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Verba, Sidney

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# The Uses of Survey Research in the Study of Comparative Politics: Issues and Strategies

*Sidney Verba\**

Abstract: This essay (first published in 1969) deals with the usefulness of survey research in studies of comparative politics. The nature of survey research as applied to problems of macro-analysis will be compared to two other approaches: the aggregate data approach and the configurative approach. The limitations of traditional survey research, the problems of comparability in multi-contextual research (technical problems, problems of conceptualization) and the strategies of comparative research (the selection and measurement of variables that are embedded in their context; the inclusion of structural characteristics into survey design; the inclusion of structural characteristics in the survey analysis) will be discussed.

## 1 Introduction

Survey research is perhaps the most important tool of empirical social research to have been developed in recent decades<sup>1</sup>. It is apparently also one of the most widely used. There are many reasons for its recent popularity. Some probably have to do with intellectual faddism and the prestige of quantitative techniques, but other reasons have more solid intellectual grounding. Survey research generates a large amount of standardized information so that quantitative analysis

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<sup>1</sup> Just as there is some ambiguity in the meaning of comparative politics so is there ambiguity in the meaning of the term survey research. For many, survey research is coterminous with what the Gallup poll does; it asks a cross-section sample of people a few relatively structured questions in a relatively short interview. For the purposes of this paper, survey research will refer to any research design that depends upon asking questions of a systematically selected group of respondents with a relatively standardized research instrument, and that involves analysis of the data by quantita-

and hypothesis testing is possible; and it standardizes procedures which is the key to the all-important task of replication. In the field of political science (to which this essay will be limited because of the limitations of the author's knowledge, though much of what is said would apply to many other areas of social research) survey research has made major contributions. Our understanding of voting behavior, of political attitude formation, of legislative/constituency relations, of political socialization, of patterns of political competition, of elite mass relations within political parties, and many other subjects has been greatly enhanced.

This essay will deal with the usefulness of survey research in studies of comparative politics. Survey techniques at first glance would seem particularly apt for comparative studies, since all survey analysis depends upon comparison. To understand voting we compare Socialists and Conservatives, workers and non-workers, protestants and catholics; to understand socialization we compare sons of authoritarian fathers with sons of non-authoritarian fathers, and so forth. But these are comparisons among individuals, or rather among large groups of individuals. One compares the rate of political activity among sons of authoritarian fathers with the rate among sons of non-authoritarian fathers. The units of analysis are individuals and their attitudes and behaviors. Our concern in this paper will be with the use of survey techniques for the comparison of large social systems: for macro-social or macro-political analysis.

This problem is important in the field of comparative politics where much comparison focusses on the largest and most complicated social unit we know, the nation-state. Many of the most important political questions require such a macro-political focus. Most of the definitions of political activity and political systems refer to the authoritative allocation of values for a society, the claim to a monopoly of legitimate violence, or the coordination of societal activity to attain collective goals. And this makes the nation-state an important unit of analysis. It is the government in most modern societies that claims the monopoly of legitimate violence, that allocates values for a society, and that coordinates societal activity toward collective goals.

Can survey research contribute to the understanding of macro-political systems? Survey research focusses on the individual person or on aggregates of individuals as the unit of analysis, yet one wants to compare macro-systems. This is the main problem to be dealt with in this paper. Though the discussion

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tive techniques. The definition is deliberately loose and merely serves as a useful frame for limiting the scope of this paper. In most cases, the surveys that will be discussed are sample surveys, where one major goal is the inference of certain characteristics of populations from statistics about samples of that population. I have not made sampling part of the definition of survey research since I want to include some studies that have involved interviewing all or almost all of the relevant population. Furthermore, the type of research I shall deal with in the paper will not be limited to studies of national cross-section samples nor to studies with highly structured interviews.

will concentrate on survey research and comparative politics, it has general relevance to the comparative method. The precision and explicitness of the techniques of survey research highlight problems that may remain implicit in other types of comparative research. For instance, one major issue to be dealt with is the validity of comparison among specific aspects of more complicated systems and this is a general problem in the comparative method. Similarly the question of the relevance of data gathered from individuals for the understanding of political systems or nation-states (a question the survey researcher inevitably faces) is one version of the more general question of the relationship between individual behavior and complex social systems, and of the yet more general question of the relationship between the study of sub-units of a social system and the study of the larger social system.

## **2 Three Approaches: Aggregate, Configurational and Survey Analysis**

The nature of survey research as applied to problems of macro-analysis can best be understood by comparing it to two other approaches: the aggregate data approach and the configurative.

In recent years, there has been much interest in gathering and analyzing aggregate unit data on nation-states. There are many kinds of aggregate unit data, some of them not that dissimilar to survey data (we will discuss this further below). For the time being, we shall be referring to information available for a social unit as a whole but not for its subparts. This includes information based on aggregates of its subparts, such as mean income, as well as information gathered on the level of the unit as a whole, such as its constitutional form. These data include quantitative data on economic and social matters (GNP, GNP per capita, newspaper circulation per capita, and so forth) as well as, in some cases, more qualitative ratings of various aspects of the economic, social or political systems (Banks and Textor: 1963; Russett *et al.*: 1964; Deutsch: 1966; Deutsch *et al.*: 1966; Russett: 1966; Retzlaff: 1965; Scheuch: 1966) One attraction of the approach is that relatively systematic data, roughly comparable from nation to nation, are gathered for a large number of units. The latter fact is important. One of the problems in macro-political research on entire political systems is that there are too few cases. The study of the single case or the comparison of a few cases may suggest plausible relationships but cannot test them. The existence of a universe of more than one hundred relatively independent polities, however, may allow one more adequately to test the relations among variables. An additional attraction of this approach is that the data are on the level of the unit about which we want to generalize; they are on the nation-state level and, therefore, quite appropriate for macro-generalization.

But the approach also entails a number of disadvantages. In the first place, the units for which measures are obtained are not necessarily comparable. The equal legal status of UN members cannot mask the fact that they differ substantially in size, internal cohesion, and degree of independence from other units. Secondly, the researcher is limited to the data made available through various governmental and international data collection agencies. One uses the statistics that are gathered, not necessarily the statistics that are most relevant to one's problems. Thirdly, these data may present a spurious 'hardness', the differences in methods of collection and recording data, in the definition of variables, in the relationship of variables to social structure from which they are measured and so forth, greatly limit the degree to which such international comparisons are valid<sup>2</sup>. Fourthly, the use of available data collected by governmental agencies usually means that one does not have attitudinal measures. Lastly, and perhaps most important, the use of aggregate measures treats the unit as a unit. One does not penetrate into the social unit (in this case the nation-state) to deal with internal variations or internal structure. Indeed, the use of measures on the level of the unit does not allow one validly to make statements about the relations among subparts of the unit (say behaviors of individuals) without running the danger of committing what Robinson has called the ecological fallacy<sup>3</sup>.

In sum, the nation-state can be characterized by a series of summary measurements dealing with its social and economic characteristics and these can be compared among many nations. But to characterize by a set of measures on the national level is perhaps to abstract too much. One must penetrate further into the system.

At the other extreme from the aggregate unit data approach is the configurative case study<sup>4</sup>. This is difficult to characterize since it takes so many different forms among different authors and in relation to different problems. I am not referring here to the use of different theoretical structures, but to such aspects as style of research, type of observations, research techniques, and so forth.

Configurative case studies are based on a wide range of types of often un-systematic observations carried out by the researcher. It is in many ways the most flexible and appropriate approach to the comparison of complex systems. It maximizes common sense; data that are 'obviously' invalid cannot sneak into the analysis as easily as they can when the operations for data selection are more rigidly defined and put into effect more mechanically. On the other hand, the configurative approach to a single political system has all the usual faults of

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<sup>2</sup> McGranahan: 1966; Koben: 1965; Scheuch: 1966. I shall return to this theme below since the same problem exists in relation to survey research.

<sup>3</sup> Scheuch: 1966; Robinson: 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the best of these studies in recent political science include, Eckstein: 1966; Pye: 1962; Apter: 1961 and 1963; Binder: 1962; Weiner: 1962.

the intensive case study: it can prove nothing; it is hard to replicate; it does not easily lend itself to a systematic cumulation of knowledge. And of course, the number of cases is necessarily small<sup>5</sup>.

Survey research, as a technique, lies roughly between the configurative case study and the aggregate data approach. Like the latter it depends upon relatively precise data gathering and evaluational techniques, using methods that allow replication by others. And the data allow meaningful quantitative manipulation to test hypotheses. On the other hand, the approach penetrates below the level of the nation-state. It gathers material relevant to internal variations within the nation. Furthermore, one can gather data on individual attitudes and behavior as well as on the 'harder' subjects on which aggregate data are gathered. And one is not bound by the data already collected by governmental or other agencies.

In this way survey techniques combine some of the advantages of depth and richness of the configurative study, as well as some of the rigor of the aggregate data approach. Is this the happy solution to all our research problems? The recent expansion in amount of survey work suggests that many think yes. But one must hesitate. For one thing, the organizational difficulties and expense of such work mean that surveys are usually limited to one or two societies and that the benefits of having a large number of national units for analysis are lost. We have a large number of cases, but the cases are individuals not systems. In this sense we are faced with the problem of the configurative approach: too few examples of the units we wish to compare. And, conversely, the survey techniques result in the kind of abstraction and selection that worries some of the critics of the aggregate approach.

Nevertheless, survey techniques promise to combine depth with rigor and therefore commend themselves to our attention for macro-comparisons. But if this research is to contribute to such comparisons, it will need modification. In the remaining sections of this paper, I should like to: (1) enumerate some of the limitations of traditional survey research for macro-comparisons; (2) argue that one needs a new type of survey research that is explicitly multi-contextual; (3) suggest some of the technical and methodological difficulties in achieving this kind of multi-contextual research; and (4) suggest some ways to get around the obstacles.

One caveat before beginning. The above discussion should not be taken to imply that we are dealing with contradictory and mutually exclusive research approaches. A configurative case study can use survey research as one of its data gathering techniques; and the differences between aggregate data and data

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<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the number of cases is usually one. But there have been recent attempts to develop parallel case studies of political systems that allow comparisons across configuratively designed studies. See Dahl: 1966; Pye/Verba: 1965 A more ambitious attempt is the parallel studies of the smaller European democracies organized by Hans Daalder, Robert A. Dahl, Val Lorwin and Stein Rokkan.

generated through the survey process is not a very clear one. Indeed, what I shall argue for is a reconciliation among approaches whereby we achieve a more systematic comparative approach.

### 3 The Limitations of Traditional Survey Research

Most survey studies have had two characteristics that limit their usefulness for macro-political analysis. They focus on the individual as the unit of analysis, and (what is really the same problem from a slightly different point of view) they have been non-contextual. By the latter I mean that they have not dealt explicitly with variations in the social context (the social structure and culture) within which the individual measurements are taken. In some cases, this is because the relevant social context does not vary. All measurements are made within a single context as when surveys are limited to single national political systems<sup>6</sup>. Or the survey may take place within several contexts, but these do not vary in terms of some relevant contextual dimensions. Thus, comparisons that incorporate the structural characteristics of sub-units of a nation-state (such as comparisons among different states or congressional districts of the United States where the contextual characteristics of the states are explicitly considered<sup>7</sup>) deal with units that are homogeneous in such characteristics as democratic political form or fundamental electoral rules and they are culturally homogeneous in certain respects. And even multi-national studies may offer little variation along some of the most interesting of political system dimensions. The Almond-Verba *Civic Culture* study, for instance, is limited to relatively older and economically developed nations that have relatively high commitment to democratic procedures<sup>8</sup>.

In other cases, there may be variation along important contextual dimensions, but the survey study remains non-contextual because these variations are ignored. Thus even studies that take place within single nations are carried on in different states, regions, cities, congressional districts and the like. But these contextual differences have rarely been considered explicitly within the analysis<sup>9</sup>.

The lack of contextual variation does not much interfere with micropolitical analyses, that is, analyses of the behavior of individuals. The behavior (say, voting decisions or frequency of political participation) of individuals is related

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<sup>6</sup> A bibliography of single nation survey studies would, of course, be much longer than the one contained in this volume. It would contain most of the major works in political survey research.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Campbell: 1966, p. 194-211 and 351-372.

<sup>8</sup> Almond and Verba: 1963. See also Alford: 1963, which focuses on comparisons among four English speaking democracies.

<sup>9</sup> Some important exceptions will be discussed below.

to their social characteristics, attitudes, past experiences and so forth. Of course, individuals operate within a complicated social context, and their attitudes or behavior as well as such social characteristics as race, place of residence or class have meaning only within some such structural context. But in the analysis of much survey research these characteristics are considered the individual possession of the respondent<sup>10</sup>. Insofar as one is interested in testing hypotheses about individuals, the fact that the measurements are limited to individuals or the fact that the context is not considered as part of the analysis may make little difference<sup>11</sup>. But if the characteristics of the context are held constant, the data about individuals cannot be used for analyses relevant to the context neither to explore the ways in which the structural context affect the individual's behavior or beliefs, nor to explore the ways in which the behaviors of individuals affect the context.

Thus, if survey research is to be of use for the study of comparative macro-politics, it has to be multi-contextual and to pay attention to the placement of the individual within the relevant social structures (the former is a requisite for the latter.) In order to explore the potentialities for such multi-contextual survey research, I would like first to spell out some of the difficulties involved; for these difficulties are relevant to the comparative method in general. And consideration of the difficulties will set the stage for an understanding of the potentialities<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> For a good conceptual discussion of the relationship between individual attributes and the attributes of the systems of which they are parts, see Lazarsfeld: 1959.

<sup>11</sup> But it may make some difference, even under these conditions. What one may not know is the extent to which the individualistic hypothesis is generalizable to other contexts. A relationship between, say, educational level and likelihood of political participation may be a positive one in certain kinds of party systems but may be negative in others, or non-existent in still other situations. Insofar as the context does not vary in this respect (i.e. the study is done within a single party system or within several similar ones) one cannot test its range of applicability.

<sup>12</sup> In this essay, I shall focus on the difficulties of cross-national research (i.e., where the relevant context is the nation state) since these present the most difficult problems. Cross-national studies carried on in several nations at the same time represent an important way in which such contextual characteristics can be brought into the analysis (indeed they force such consideration of systemic characteristics) but multi-contextuality does not necessarily imply such a study design. A survey carried on within one particular system can be a multicontextual study as long as the frame of reference goes beyond that system. Thus, though studies limited to a single context cannot test propositions in which the context figures as a variable, it can, as can any well designed case study, suggest such propositions for further testing. Furthermore, it is possible for a study carried on within one political context to be so designed that the data gathered is comparable to data gathered by others in other political contexts. It is one of the virtues of survey procedures that they have been concerned with inter-observer reliability and are therefore often amenable to replication from system to system. Thus, a single context study, by being related to other studies, can become part of a multicontextual body of work (Herbert H. Hyman stresses the usefulness of studies of this sort which he calls »pseudo-comparisons«; see Hyman; 1964.) And,



## 4 Problems of Comparability in Multi-Contextual Research

The major problem is whether that which we compare is indeed comparable. Consider cross-national comparisons of voting rates, or rates of acceptance of agricultural innovation, or frequencies of expression of loyalty to the nation. Can these be compared? Is a vote in one context (say in a two-party democracy) equivalent to a vote in another context (say in a single party mobilizational system)? Can one compare frequencies of certain attitudes from one country to another? If we want to interpret differences in frequency of certain kinds of behavior or frequency of the expression of certain kinds of attitudes from nation to nation we must be measuring comparable frequencies. But equivalence is difficult to achieve because of the very fact that these measures are taken within different contexts. There are two kinds of problem here: problems of technical measurement and problems of conceptualization. The two types of problem overlap, but we shall discuss them separately, looking briefly at the first and then more intensively at the second. And we shall consider them in connection with problems in cross-national research.

### 4.1 Technical Problems

If we want to compare the responses of two individuals to a survey question or the rates of response in two groups to a survey question, we want to make sure that they are asked the same question. The responses are not comparable if the stimuli are different. Most of the techniques of survey research (interviewer training, question wording, control of the setting of the interview and so forth) are aimed at creating a situation where each interview can be considered an experiment that replicates the other interviews. Differences in response cannot be caused by differences in stimulus. It is thus meaningful to ask questions about what else might have caused the differences.

But when research is carried on in different nations, it becomes difficult to standardize the stimulus. There are numerous reasons for this, the most obvious being the problem of linguistic equivalence. There are now a number of standard techniques for the translation of interview items from one language to another but these, though useful, give us relatively little certainty that we have achieved equivalence. The standard technique now appears to be the use of a blind translation from the language in which the interview was first written into

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lastly, for the introduction of systemic variables into a survey study it is not necessary that the system unit be a nation. Multicontextual studies can be made using other political units: communities, organizations and the like. There is of course some advantage to studies that are explicitly multicontextual in design and in which the several contexts are nation states. An explicit multicontextual design allows the maximization of system variation and also forces recognition of such systemic variation, a recognition that may be missing if the design is not an explicitly multicontextual one.

the new language, followed by a blind retranslation back into the original language. The first version in the original language is then compared with the new version. Discrepancies that are revealed help to locate ambiguities in the original or misinterpretations in the translation. But as Erwin Scheuch has pointed out, this tells us relatively little about the equivalence of the final products (Scheuch: 1968. See also Erwin and Bower: 1952; Jacobson: 1954; Jacobson and Rokkan: 1952; Rommetveit and Israel. 1954).

In recent research being conducted by the Institute of Political Studies at Stanford and the Institute for International Studies and the Survey Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley, in collaboration with university groups in four other nations we have found that a translation-and-blind-retranslation technique is less efficient and less to the point than parallel blind translations from the original into the new language. This is coupled with intensive discussion of the meaning of the items among the several translators and the drafters of the original items. In addition, the original draft of the questionnaire is accompanied by discussion of the intended meaning of the terms in the questions, a technique we found quite useful for translators. This procedure introduces a clearly subjective and somewhat unsystematic aspect into the survey design. But this aspect of research design (question selection and wording) is an aspect with heavy qualitative components even within single nation surveys.

The problem is that literal equivalence, even if achievable, does not mean that the questions are equivalent in the different languages. Words that denote similar objects in two languages may have different emotional connotations; words that denote the same object may have multiple meanings in one language but not in the other; words that denote a particular object may not exist in both languages (which means that one has to use longer and more involved circumlocutions); the most accurate word to describe an object may be a colloquial word in one language but a technical word that is less generally familiar in another language, and so forth. (See especially Scheuch: 1968)

The problems are severe and it is easier to explicate them than to suggest ways of dealing with them. One reason that standardization is difficult is that any procedure to test standardization involves using non-equivalent stimulus and response; that is, the stimulus in language A produces a response in language A; while that in language B produces one in language B. There is no overlap in either stimulus or response that would allow one to test whether the same individuals or the same populations would reply in a similar manner to the two versions of the question<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Non-verbal techniques represent one possible way around the language problem. There is probably great room for innovation in this regard. Two problems exist, however, in this respect. In the first place, there is evidence of lack of equivalence of meaning of these techniques in different cultures. This is clearly the case when representational pictures are used as in the TAT. The pictures have to be adjusted to

In general, though, the problem is not unmanageable and can be exaggerated. Exact linguistic equivalence is, indeed, probably impossible. We would not know how to recognize it if we saw it. What is important is that the question tap the same dimension of attitude or behavior in the two languages, not that it be an exact replica in one language of the question in the other. In this connection it must be remembered that even in a single language, any particular question is but one of a number of alternative measures of some underlying dimension and it has only a probabilistic relationship to the underlying dimension. This is the basis for Paul Lazarsfeld's argument that survey items are interchangeable. Two different items may measure the same dimension and have a similar relationship to some external criterion even though the distributions of individuals who answer the two items negatively or positively will differ<sup>14</sup>.

This suggests that one can look at parallel survey questions in different languages as alternative items that measure the same dimension. Thus identity in meaning is not needed any more than it is needed for two items in the same language that tap a single dimension. Whether the items do indeed tap the same dimension will be ascertained in terms of their pattern of relationship with other such items, both in terms of the extent to which they form meaningful scales or clusters of items and in terms of their relationship to other dimensions<sup>15</sup>. The point is that one must first define the underlying dimension with which one is interested, and then seek indicators of that dimension in the several languages. It may be that the most adequate indicators in different settings take quite different forms. We shall return to this problem below when we discuss problems of conceptualization in cross-national research.

When looked at in this light, it becomes clear that the problem of linguistic equivalence is not unique to cross-national survey research. It exists in connection with survey research within a single national context; and it exists in connection with non-survey research in a cross-national context. The obvious case of a linguistic problem within a single national context is the multi-lingual society; and here of course the problem is no different from that in cross-national research. But even in situations where one language suffices for research purposes, the difference in meanings assigned to words in different regions of a country, different social strata, and so forth may be substantial. These problems are little different in kind from those found in cross-linguistic research; and if

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the local modes of dress and physical characteristics but this immediately introduces problems similar to those associated with linguistic equivalence. And the same type of problem may arise with non-representational techniques such as the Rorschach. On this general subject, see especially Lindzey: 1961; as well as Henry: 1961; Kaplan: 1961; Sears: 1961; and Adcock: 1958. See also Anderson: 1967 (This article reviews most of the literature on the cross-cultural equivalence of verbal as well as nonverbal stimuli.)

<sup>14</sup> Lazarsfeld: 1959.

<sup>15</sup> For a general discussion and some specific measures relevant to this problem, see Przeworski/Teune: 1966.

they are somewhat less severe in research limited to a single language, they are more likely to be overlooked. One advantage in cross-linguistic research is that one has to be conscious of language problems, though that does not mean there is always much one can do about them.

Just as single nation survey research shares linguistic problems with cross-national survey research, the same applies to cross-national research of a non-survey kind. Problems of linguistic comparability apply to comparative historical studies or comparative configurative studies where the comparison is across different linguistic units. The researcher is forced to compare historical documents, statements of leaders, political platforms, and so forth across languages. Linguistic problems take a different form and are perhaps not quite so severe. The researcher has more flexibility to interpret, explain, and use common sense than is possible in a structured dialogue between interviewer and respondent. Nevertheless the general problem of finding comparable linguistic items exists. Consider for instance, the statement by John Beattie from the preface to his ethnography of the Bunyoro<sup>16</sup>: '\. . . In every culture there are concepts which do not have an exact equivalent in another culture, so that any translation is bound to be to some extent a mistranslation. Since many of the categories of Nyoro kinship terminology have no exact equivalent in English, to translate them by familiar English kinship terms may lead to serious misunderstanding. There is no easy solution to this problem; I have to write my book in English and not in Nyoro... I shall try to avoid misrepresentation as far as I can by presenting Nyoro categories of thought and behavior as far as possible as they conceive them, even if this sometimes involves circumlocution.' I believe one could find many cases where such comments would be relevant but where the problem is unrecognized.

Linguistic problems are paralleled by technical problems in the area of interviewer-respondent relations. Just as the instrument must be standardized across nations so the interviewing setting must be the same if responses are to be comparable. The fact that interviews take place within different cultures and different social structures creates non-comparabilities in the interviewer-respondent relationship. One such problem has to do with differing stratification and social cleavage patterns in different societies, and the way these intersect with interviewer-respondent relations. Interviews are affected by the relative social statuses of the respondent and the interviewer. There is evidence, for instance, that Negro respondents in the United States reply quite differently to Negro and white interviewers, though other social differences make less difference<sup>17</sup>. But this does not mean that racial differences would be the only ones to have a major contaminating effect in other societies. In many societies the inhibitions to social intercourse across linguistic, caste, religious, or social class lines may be as severe or more severe than those between Negro and White in

<sup>16</sup>Beattie: 1960, p. 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> Hyman: 1954; Axelrod/Matthews/Prothro 1962.

the United States. Since we cannot match each respondent with an interviewer of the same social characteristics, surveys in different countries are inevitably faced with the problem that individuals with one set of social characteristics will be interviewing individuals with another, that the relevant social characteristics will differ from society to society (in some cases interviews will go on across religious lines, in some cases lines, in some cases tribal lines, and in most cases social class lines) and that the societies will differ in the extent to which these social cleavages are significant. In the United States, a Protestant respondent would in all likelihood be unaware whether the interviewer were Catholic or Protestant and, for most subjects, it would make little difference in the response. The same cannot be said with confidence for Moslems and Hindus in India or Catholics and Protestants in Holland.

There are a number of other factors that might make interviewing situations non-comparable from society to society. Consider the following example. In the United States, Almond and Verba found that less than 1% of their respondents refused to give their partisan preference; in Italy 35% refused. We cannot be certain about the reasons for this, though information we have about the degree of interpersonal trust in the two countries, the knowledge of and exposure to sample surveys, and so forth suggest that the measurement situation is different in the two countries. Assuming for the time being that partisan affiliation is a comparable phenomenon in the two countries, the difference in response rate can probably be traced to differing degrees to which respondents trust interviewers.

The example illuminates our problem. The point is often made in the literature on comparative politics (particularly in connection with the literature on political development) that theoretical approaches are culture bound; that we transfer to other nations (specially the newer nations) models and hypotheses generated in our own. Thus we tend to use equilibrium models while we ignore problems of rapid change. Or we focus on the problem of participation and social mobilization, without considering the problem of the creation of fundamental institutions that can manage and channel participation<sup>18</sup>. The criticism is often just. The main reason why we make these mistakes is that we do not notice the extent to which our models of politics contain parochial assumptions that do not apply to nations with far different experience.

A parallel point can be made with some justification about research techniques. Survey research has been developed largely in the United States, and has been transferred from there to other western democracies and more recently to the developing societies<sup>19</sup>. Consequently, certain aspects of the social system

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<sup>18</sup> Huntington: 1965.

<sup>19</sup> The statement is certainly impressionistic and possibly chauvinistic. One certainly has the impression that survey research abroad is often market research, or pre-election surveys for public consumption or for political parties and candidates as a means of improving campaign strategy. These are uses of survey research that started in the

and culture of the United States that are not present elsewhere may have important effects on the workability of the technique and the comparability of the results particularly as we move into the developing areas. A few examples of the assumptions upon which survey research operates will illustrate the point<sup>20</sup>.

1. In the United States, many relationships are functionally specific and impersonal: successful interviews may depend upon the respondent's willingness to discuss with a 'stranger' subjects that often are discussed only among intimates. Respondents may do this largely because the relationship with an interviewer is so specific and impersonal that one can break down ordinary boundaries in the belief that the relationship will not extend beyond this specific exchange of information. But where individuals have less exposure to such functionally specific relationships, they may be less willing to speak honestly or to speak at all to the interviewer. The limitations of the relationship may be unclear and, therefore, threatening.

2. Techniques of answering questions are well known to respondents in the United States: everything from school examinations to quiz shows probably have some impact on learning what a question is, what an answer is, what a rating scale is, and so forth. In the absence of such experience standardized questions or the use of a rating scale may not be easily comprehensible<sup>21</sup>.

3. The sheer volume of survey type work and its well publicized uses make it easier for respondents to understand the purpose of an interview. One has to engage in much longer explanation of what it is that one is about where the 'Gallup poll' is not a household word.

4. In the United States, individuals have many contacts with large organizations in the private sphere. And much well-publicized survey work is clearly non-governmental. Where the government intervenes more in daily life or where fewer private organizations exist, one is more likely to believe that the interviewer at your door represents the government (and, indeed, in many nations private interviewing for commercial or academic purposes requires government approval, so that the governmental involvement is real even if not necessarily relevant). Under such circumstances, respondents are likely to be on their guard against revealing information that might be damaging to them.

5. It is hard to say what it is that makes individuals accept the promise of anonymity explicit or implicit in the interview situation. Such institutions as the secret ballot may lead people to understand that anonymity can be maintained.

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United States. In addition, the use of survey research by the U.S. Occupation Forces in Japan and Germany left behind both qualified personnel and interest in the technique. But the major impact may derive from the work of such groups as the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. The two most important contributions of this group and others like it are the provision of intellectual models (Crespi: 1950; Passin: 1951) and training via student and faculty exchange.

<sup>20</sup> Several of these assumptions have been discussed in Goskowski: 1964.

<sup>21</sup> Goskowski, *op. cit.*, points out that in Poland those with limited education cannot understand the notion of a scale, and rarely use the lower positions.

But it may be harder for individuals to believe that preferences not identified with a particular individual can be taken seriously, and if one believes that a statement of preference or position only makes sense in terms of the person who said it, it becomes hard to credit promises of anonymity offered by interviewers<sup>22</sup>.

6. One can go on to list what may be special characteristics of American society (or of more modernized societies in general) that make survey research a more useful technique: greater understanding of scientific inquiry; greater comprehension of an 'opinion' (an individual statement of preference that cannot be considered right or wrong); greater ability to imagine oneself in hypothetical situations; and so forth and so forth.

As with the linguistic problems, it is easier to list the problems than to solve them. There is growing technical experience with survey research in social situations different from those in which the original techniques grew up. But there is need for research into interviewer effects and biases: studies of the effect of class or ethnic group on the interviewer-respondent relationship; problems of cross-sex interviewing; problems of interview setting (in front of others or alone); problems of respondent fatigue and so forth.

In the meantime, one can point out, as with the linguistic problems that problems of the interviewer-respondent relationship are not different in kind from interviewer-respondent relationships within a single nation; nor are they different in kind from researcher-subject matter relationships in other kinds of social research across cultures. Within nations, there are problems of the differential relationship of interviewers and respondent at different points in the social structure<sup>23</sup>. And those researchers working with other kinds of material—be they written materials, or interviews with political officials or direct observation, may be faced with similar problems of lack of comparability in their relationship to the material. Governing officials may be more likely in one country than in another to give researchers the 'official line'. Documents in one country may reflect a systematic bias not apparent in other countries. In one society one may have access to all archives; in others the archives may be carefully controlled with the researcher sent only to some. And so forth. Survey research may intensify the problems of the observer effect, but it does not create them. These problems should not inhibit research but make research more cautious. And these problems should become the subject of research. Only by carrying on empirical research with this type of problem in mind can we see the extent to which it is a problem.

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<sup>22</sup> As will be suggested later, respondents who ask the question »Why me?« when they feel their views are not as important as those of others, are asking a quite meaningful question.

<sup>23</sup> Hyman: 1954.

## 4.2 The Problems of Conceptualization

Thus far we have been discussing problems of the accuracy of measurement. Let us assume that the technical problems of survey design have been solved and that respondents have been presented with equivalent stimulus situations: the translation is such that they have answered the same question in each system; the interviewers have behaved in a standardized manner; the problems of evasion, of courtesy, of fear have been handled such that the respondents in all the systems studied are roughly as open and honest; and in all respects we are dealing with answers to the same questions. The problem remains of interpreting the meaning of these results. The problem derives from the fact that the questions have been asked within different social and cultural contexts. We may have accurate information as to whether respondents vote or belong to political movements; or as to whether they are in favor of or opposed to the incumbent regime. But we are still faced with a serious problem of the equivalence of these acts or attitudes, since their meaning may be contingent on the particular social and cultural setting in which they exist.

The problem is a general one for all comparative research: what set of concepts and measurable variables can we develop such that they can be applied with equivalent meaning in a number of systems? No matter how much one is committed to a macro-sociological approach, it is clear that one cannot compare total systems. Rather, one abstracts certain aspects of the system for comparison. But how do we find equivalent aspects? It makes little sense to compare the legislatures in two nations if the two bodies are selected differently and perform quite different functions. The only similarity may be that both are labeled with that term. In political science this problem has led to attempts to define and compare the performance of general political functions such as interest aggregation or political socialization or to locate and compare political institutions such as bureaucracies or political elites. The problem remains, though, that the meaning of any political structure or function that we isolate by assigning it a conceptual label depends to some extent upon the context within which it is found.

The problem is clear in connection with behavioral and attitudinal measures in survey research. In the first place, it is necessary to find dimensions of attitude or behavior that are relevant to the various contexts in which they will be used. One cannot compare party affiliation across nations, if one nation has no party system. For cross-system comparisons it may be necessary to define quite general dimensions such as political involvement or political activity in such a way that they are meaningful in a multiplicity of systems. But, though one may deal with quite general political variables, the problem remains of finding indicators that are comparable from system to system. Suppose we want to compare political activity in two nations. It is clear that we will learn little if we compare the rate of some political activity in one country with the rate of some economic activity in another. (I am assuming, of course, that we have



defined these general dimensions adequately from a theoretical point of view). The simplest and standard approach is to compare the 'same thing' across nations; which usually means acts with the same label - be that 'votes' or 'crimes' or 'suicides', or answers to the 'same question'. But this is deceptive. Activities which receive the same label and which appear on the surface to be the same kind of activity in two nations may, due to the different contexts in which we are measuring the particular behavior, differ sharply from each other. And similarly labeled activities may differ in their meaning for the individual who is performing the act or in their meaning for the political system in which the act is performed.

Voting is a good example of such an activity since it is the most easily measurable political behavior and the most frequently used for cross-national comparative purposes. From the point of view of the individual the vote may mean any one of a number of things: one may vote because he wants to bring into power a certain candidate or political party; he may vote because he wants to throw out of power a political party or candidate; he may vote merely in ritualistic conformity to traditional party affiliation; he may vote in order to fulfill an obligation he feels he owes as a citizen; or he may vote because the law says he must vote. Thus, to use the vote for various political parties as a measure of the political attitudes and desires of the citizens of a nation may be quite risky, just as it would be risky to use voting turnout as a measure of political activity or involvement. Variations of this sort in the meaning of the vote occur, of course, within nations, but the variations among nations are likely to be even sharper. It would make little sense to compare the rate of voting in Australia, where voting is compulsory by law, with the rate of voting in a nation that has no such legal provision.

From the point of view of the political system within which it takes place the meaning of any political act also may differ strikingly from nation to nation. There are relatively few political systems in the world without elections, but the act of voting means quite different things under different electoral or party systems. In some nations where there is no choice between candidates voting may have symbolic consequences as a manifestation of solidarity; in other nations there may be a choice among candidates or parties but voting may have little consequence in terms of deciding who runs the country because one party tends to be overwhelmingly dominant or because, conversely, there are so many parties that the formation of governments takes place within the legislature and only weakly reflects voting decisions; while in other countries voting can in fact have an effect on who will man the key political positions. Certainly the vote is not an equivalent act in these different circumstances.

Finally, it should be pointed out that there may be independent variations in the individual and systemic meanings of a political act such as voting. Two individuals may vote for entirely different reasons but their votes may have identical effects on the political system. One individual may be conforming to

traditional family voting patterns, while another votes to further a particular policy, but both vote for the same party. And, indeed, the fact that social structures such as political parties direct multiply-determined behavior into a limited number of channels is one of their most important characteristics. Conversely, the vote may mean the same to two individuals but different things from the perspective of the system: two individuals may vote to express their strong opposition to an incumbent regime, but the vote of one may be counted while the other's vote is not.

Thus the context within which one measures the frequency of a particular act affects the meaning of that act. And since the meanings may differ between two contexts both from the individual and the system point of view (and vary independently from each point of view) it may become difficult to say whether differences found between two nations in the frequency of certain political acts reflect differences based on the characteristics of the individuals within those nations or the characteristics of the system. Consider the data that Almond and I found about differences in media exposure between the United States and Mexico. (Almond and Verba: 1963) In our cross-national survey we found that a much higher proportion of Americans than of Mexicans watch news broadcasts on television. There is little doubt that this represents a real difference in the behavior of Americans and Mexicans: the question was a simple one with no particular translation problem, and we have little reason to believe that respondents were inflating or deflating the extent to which they watched news broadcasts. But how does one interpret such a result? Can one conclude from this information that Americans are more interested in politics and involved in governmental affairs? Probably not. The bulk of the difference between the two nations is due to the greater ease of access to television sets in the United States. This does not necessarily mean the difference is unimportant or meaningless. If one is interested in the amount of time spent exposed to certain kinds of communications about politics, the difference is important. On the other hand, the data cannot very well be used to infer differences in such individual attributes as motivation to obtain information about politics. Nor can it tell us much about differences in exposure to political communications in general between the two nations unless we also consider the use of alternative channels.

This discussion illustrates the complex intertwining of micro- and macro-measures when one conducts multi-contextual research. We measure individual behavior such as the vote within societies that differ in terms that are relevant to the voting act (that differ in terms of the structure of the electoral system as well as in terms of the cultural meaning assigned the votes.) This raises questions as to the usefulness of data on voting for either comparative micro-analyses or macro-analyses. From the point of view of the understanding of individual political behavior one must ask what the vote signifies. One can argue that a vote is a vote, and therefore the comparison is on the face of it

valid. But it clearly is not from the point of view of any interesting theories or hypotheses about political behavior. Or one can consider the vote an indicator of some more general political dimension such as political mobilization, and ask: what kinds of people are likely to be mobilized; and what are the consequences for the individual of this mobilization<sup>24</sup>. The questions are posed on the micro level for which the data of survey research is most immediately useful. But even for the micro-comparison, we must deal with the fact that the item being compared may not be an equally valid indicator of the underlying dimension because the measures are made of different macro-contexts.

From the point of view of our major interest in political systems we have a similar problem. Votes can be aggregated in various ways. We can compare nations by adding the number of votes together as an indicator of the amount of popular control over the government; or we can compare rates of voting in different sub-groups to locate differences in the distribution of power among several systems; or we can relate the vote for various parties to other social attributes to estimate the extent to which party affiliation is crystallized within specific social groupings.

Or can we? The answer is we can, but not simply. We can aggregate in this way in order to make statements about systems only after we have dealt with the problem of the comparability of the individual acts we aggregate. And these acts in turn differ because of differences on the system level. This appears to be a vicious circle, and we will return with some ways of breaking it later.

A similar problem applies to the interpretation of differences in frequency of political attitudes. Because of the different contexts within which one is asking about political attitudes, the objects of orientation for these attitudes differ. Individuals will be talking about different political systems. The situation is quite different from that in most single context surveys where one compares the attitudes of different sub-groups toward the same government. Suppose that we could develop cross-cultural measures of political attitudes that would reliably measure the same attitude in different political contexts. We could then say that two individuals in two different political systems feel the same way about their respective governments; for instance, both are as alienated from their governments. Despite the fact that in some sense the mental states of these individuals *vis-à-vis* their governments are the same, their attitudes would have different meanings because of the different contexts in which they exist. In the cross-national political survey mentioned above, we found that the five nations studied differed sharply in the frequency with which individuals reported that they felt competent to influence their governments. This probably represents real differences in the attitudes held by the populations in the several nations studied. But what do these differences mean? They may reflect the fact that individuals in the different nations have been exposed to different socializing experiences. In some nations the entire range of non-political experience, in the

<sup>24</sup>Bendix: 1964; Deutsch: 1961; Rokkan: 1962b.

family, in the school, and at the work place, may be such as to lead the individual to believe that he can influence those in authority over him. In other societies, socializing experiences may create a more passive attitude toward authority. Our study suggests that differences in which non-political authority figures have an important effect on the extent to which individuals believe that they are capable of influencing their governments. (Almond and Verba: 1963, chapter 12.) On the other hand, the differences in frequency of belief in one's influence capabilities may simply reflect the fact that the governments in the five nations differ objectively in the extent to which they are amenable to being influenced by their citizens. In this case the different frequencies would reflect accurate cognitions of the real political situation in the several nations.

Or, consider the implication for the operation of the political system of these varying frequencies of belief in one's ability to influence the government. In all the nations studied, we found that those who believe they can influence the government are more likely to engage in political activity and to attempt to exercise such influence. This appears to be an interesting, if not startling, cross-national micro-political generalization. Nevertheless, there are sharp differences among the nations in the likelihood that this belief will be translated into activity. Furthermore, the effect of this activity on the behavior of the political elites depends on a number of factors that are independent of the particular attitudes held by the citizens in a society. This is not to argue that the differences found are not real differences with important consequences. It is merely to point out that the interpretation of these differences is quite a bit more complex than it would be if one were dealing with a political survey carried on in one political system.

The problem of the different meaning that answers to questions can have within different political systems relates not merely to specific measures of attitude or behavior but to the general question of the meaning of public attitudes. It was suggested above that survey research methods have a 'western-democracy' bias. The same may be suggested for the interpretation of survey research results. The differences, for instance, between the state of public attitudes in the United States and in some of the new nations of the world are numerous. It has been argued that opinion surveys in developing nations will reveal little for there is little to reveal. Individuals have few opinions; they are not informed about politics and have rarely thought about the subject. The questions an interviewer asks suddenly propel the respondent into a world of thoughts he never had. He may find the questions incomprehensible and throw up his hands or he may respond with spontaneous thoughts about politics that did not exist before the question was asked. This is certainly true, especially if the questions are about political problems as defined by the researcher, but it does not appear to be a problem limited to the developing nations. The characteristics spelled out above seem to be general ones for 'mass publics' in developed societies as well<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> See Converse: 1964.

More important than the mere absence of opinion and ignorance about politics, is the contrast between the social settings of opinions in the United States and in many of the developing nations. In the United States individuals are important: leading American values involve the equalitarian nature of political opinions, the privacy and independence of political opinions, and the positive value of having opinions. In many traditional societies, the individual is not expected to and does not consider it proper to have individual opinions. The Rudolphs, commenting on their experience in India, point out 'the flaws in the assumption that most people hold opinions on a broad range of issues and are capable of articulating them. But articulation involves at least some degree of self-consciousness, sufficient to see that the dictates of custom are not the only sources of beliefs and attitudes. Even if he clings to his customs and tradition, the person who has developed some selfawareness realizes, however dimly, that other ways of seeing the world exist. Only when this perception of alternatives arises does the individual appreciate that his views are in some sense peculiar to himself, that he *has* opinions. In the area of the political culture (political self-consciousness, information, literacy) this transformation has not yet taken place among many of our interviewees.' (Rudolph and Rudolph: 1958, p. 236. See also Jones: 1963; Wilson and Armstrong: 1963; Wilson: 1958)

Such community grounding of opinions introduces problems of survey design, of course, in that respondents may be unwilling to talk as individuals to interviewers. But what we are interested in here is the fact that the meaning of such responses differ from those elicited in circumstances where they have a more independent origin. If two respondents in two different political settings express the same opinion, the expression may not be equivalent because of the different social roots of the opinions. And such a difference in social roots may have important implications for the attitude under study. Similar attitudes with different origins may differ in terms of stability and in terms of the situation under which they will change.

This difference in nature of opinions may also be looked at from the point of view of the system. If there are differences among systems in the degree to which political opinions are individually based and in the extent to which the holding of opinions is considered legitimate, there will also be differences in the implications for the system of the opinions that are held. For instance, the extent to which expressions of hostility toward an incumbent regime represent a threat to that regime will depend not merely on the frequency with which such hostility is expressed (assuming one can get comparable measures of frequency and intensity across systems) but on the organizational potentialities for those with hostile opinions, the degree to which it may be freely expressed, the response of the incumbent elites, and so forth<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Analysis of data on American attitudes toward the war in Vietnam indicates that though there is widespread dissatisfaction with the war, this dissatisfaction probably

The above discussion relates to some of the complex attitudinal and behavioral variables that are often the dependent variables in political research. But the same problem exists in relation to some of the standard independent variables used in such analysis. These variables also differ from nation to nation because of different social structures and different patterns of meaning associated with them.

Standard measures have ambiguous meanings. It may be difficult if not impossible to match individuals on these measures; or even to consider them comparable ordinal scales (in those cases where an assumption of ordinality seems warranted). Let us consider a few:

1. Education. - This is one of the most important variables used in comparative research and one that is closely related to many political phenomena of interest. (Almond and Verba: 1963, Chapter 13.) But can we match individuals in terms of their educational attainments? What appear to be comparable levels of educational attainment (say the completion of a secondary school degree, or a university degree, or 12 years of school, or some other measure of amount of education received) may turn out not to be comparable at all. Even if a similar amount of time is spent in school by respondents in different societies, the meaning of that education will differ. Not only is the content and quality of education different, but the social position that education implies differs. For instance, in a society where a high proportion of secondary school graduates go on to higher education, higher education has quite different implications in terms of prestige, career opportunities, and the like than it does in a society where a university education automatically makes one a member of the intellectual elite. This is not a measurement problem in the usual sense. We assume that we can accurately measure the amount of education that an individual has received. The problem is: what does it mean?

2. Occupation. - The problem is similar. Two individuals may do the same work - perhaps run a machine of a certain sort in a factory -. But does this mean they have equivalent occupations? Only in part. The question of equivalence hinges as well on the prestige accorded different occupations, the amount of special training needed (in one society a machine operator may need little extra training since his basic education taught him such skills as counting, reading and writing; but in other circumstances the same job may entail much extra training.)

3. Income (and/or wealth). - The relative material well-being of individuals is an important consideration in understanding political attitudes. But measuring it is difficult. Again we can ignore for the time being the severe measurement problems involved in unwillingness or inability to report income as well

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has little effect on decision-makers because of the diffuse nature of the dissatisfaction. It is not concentrated in any social group nor in either political party, and therefore, does not play a major role in elections simply because party leaders cannot adopt electoral strategies to deal with it. See Verba *et al.*: 1967.

as problems in translating from one monetary system to another. More difficult problems arise in terms of the social structure within which income is earned and the cultural interpretations of what are valued material goods. More concretely these problems translate into those of 'whose income?' and 'what is considered income?'

The extent of the group that has a 'common purse' or that shares responsibility for monetary support varies from society to society. Thus in one setting the respondent's material status may be determined by that of his nuclear family, in another one would have to consider the material status of more distant relatives.

Similarly, the measurement of material status becomes quite difficult in circumstances where material goods are not easily translatable into monetary terms. If wealth in land or in cattle is more desirable than wealth in money, and if land or cattle are not freely convertible into money (because, for instance, of a land tenure system that restricts sale of land) it becomes difficult to measure relative wealth within a society, and more difficult between societies<sup>27</sup>.

4. Urban status. - It makes a difference whether an individual lives in a village, town or city. And these are usually differentiated by the size of the local governmental unit. But it is now well known that not all cities are the same—some small units are really contiguous suburbs of modern industrial cities; some large cities (the Nigerian cities of the western region are a good example) are largely populated by people engaged in agriculture. Their sociological meaning is different, though their size is similar.

5. Age. - A simple quantitative measure (not always so simple since some individuals will not know their age, or report it in terms of membership in some age grade association, but that is not our problem here), but chronological age is a complicated measure. It articulates only imperfectly with position in the life cycle; in some cases people may have the same age in terms of years, but in one society the individual will still be a dependent child, while in another he will be an independent head of family.

The list could go on. The point is that what seem to be simple variables are really complicated clusters of variables that do not correlate the same way in different settings. And they are complicated clusters of variables that do not correlate the same way because what we may take as the 'measurement core' of the variable (i.e. that which we design our research to measure such as number of years in school, chronological age, and so forth) is embedded in a social

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<sup>27</sup> The problem exists, of course, within societies as well. The same material object may be differentially evaluated by different groups in the same society. Crumrine points out, for instance, that the mestizos and Mayos in the Mexican city he studied look upon certain material goods differently. Both groups sometimes wear shoes and sometimes sandals. For the mestizos, the wearing of sandals is an indicator that he cannot afford shoes and thus implies low material status. For the Mayo sandals are the ritually proper footwear, that is, he wears them on holidays as a means of expressing ethnic identity. See Crumrine: 1966.

structure and a culture that give that measure a different meaning. One obvious 'structural embedding' is the distributional pattern of the variable. Even if we match education in terms of length and quality etc. we need to know the distribution of educational attainments to understand the meaning of a particular educational level. Or if we compare occupations that involve the same kind of work, we need to know something of the hierarchical arrangements within the factory. Similarly, we need to know something about the meanings assigned by the culture to particular positions if they are to be compared. 'Leather-worker' may be a useful denotative occupational terms in several societies, but it does not have the same meaning in a society that considers working on the skins of animals ritually impure as in one that does not.

The situation is of course not unique to survey research. The problem does not arise from the research technique, but from the differences in social structure and patterns of meaning assigned to social positions. Thus the same problem would exist for other kinds of data used on a comparative basis. (For the same problem as it relates to aggregate data, see McGranahan: 1966) And it exists for studies based on techniques that do not attempt relatively precise measurements. But it is likely to be a more severe problem the more precisely one attempts to select out some variable for measurement.

The discussion above poses the problem for the use of survey research to deal with problems of macro politics. If the measures taken from individuals are to be useful in understanding the larger social units of which the individuals are members (to be useful, that is, in hypotheses where one of the variables in the hypothesis refers to some characteristic of a social unit) survey studies must be multi-contextual. They must take individualistic measures within different social contexts: in different nations, different communities, etc. But this raises the problem of the equivalence of the individualistic measures. The problem derives from the fact that one is dealing with multiple contexts. This leads to technical questions of survey design and administration. More importantly and interestingly, it leads to conceptual and theoretical problems. These problems derive from the fact that the items we select for measurement are embedded in social structures and cultural systems; and when these items are selected from different social structures and cultures their meanings may be different. Votes mean different things in different electoral systems. And they mean different things in different cultural systems where the values and norms associated with political behavior differ. How is one to deal with this problem? Thus far we have given two rather evasive answers. It has been suggested that problems associated with cross-cultural survey research are no different in kind though perhaps different in intensity from those associated with survey research in a single country. Linguistic problems exist even in the same language; and measures taken at different points in a society-whether this be different regions or different social classes-are taken from different structural and cultural contexts. The other evasive answer has been that cross-cultural survey research shares



problems with cross-cultural research of all sorts, whatever techniques are used to gather data for comparison. It is important to make these points to indicate that the problems discussed are related to other forms of research and to counsel against despair, or conversely to suggest that one's despair should be cosmic and not specific to survey research.

But such answers to the problem may give a kind of false sense of satisfaction to the survey research practitioner without changing the real situation with which he is faced. I would, therefore, like to suggest in the last section of this essay some ways by which the problem can be minimized, if not eliminated.

## **5 Strategies of Comparative Research**

If the problem of the comparability of measures taken from two different social systems derives from the fact that the measures are embedded in different structural and cultural contexts, the solution to the problem lies in trying to maintain the contextual grounding of the measures when making comparisons. Insofar as possible, comparisons should take into account the structural and cultural context of the measure before comparisons are made of the measures across systemic boundaries.

Three ways in which this can be done are suggested: (1) the selection and measurement of variables that are embedded in their contexts; (2) the inclusion of structural (and perhaps cultural) characteristics into the survey design and (3) the inclusion of structural (and perhaps cultural) characteristics in the survey analysis. In a sense I am saying that we can get around the problem of the gap between the individualistic data of survey research and the macro level by so conducting our survey that the individual is placed in his political and cultural context rather than being treated as the isolated and anonymous figure of the standard polling model.

### **5.1 Embedding a Variable in its Context**

The first way in which the context of the individual measure can be taken into account is through the selection of the variables. Face similarity may be trivial unless the variable has the same relationship to other variables in each system, i.e. it is a functional equivalent across systems<sup>28</sup>. The need to find functionally

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<sup>28</sup> What this suggests in the first instance is that one must take into account the cultural and structural context within which the measurement takes place. If one is comparing voting rates, it is important to know and take into account the electoral system. (This by no means signifies that voting rates cannot be meaningfully compared for certain purposes across different electoral systems, as we shall discuss below.) This, of course, is to say nothing more than that one ought to know a lot about what it is one is studying before one starts empirical research; and that this is especially the case when one is using techniques, such as survey research where the »automatic« nature of the

equivalent measures in different contexts is an argument for specifying relatively general theories (or at least relatively general hypotheses) before one searches for equivalent measures. Only by specifying what the underlying variable is that one is interested in can one begin to look for functional equivalents. Thus the comparative study of voting rates may not be interesting (though one can find voting systems in most nations) since the act differs in meaning and is not relevant to any general conceptualization. But comparative studies of the differing modes of political participation (defined, perhaps, as activity intentionally aimed at influencing decisions of political authorities) may be interesting. We might pose such questions as 'What kinds of people are more likely to engage in participatory activities?', 'What kinds of people are likely to have a high ratio of successful participation acts?' and so forth. Once we understand what the dependent variable is (in this case, political participatory acts) we can then ask what are the most likely such acts in different countries, and compare these acts. In this case one might refer to voting in one system and petition signing in another. And rather than using one item of behavior for each nation one might use several. The fact that one had an underlying general dimension would make it possible to locate this multiplicity of measures.

Examples could be given from other fields. The items that measure aggressive behavior might differ from society to society or from social group to social group. In one case it may be various kinds of verbal behavior, in another various kinds of physical behavior, or perhaps different kinds of verbal behavior and physical behavior in different systems. Or as suggested above the measures of economic well-being may differ from system to system.

Several points follow from this. The fact that we are searching for functional equivalents, makes clear that we are not looking for variables or measures that are equivalent in all respects. As was suggested earlier a particular political attitude or behavior may have equivalent meanings across systems for individuals but different meanings for the system, or vice versa; and such lack of across-the-board equivalence represents a serious problem in comparative research. But no two measures are ever perfectly equivalent. What is important is

data gathering process means that obvious aspects of the data may be overlooked. But even if the maxim is platitudinous, it is not always easy to follow. At times we conduct the research simply in order to find out about those structural and cultural features that we need to understand in order to design the research. This leads to another platitudinous maxim about research design: that it is only after it has been done that one knows what one ought to have done, and the obvious conclusion that research programs must build their store of understandings of the meanings of the variables that they measure. In single nations we have had these kinds of replicated growth programs, the voting studies of the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan are an example. It has been only through numerous replications and analyses of their data that the meaning of some of their fundamental variables, such as partisan affiliation, has become clear. The same kind of long term replicated understanding of variables on the cross-cultural basis is needed as well.

that the measures be equivalent in those respects that are relevant to the problem at hand. It is, for instance, a point of great substantive political importance that the structure of political competition in a party system - particularly in a system with relatively few parties - can convert the vast variety of individual motives into a choice among two or three or four alternatives. For certain problems having to do perhaps with election outcomes and the stability of party systems it may be possible to look at measures of individual attitudes and behaviors on a level where they have equivalent meaning. If one plunged deeper into the roots of those attitudes or behaviors one would find a great lack of equivalence.

The above example is one in which the individual motivations for holding a particular attitude or performing a particular act differ, but the substantive content of the attitude or act in terms of its impact on the system is equivalent. It is possible to find situations where the converse is true: the substantive political content of an attitude or act may differ, but on the level of the individual, there may be important equivalences. Much of contemporary work in attitude formation and change has dealt not with the content of attitudes but with their structure. Thus there has been concern with whether a set of attitudes are congruent one with another, whether a set of attitudes is rigidly held or flexibly held, whether an individual adheres to a closed, rigid and all-encompassing ideology or has instead a looser set of political orientations<sup>29</sup>. It may be possible, using measures of attitude structure, to compare political systems in terms of the frequencies of types of attitude structuring. In one system there may be more individuals with flexible political attitudes than in another. On this level it may not matter that individuals in one system are flexible on one aspect of politics, while individuals in another are flexible on another aspect. Complete equivalence of measures in differing systems is difficult if not impossible. What is important is equivalence that is appropriate to the problem at hand.

In order to find functionally equivalent measures, it may be necessary at times to change the level of generality. An example of this is given above, where the shift in emphasis is from the content of the belief to the structure of the belief. Such a shift in level may enable us to find comparable problems where comparability does not exist at a lower level.

For the frequencies of certain political attitudes or behaviors to be useful as explanatory factors on the system level, it is necessary that the attitudes or behaviors be defined in such a way that they have general relevance to the set

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<sup>29</sup> On this general subject, see the growing literature on cognitive balance or dissonance, including Festinger: 1962; Heider: 1958; Osgood/Suci/Tannenbaum: 1957; Rosenberg *et al*: 1960; and the special issue of *The Public Opinion Quarterly* on » Attitude change«, 24(2), Summer 1960: 163-365, especially the articles by Zajonc, Cohen, Rosenberg and Osgood. For some studies of the structure of attitudes with more direct political implication, see Rokeach: 1960; Himmelstrand: 1960.

of systems for which explanation is sought. One must look beyond political attitudes or behaviors that are specific to a system. Since specific political issues differ from system to system, propositions in terms of attitudes on these issues will have little general relevance. If, however, attitudes on political issues can be conceptualized in more general terms (say, in terms of broad tendencies in favor of or opposed to more government activity, or in terms of the rigidity of attitudes on specific issues, or in terms perhaps simply of whether or not many people have attitudes on issues) broad generalizations may be easier.

This can be illustrated if we consider the problem of whether or not respondents in fact have opinions worth studying. As was suggested earlier, one objection to carrying on studies of attitudes on public issues in some of the newer nations is that one will discover few attitudes on public issues, that the individuals interviewed will have little information on the subject and will have thought very little if at all about what the interviewer is asking. And since one is studying opinions on different topics in different systems and since there is so little to be discovered about attitudes on these topics, it might suggest that such study is of little use. But if the problem is redefined so that what is studied is simply whether or not respondents in various nations have opinions on various subjects, not what opinions they have, the comparative study of even the uninformed and inarticulate masses may become important.

By raising the level of generality of the problem to that of having opinions or not, it is possible to learn a lot about the relative politicization of the populations in various systems. Opinion holding was found by Daniel Lerner to be a key variable in explaining the involvement of individuals in the modern aspects of their societies. In this way, the inability or unwillingness of a respondent to answer a question does not involve the loss of data, but is itself an important datum<sup>30</sup>.

Another way in which variables may be made more equivalent is by breaking them down into the components parts. This again is related to the search for underlying theoretical dimensions. Such variables as education, occupation and the like are in fact bundles of variables. The occupation of an individual is

<sup>30</sup> Lerner: 1958. The search for new dimensions of political attitude may enable us to break down the barrier to survey studies that appears to be erected by the limited content of the attitudes that are found in survey research. Much of what scholars consider to be a paucity of important political attitudes may rather be an inability of the respondent to structure his political world the way the scholar does. The scholar asks questions about political dimensions that he considers important, with the result that the respondents often have difficulty in answering. If one were to use interview techniques that give the respondent more room to express his own views in his own terms, it might turn out that a richer set of political attitudes exists than we had heretofore expected. This suggests a research strategy involving longer and less structured interviews as a preliminary to the conduct of more highly structured survey research. An example of the richness of popular political ideology that can be gleaned from long and intensive interviews is found in Lane: 1962.

important for his political or social attitudes for a number of reasons: it places him in a particular economic situation in relation to his wage earning capacity and the market of his nation; it places him in a particular interpersonal set of relations within the plant; it requires of him that he have certain skills, think about problems in a certain way; it leads others to react to him in particular ways etc. A single occupation found in two nations (say lathe operator) may put two individuals in the same category on some of these dimensions but not on others. They may have the same skill, but not the same prestige<sup>31</sup>.

In dealing with occupational categories, thus, these various dimensions may be taken into account, depending of course on which dimensions are most relevant to the problem at hand. If one is studying the strains associated with incongruent or uncrystallized status positions<sup>32</sup> it may be most useful to measure the prestige ratings of professions and occupations directly. Individuals could be asked to rate their own occupations in terms of prestige as well as to rate occupations in general in these terms. In this way one could develop occupational ratings for the system as a whole (by summing the results of a sample) as well as the individuals rating of his own and other occupations. And this, combined with other data that place the individual subjectively and objectively on various hierarchies would allow testing of hypotheses about the strains associated with incongruities among various hierarchies.

Similarly one might be interested in occupational variables as they relate to such variables as beliefs or non-occupational behavior. Thus modernization has been defined (in one of its myriad definitions) as the growth of the use of complex machinery and the substitution of inanimate for animate power<sup>33</sup>. The usual occupational categories would not allow us to place an individual on a 'modernity\*' scale using this definition since certain occupations may vary in the complexity of the machinery used. This may have to be measured directly, through job descriptions, questions about technical training needed for one occupation and about equipment used and the like.

The point is that the equivalence of items may be marred by their multidimensionality. And the relation among the dimensions will differ from system to system. Thus it may be necessary to define the theoretical purpose for which we want the item and to measure the items in terms of its sub-dimensions.

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<sup>31</sup> Early work by Inkeles and Rossi suggested that there were similar occupational prestige hierarchies in different countries, a finding that would make this problem less severe. (Inkeles and Rossi: 1956) Further studies have in general confirmed the finding, but suggested qualifications particularly when one is dealing with fairly precisely defined occupational categories and with less industrialized sectors. (D'Souza: 1962; Hutchinson: 1957; Mitchell: 1964; Ramsey and Smith: 1960; Thomas: 1962; Tiryakian: 1958)

<sup>32</sup> See Anderson/Zelditch: 1964; Bell: 1955; Goffman: 1957; Lenski: 1954 and 1956; Kelly: 1966; Rush: 1967; Galtung: 1968.

<sup>33</sup> See Levy: 1966; especially p. 35-38.

The above discussion is related to a point made by Neil Smelser on the need for a combination of objective and subjective definitions of terms in comparative research<sup>34</sup>. One reason why apparently equivalent measures may differ is that they are embedded in different cultural contexts. Thus it may be useful and necessary to measure not only the individual's position or activity, but the subjective meaning of these activities or positions to him. And one of the advantages of survey research (unlike many other research techniques) is that it can be used to measure both subjective and objective aspects of action or social structure. The simultaneous measurement of both the objective occupational position held by individuals and such subjective aspects as the prestige rating assigned that position by the respondent is an example of the dual perspective possible with this kind of research. Or consider measures of political activity: votes, campaign participation, or demands sent to political elites. These have, as suggested earlier, different implications in different political systems. One way both to assess and improve the comparability of measures of such activities would be to tap at the same time the interpretations of the meaning of these activities by those engaged in them. We know the rate of voting in various societies, and we can estimate the objective impact of the vote in terms of its effect on electoral outcome. But we can also gather information on the perception of the meaning of elections by those who engage in them: both voters and political elites. The discovery of similarities or differences across populations in the meaning of the vote would help us to evaluate the extent to which such acts can be considered equivalent measures in different populations.

The point being made here is that the equivalence of indicators is ambiguous because of structural and cultural contextual factors. In some cases, these contextual factors are known prior to the research. But the research itself can be used to generate data that allow assessment of the importance of such factors.

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<sup>34</sup> See Smelser: 1968. See also his persuasive argument for a combined objectivist and subjectivist definition of major concepts in comparative research. He argues that any definition of economics must »involve a definition of the production, distribution and consumption of scarce goods and services in relation to individual and social goals« (*op. cit.* p. 155). The important point is that economics thus involves a relationship between the allocations of scarce resources and social goals. Much economic analysis considers the goals for which the scarce resources are mobilized as given. This may be legitimate in situations where there are well known and fairly uniform institutionalized values throughout a society. But in a cross-national context, one cannot make such an assumption. The goals of economic activity may differ.

A similar argument can be made for political activity. If one defines political activity (as I think is useful) as the coordination of societal activities to attain collective goals, it becomes clear that one is dealing with various kinds of coordinative activities (acts of political leadership, coercive acts, governmental decisions, and so forth) all of which make sense only in terms of the goals toward which they are directed. Thus, to understand the relative effectiveness of different political forms (a task pursued by many political scientists of an earlier generation which might be a fruitful consideration for more scientifically oriented political scientists) one must consider that effectiveness depends on what is it one is trying to accomplish.

In many cases these additional data are data about the meanings assigned by the respondent to some act or status.<sup>35</sup> The suggestion that surveys be used to gather information simultaneously on the rate of particular activities and on the interpretations of these activities is most relevant in situations where the meanings of acts are ambiguous, or unknown, or variable among the several populations studied. And this is most often the case in cross-national research.

The need to embed cross-national survey research in different cultural contexts creates special problems for the design of survey instruments. For answers to be equivalent, the frame of reference of the various respondents must be the same. 'Bad' survey questions are those that allow for more than one frame of reference (one respondent answers a question about 'interest in politics' with reference to a current election, another with reference to politics in general; one respondent thinks of politics as referring only to domestic politics, another includes international politics). In cross-national survey work, the differences in culture and social structure mean that for many types of questions the frame of reference of the respondent will be unknown and may systematically vary from society to society. Under these circumstances, it may be difficult if not impossible for the interviewer to be sure that the frame of reference is the same for different respondents.

One solution to this problem is to attempt to define the frame of reference as precisely as possible; which is not more than to say that the questions should be as precise and unambiguous as possible. An alternative technique, often useful in cross-national research where the possible frames of reference are uncertain, would be to allow the respondent to set his own. In exploratory research, as most cross-national research must be, this is a particularly useful way of avoiding placing the respondent into categories designed by social scientists that do violence to the respondent's beliefs. Allowing the respondent to set his own frame of reference may involve a two stage process: the respondent makes clear his frame of reference and then is questioned further. An example of this is Hadley Cantril's cross-national study of the 'pattern of human concerns'. Cantril is interested, among other things, in the extent to which people perceive improvement in their lives. But there are many ways in which one can improve one's life, and a major improvement for one person might be quite minor for another. To measure the perception of improvement, he first has each respondent set his own frame of reference, by telling what he considers the best and worst of all possible worlds. He then places himself on a scale that runs from his self-defined worst world to his self-defined best world, the scale being 'self-anchored' by his own definitions of these two situations<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> The generation of data on interpretations of particular acts or statuses is not needed from every study. One study that presents information on the interpretation of, say, the sex role in a particular society can be used by other scholars who want to interpret the meaning of sex differences. But, if there is internal variation within a population in the interpretation of these roles, and if one is interested in the respondent's own interpretations, each individual study must generate this data anew.

## 5.2 A Contextual Research Design

Thus far we have dealt with the selection and measurement of variables in such a way as to increase the extent to which they are embedded in the context from which they are selected. In addition, general survey design can incorporate aspects of differing social structures.

Much of survey research has been conducted and analyzed on a populistic 'one-man-one vote\*' basis. The preferences of a group are assumed to be the simple sum of the preferences of a random sample. This may conform to populistic ideology, but as a reflection of actual patterns of preference and of meaningful impacts that might derive from these patterns of preference, it is a highly inadequate perspective<sup>37</sup>. The sum of policy preferences of individuals tells us little unless we know something about the stratification of the population in terms of intensity and stability of preference. And if we want to know the impact on governmental decision making that is likely to result from a preference distribution we need to know about the resources (such as money, skills, access, etc.) that are available to various people at various positions in the society. Otherwise one is in the position of someone trying to predict an electoral outcome on the basis of knowledge of the distribution of votes for the various parties, but who lacks knowledge of the system on the basis of which the votes are converted into electoral victories, and under circumstances where votes are not weighed equally.

Erwin Scheuch has labeled the attempt to derive characteristics of a political system from the simple sum of the responses from a sample of individuals the 'individualistic fallacy.' (Scheuch: 1968) This is the opposite of the 'ecological fallacy'<sup>38</sup>. The latter involves statements about patterns of individual behavior on the basis of measurements on the level of social units; the individualistic fallacy involves statements about a social unit on the basis of measurements based on individuals. Scheuch rightly points out that one cannot infer the extent of 'democracy' in a nation on the basis of the proportion of respondents who

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<sup>36</sup> Cantril: 1965; Cantril: 1963; and Cantril and Free: 1962. The problem is not specific to cross-national research in exotic situations. One of the most striking findings of the American voting literature is the extent to which ordinary voters lack a frame of reference comparable to that held by more sophisticated political observers, particularly by newspaper commentators or political scientists. Issues and ideologies (the stuff of sophisticated political debate) are not the stuff of the ordinary man's political world view. Few have anything that could be called a consistent ideology or belief system relevant to political issues. Though they will take positions on a variety of issues when given choices, they will often take the opposite position on the next round of questioning. But this may not mean that they hold no consistent belief systems relevant to politics. It just may mean that the dimensions of academic discourse are not the most meaningful ones for at least one stratum of the participants.

<sup>37</sup> See Converse: 1964b; Rokkan: 1964; and Scheuch: 1968. On the general subject, see also Hennis: 1957; Dahl: 1956.

<sup>38</sup> Robinson: 1950.



give 'democratic' answers to opinion questions. The political structure and the way in which it channels these responses will mediate between the response pattern and the way in which political decisions are made. Much evidence exists, for instance, to suggest that a system of civil liberties is compatible with a high degree of rejection of such liberties by cross-section population samples. The reason is that few act or have the opportunity to act on what are on the surface quite antilibertarian beliefs. In addition, those in more elite positions, tend to have more libertarian outlooks<sup>39</sup>. What is needed thus is some technique for aggregating responses that includes more assumptions about the social structure, i.e. about the hierarchy of statuses or differences in respondents in terms of other attributes.

What assumptions one wants to build into the summation process, of course, depend upon the particular problem in which one is interested. Consider two examples:

1. Much survey research is aimed at describing the policy preferences of a population on some burning issue of the day. The purpose of such research, a type usually carried on outside of academic auspices, is often to inform the public and the government of the state of public preferences on a particular issue. But the raw distribution of preferences conveys little information; one would want to consider the level of information of those with various preferences, the intensity of their beliefs, and so forth<sup>40</sup>. Some weighting scheme that took these variables into account would give a better indication of the distribution of preferences. The use of filter questions to eliminate those who have not considered the problem or who have no information is one technique that has come into common use.

2. If, on the other hand, one's concern were not with the mere distribution of preferences but with the likelihood that public preferences would affect the decisions of governing elites, one might want to weigh the preferences in terms of the likelihood that a preference will be converted into a demand on the government and in terms of the resources available to the preference holder to enforce his demand. The preference of an individual with a history of political activity who controlled such resources as money, access to influential people, skills and the like would be weighted more heavily.

The weighting procedure can take place at one of two points: as part of a sample design or as part of the analysis of the survey results. At the sampling stage, one can increase the number of respondents from particularly relevant groups. If one is interested in political mobilization, one might oversample those most likely to have just been mobilized or most likely to become mobilized in the near future. Or, if one is interested in conflict and consensus among political groups within a nation, the sample might best be one drawn from the

<sup>39</sup> Stouffer: 1955; Prothro/Grigg: 1960; McClosky: 1964.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of survey data in the United States in relation to a major public issue, see Verba *et al.*: 1967.

major conflicting groups, rather than from the population as an undifferentiated whole. The advantages of a sample design that reflects structural aspects is that it allows for more flexible data analysis. One is, for instance, more likely to have sufficient cases of the particular kinds of groups with which one is concerned.

The advantages and costs of such a sampling strategy are spelled out by Frank Bonilla and Jose A. Silva Michelena. Given the heterogeneity of Venezuela, the country they were studying, they note the unreality of a 'poll plebiscite' as a guide to policy.

The weight of diverse social groups in the policy process plainly had little relation to their general numbers in the general population. A cross-section of the nation would not have yielded more than a few individuals in such key positions as parish priests, student or union leaders, university officials or government officials. Increasing the sample size to ensure reaching enough such individuals for independent analysis, particularly if any attention was to be paid to within-group variations, would have pushed the number to be sample far beyond the resources at hand or what seemed justifiable in view of the limited usefulness of the global figures.

The selection of groups to be sampled was thus carried out with a number of priority development issues and an intuitive vision of the political structure in mind. The clear focus of policy makers on issues such as industrialization, agrarian reform, education, and community development in itself pointed to certain groups as indispensable to the survey-

While this approach seems best suited to the aims of the study, it raised a great many difficulties not common to more conventional national surveys: problems of field administration are multiplied by the need to deal with some three dozen independent sampling frames. Cross-national checks or comparisons become extremely difficult.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, one can argue that the sample design should have no built in assumptions about population. The reason is that one does not know these distributions nor the implications of structural position. If the purpose of the research is to locate points of conflict within a society, one cannot design a sample around the conflicting groups. Under these circumstances, an assumptionless random procedure may be preferable. The argument has merit, especially under conditions where empirical survey work is just beginning. But as data accumulate and as studies become more purposive and less exploratory, the argument may become less persuasive. And even at our present level of knowledge, we know enough about educational differences, rural-urban differences and the like to justify violating principles of equal probability for all members of the population if the research problem warrants it. In many cases, the preferred strategy may be one of unbiased but weighted sampling<sup>42</sup>. In this way, the sample is weighted to reflect the assumed weight of each sub-group in relation to the research problem. If the research problem has to do with influence over the national government one can oversample those presumed to have

<sup>41</sup> Bonilla/Michelena: 1966, p. 8-9.

<sup>42</sup> See Rossi: 1959.

more influence, such as those living in the Capital, those with organizational affiliations, higher education, etc. But others, not assumed to be in this favored position are sampled as well. The latter allows one to check the assumptions built into the sample design.

In cases where one has opted for the cross-section assumptionless strategy, it is still possible to build structural assumptions into the analysis stage. Here, a two-stage 'bootstrap' procedure might be most appropriate. The data that are gathered can be used to test various assumptions about the nature of the political or social structure—one can test empirically whether or not particular subgroups are likely to attempt influence disproportionate to their numbers. These assumptions, thus tested, can then be built into the next analysis stage of the data, and/or into sample designs for further research. Thus far we have discussed sample designs that reflect structural aspects of the social unit under study. Another approach would be to sample social units. If one samples units one can, in principle at least, deal with them in the same way as one deals with individual respondents. Survey research becomes relevant for the macro-unit by being a survey of such units.

The difference between a sampling of social units and multicontextual studies in which samples are drawn from a small number of political systems is that in the former the characteristics of the social unit may be systematically varied in order to study their interaction with individual characteristics. To take a concrete example: James A. Davies drew a sample of 172 groups containing 1909 participants from groups in the University of Chicago's Great Books Program. Thus he had a sample both of individuals and of groups. Propositions could be tested that related individual to group characteristics and vice versa. For instance, a good deal of the analysis focuses on what the author calls composition effects, i.e. the independent effect on an individual possessing certain characteristics of the proportion having that characteristic in his group. Thus one studies not merely individual attitudes that are related to withdrawal from the group, but the effect on withdrawal of the culture of the group. Two individuals with the same *attitudes* toward their groups may differ in their *behavior* depending upon the attitudes of others in their respective groups<sup>43</sup>. It is clear that the study of composition effects is closely related to the subject of the aggregation of individual attitudes in terms of their systemic effects.

The use of a multiplicity of social units help avoid the 'individualistic fallacy', by developing rules as to the ways in which the relationship among individual attributes is affected by the context in which they exist. To take some examples: we may find in survey studies that hostility to the government is related to active involvement in revolutionary movements, or that level of need-achievement is related to involvement in entrepreneurial activity. But the study of composition effects would indicate the way in which the *rates* of hostility or need achievement in a society affect the extent to which hostility is

<sup>43</sup> Davies: 1961; see Chapter 1. See also Blau: 1960.

translated into revolutionary activity or need-achievement into entrepreneurial activity. Thus one might hypothesize that in a society in which many are hostile, hostility is more likely to lead to action; and even those not personally antagonistic toward the government may get caught up in revolutionary movements. The relationship between an individual's preference on a particular matter and the likely consequences of that preference (say, the likelihood that he will act on it) is complex. In general, one can argue that the likelihood that an individual will act on the basis of a particular preference is related to the proportion of those around him who share that preference<sup>44</sup>. This argues for knowledge of individual preferences as well as knowledge of the distribution of preferences within the relevant social unit - be this small group, community or nation. But this might not be sufficient to place the individual opinion in its context. Individual beliefs as to the distribution of preferences among others is also relevant. Though perceptions of what others prefer may be inaccurate, it may be more controlling over behavior than the actual distribution of preferences<sup>45</sup>.

In the foregoing example characteristics of the social unit are used to help explain individual attitudes or behavior. The systematic selection of groups as well as individuals as units of analysis also permits the development and testing of a type of proposition very rare in studies that utilize survey data, propositions in which the dependent variable is an attribute of the system. A sample of 172 groups, for instance, allows one to test propositions as to why some groups dissolve while others survive.

There are a few explicitly political studies that approximate the multilevel design of the Great Books study. All are studies that use as the political unit sub-national political systems. Thus there are studies of the way in which

<sup>44</sup> See Berelson/Steiner: 1964; see p. 567.

<sup>45</sup> An interesting example is found in some studies of Japanese attitudes on particularistic versus universalistic obligations. A large sample in Japan was asked how they would act if faced with the following dilemma: they have been asked to recommend an individual for a job. They know him to be disqualified for it but they have some personal obligation to the father of the applicant. Twice as many (48 %) give the »universalistic« answer that they would tell the truth about him as say they would recommend him anyway (23 %). On the other hand, when asked how they thought others would evaluate their acts, those who gave the more popular universalistic response were more likely to believe that others would disapprove, than were those who gave the less popular particularistic response. See Hayashi *et al.*: 1960 Here might be an interesting example of a situation in which a social norm (in the statistical sense of the numbers who hold a particular position) has changed in a universalistic direction from the more traditional norms, but the perception of the change has lagged behind. In such a case, the largest group might approve of a particular kind of behavior but the frequency of that behavior might be somewhat lowered by the absence of perception of this change. This is an example where knowledge of the context of the individual preference (in this case both the preferences of others as well as the perceptions of the preferences of others) places the individual preference in a more comprehensive social context.

voting laws affect electoral behavior in which the political unit is the state<sup>46</sup>; of the way in which local party activities affect the outcome of elections in which the political unit is the precinct<sup>47</sup>; and of the ways in which the nature of the campaign, or the size of the town, or the distribution of the votes affects electoral behavior in which the community is the political system studied<sup>48</sup>.

Perhaps the most ambitious study of this sort is that being conducted by Miller and Stokes of congressional districts-in which one has data on the attitudes of voters in a sample of districts as well as such system characteristics as the attitudes and behavior of the incumbent congressman and his opponents<sup>49</sup>. This study represents two important additions to the standard techniques of survey research. One additional technique involves the systematic selection of units at more than one level, individuals and congressional districts. The second technique involves the coordinated interviewing of both ordinary voters and political elites. Since so much of the problem of integrating studies of mass attitudes with the operation of political systems is related to the way in which these mass attitudes interact with elite attitudes and behavior, this represents a step forward in the application of surveys to problems of macro-political analysis.

The above examples illustrate the variety of kinds of measures one can generate in a study that samples both individuals as well as social systems. It also points to an asymmetry between the individualistic and ecological fallacies: individualistic data can be aggregated more easily than ecological data can be disaggregated. One type of variable that can be used to characterize a social unit is the aggregate of responses in a survey of individual attributes, assuming of course that one has an adequate sample or a full census. One can characterize a unit as having a high average income or one can use measures of distribution to characterize a unit on the relative equality or inequality of income, and so forth<sup>50</sup>. In addition, one can often add to the analysis 'found' data that characterize the social unit, e.g. census data, voting data and other forms usually considered to be ecological measures. This is of course facilitated if the social unit sampled is also a unit of measure for governmental statistics. And one can add to the research design explicit measures of 'global' or unit-level characteristics; on which information may already exist, or for which information can be gathered as part of the research design. These can include such items as political structural characteristics<sup>51</sup>, beliefs, acts, etc. of leaders<sup>52</sup>, phy-

<sup>46</sup> See Campbell: 1963; (Chapter 11: »Election laws, political systems and the voter«, p. 266-289), and Campbell/Miller: 1957;

<sup>47</sup> See Katz/Eldersveld: 1961; pp. 1-24, and Cutright/Rossi: 1958.

<sup>48</sup> Ennis: 1962.

<sup>49</sup> Stokes/Miller: 1962; and Miller/Stokes: 1963.

<sup>50</sup> See Lazarsfeld: 1959. See also Alker/Russett: 1966.

<sup>51</sup> As in the Michigan Survey Research Center studies of voting in which local laws can be added as an independent variable affecting voting turnout. See Campbell: 1963.

<sup>52</sup> Miller/Stokes: 1963.

sical facilities of the social unit<sup>53</sup>; or aspects of the social organization of the unit used in the sample<sup>54</sup>. And, as Lazarsfeld has pointed out, any of these measures on the level of the social unit can be used, in turn, for micro-analyses since each individual respondent can be characterized by the nature of the social unit of which he is a member, e.g. he can be considered a resident of a high income community (over and above his own income); or a resident in a state with restrictive voting laws, and so forth. And these unit characteristics, in addition to what we might call individual specific characteristics such as his own beliefs or attitudes, help explain the individual's behavior<sup>55</sup>.

As these examples make clear, the micro-macro (individual/ecological) distinction is not a hard and fast one. And the most interesting research designs are those that straddle the border between these two types of measures.

One shortcoming in the above examples of the systematic selection of political units will be immediately apparent to the student of comparative politics. In all cases, the political units selected were sub-national units (congressional districts, communities, electoral precincts) rather than nation-states. The latter has been the traditional unit of analysis for comparative political science and is, indeed, the most general focus of political integration and political development in the modern world. The use of sub-national units has, however, certain advantages. For one thing it is feasible; it takes less resources to sample a series of local units than to sample a series of nations. The complex organizational and technical problems that accompany cross-national research can be avoided. (Abrams: 1962; Duijker and Rokkan: 1964; Almond and Verba: 1963; Rokkan: 1962a) Furthermore, it is easier to get a fairly reliable sample. Though there are over one hundred autonomous nations from which a sample could be drawn, not all are available for research and the thought of drawing a sample of, say, thirty nations and conducting surveys in each staggers the imagination. On the other hand, there are many local political units much more amenable to systematic sampling. In fact, the value of such locally based comparative studies may be that they will alert the student of comparative politics to the fact that useful systematic comparisons may be pursued on many different levels. One problem in comparative analysis of political systems (unlike analysis of micro-politics) is that one soon runs out of cases. The systematic comparative study of local political units is one way of increasing the number of cases. Lastly, the comparative study of local political units has the methodological advantage of controlling for many of the contextual variations that were cited in the beginning of this paper as complicating multicontextual research. By dealing with communities within a nation, one holds constant a large number of political

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<sup>53</sup> As in the M.I.T. studies of Turkish villages, see Frey: 1963.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* (Frey: 1963).

<sup>55</sup> See the way in which individual motivation is combined with restrictiveness of state laws to help explain voting behavior in Campbell: 1963; Chapter 11: »Election laws, political systems and the voter«, p. 266-289.

factors and, therefore, can isolate somewhat more unambiguously the relevant differences among the systems<sup>56</sup>.

On the cross-national level, it may be possible to approximate some of the benefits that would be forthcoming if one could systematically select a sample of nations. Coordinated cross-national studies are rare, and coordinated cross-national studies in which the nations to study are systematically selected on the basis of their characteristics as systems are even rarer, if not nonexistent. Coordinated study of a systematically selected group of nations is of course greatly to be desired. But in several ways it may be possible to approximate some of its benefits. There have been a number of recent attempts to gather aggregate data about nations; and to relate these data to the political characteristics of these systems. (Deutsch: 1966; Deutsch *et al.*: 1966; Banks and Textor: 1963; Russett *et al.*: 1964; Russett: 1966; Retzlaff: 1965; Scheuch: 1966) Such work ought to provide some standard criteria for the description of the macro-characteristics of systems in which survey research is carried on<sup>57</sup>. This will facilitate the development of a cumulative body of survey material which, though carried on by different researchers is, nevertheless, similar enough to allow comparison. For this purpose, the precision and concern for reliability of the survey method particularly recommends itself; for it makes possible the replication of survey instruments or parts of survey instruments by different scholars in different contexts. Thus without the development of centrally directed and coordinated programs of multi-national survey research, it may still be possible to develop a body of survey data from many nations that can be coordinated with data on the macro-characteristics of the systems and that will allow systematic comparative treatment.

### 5.3 Adding Context to the Analysis of Survey Research Results

Comparisons based on survey research take into account the context of the survey measures if comparisons are made not of the absolute frequency of attributes in several systems but of the patterns of distributions of attributes. Stein Rokkan has called these second-order comparisons. (Duijker and Rokkan: 1964; Rokkan: 1962b; Rokkan and Campbell: 1960) What is compared is not the absolute frequency of, say, voting between two systems, nor even the absolute frequencies of voting within comparable sub-groups in two systems. Rather one compares systems in terms of the ways in which voting rates *differ* among sub-groups within the several systems. Does voting turnout increase as one moves up the status hierarchy in all systems under study, or are there differences among systems in the relationship between class and voting turnout? Thus the comparative question one asks is not whether American participate more actively in politics than Frenchmen; nor if American workers par-

<sup>56</sup> Linz/Miguel: 1966.

<sup>57</sup> See Gregg/Banks: 1965.

ticipate more actively than French workers, but how workers in each nation differ from other occupational groups.

There are several ways in which such comparisons of patterns of distribution place survey results in a more comparable contextual frame. From the point of view of the achievement of equivalence in measures, this type of comparison controls for many of the contextual differences discussed earlier. Thus, for instance, the frequency of a specific measure of participation is not directly compared among systems, but rather participation rates for various groups are compared within individual systems, with the differences among groups forming the focus of cross-system comparison. Consider an example discussed above. In *The Civic Culture*, Almond and I found sharp differences among the five nations studied in the frequency with which respondents reported that they believed they could influence the government. But the interpretation of such a direct comparison of frequencies across systems is difficult. They may reflect differences in socialization practices or differences in governmental structure. On the other hand, the finding that in each of the five systems studied, the sense of ability to influence the government varies in a similar way with educational level and social class represents a more validly comparable finding. The differences in governmental structure are to a large extent controlled by the fact that the relationships between education and sense of political competence are made in the first instance within individual nations. Though there may be differences from system to system in the meaning of the measures we use to estimate the sense of competence to influence the government, the measures are roughly comparable. And their comparability is insured because they are in the first instance related to other variables within the system. We can, thus, conclude with some certainty that education has a similar relationship to this attitude in each of the nations studied. (Almond and Verba: 1963, chapters 7, 9 and 13; See also Inkeles: 1960)

This kind of comparative analysis also simplifies the problem of finding equivalent social categories for cross-national comparison. As pointed out above, demographic measures may have different meanings because of their different contexts. If we concentrate upon second order comparisons, much of this problem fades. It is difficult to determine whether a university education in Burma is equivalent to a university education in Germany, but we are quite sure that a university education in each of these systems represents a higher level of education than does secondary education in each system. Though it is difficult to find equivalent absolute measures of social class or education in different political contexts, it is quite easy to find ordinal measures such that we can be sure that within each individual system we have people who are arrayed on similar hierarchies. And for second order comparisons, this is all that is needed<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> In some cases, however, even an assumption of similar ordinality may not be warranted. The status hierarchy of occupation, for instance, may differ.



The finding of a uniform relationship between educational level and one political attitude becomes even more useful and interesting when it is contrasted with the relationships between educational level and other political attitudes. Thus Almond and Verba found that the general sense of ability to influence the government increased in each of the five nations when one moved up the educational ladder. But the particular strategies that respondents reported they would use in exerting such influence (in particular the frequency with which respondents reported that they would cooperate with others in these attempts) did not vary with educational level. (Almond and Verba: 1963, pp. 208-213 and 379-386.) Such a finding allows us to infer certain characteristics of the impact of educational systems on the patterns of political involvement in nations. As educational levels are raised, one can assume that the general sense of one's ability to take part in political affairs will rise; but the mode of participation may well depend upon other factors than the mere attainment of higher levels of education.

The substance of the argument in relation to education and modes of political participation is not of prime concern for this paper. What is important is the example of the way in which the mode of analysis of the survey material can both increase the comparability of the survey findings and relate the survey material to attributes of the system. Before comparisons are made, the particular variables are related to other aspects of the social context; political participation is placed in the context of the local educational system before one attempts to compare modes or rates of participation. In this way one increases the comparability of the measures by embedding them in their contexts as part of the process of comparison.

It is, of course, a bit presumptuous to consider the bivariate comparison described above as a solution to the contextual problem. To relate modes of political activity to level of education is not to put the political activity variable very deeply into the context. The social context is much more complicated than the single variable of level of education. But it is a beginning, and one can go further to third order comparisons. Comparisons across nations are made only after a two-step internal patterning of relationships. Is the relationship between education and political participation stronger in more industrialized segments of society than in less? And is the pattern the same in different nations? (Rokkan and Campbell: 1960) Recent work has illustrated the value of sub-national comparisons among regions<sup>59</sup>. The next stage would be to compare the patterning of regional differences among nations. In this way comparison is not made until relatively elaborate internal analyses have taken place within each relevant political unit, in this case the nation state.

The above examples of the application of survey research to the analysis of comparative political systems do not differ in form from micro-political surveys. The same sort of data are gathered and the same types of analyses are

<sup>59</sup> Linz/Miguel: 1966.

made of the data. What does differ from much survey research is the focus of the analysis on the function of systems. Survey research can, thus, contribute much to the analysis of systems merely by framing problems in terms of such systems. This can be illustrated further if we consider the possibilities of 'micro-tests of a macro-hypothesis'. At the beginning of this paper it was pointed out that survey analysis usually relates two or more attributes of individuals. Most macro-hypotheses about political systems (that is, hypotheses where variables on the system level are related to other variables on the system level) assume certain micro-hypotheses about the individuals who make up the system. In situations where the macro-hypothesis is not directly testable - for lack of precise enough measurement tools, or for lack of accurate data, or, as is often the case in macro-analyses, for lack of enough cases - it may be possible to test more directly the microhypotheses that can be deduced from the macro-hypothesis.

An example may make this type of test clear. Several authors have written of the importance of voluntary associations for the maintenance of a stable system of citizen participation in politics<sup>60</sup>. Such an hypothesis could be tested on the macro-level. One could relate the extent and nature of voluntary associations in a society with its political characteristics. This would require the gathering of data on associational life and political characteristics from a large number of systems. Or one could test the hypothesis on the micro-level. The hypothesis on this level would be that the individual who is a member of a voluntary association is more likely to be an active participant in politics than is a non-member. One could also deduce that attitudes of members will differ in other ways from non-members, that they will be more committed to democratic values, for instance. And analysis of the data as to the relationship between organizational membership and political participation and values in five different countries suggests that in all these countries, they are positively related. (Almond and Verba: 1963, chapter 11; Verba: 1965) This is, in a sense, an indirect test of the proposition about political systems and voluntary associations, but is a powerful test nevertheless. One would certainly have been dubious about the acceptability of the macro-hypothesis if the micro-hypothesis had not held.

However, it still would be an example of the individualistic fallacy to accept or reject the theories of voluntary associations on the basis of such evidence. Such associations could still increase political participation and commitment to democratic norms even if the individual members were not more likely to have these attributes.

Though most of the approaches cited above deal with attempts to get away from the individualistic focus of survey research, all still depend upon the standard survey technique of asking questions of discrete individuals. The measures are still primarily of individual attitudes and behavior. But many of the

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<sup>60</sup> See, for instance, Kornhauser: 1959; pp. 76-77; Lipset: 1960.

interesting problems and theories as to the functioning of social systems deal not with individual actions but with the relationship among individuals. Most contemporary work on power and influence stresses the fact that these terms refer to relationships among individuals not to the attributes of individuals; and the very conception of role that forms the basis of much contemporary social science analysis implies a relationship among two or more actors. Thus the study of the structural aspects of political systems—be these structures of power and influence, communications nets, structures of mutual perceptions, or structures of affective commitment—would require direct measurement of relationships. If one were to chart the power structure of a system, one would study both the power holder and the person over whom power was held. Sociometric techniques developed in the study of small groups immediately come to mind as ways of dealing with relationships among individuals, but the difficulties of applying these techniques to large social units are enormous. If one is able to study all of the members of a social system it may be possible with the use of high speed computers to develop elaborate structural descriptions of the patterns of interaction<sup>61</sup>. The problem is more complicated when, as in most survey studies, one cannot encompass all the members of the system. Yet, this may be an area in which important technical breakthroughs are possible.

Expanding the historical frame of reference of survey research may be another way of increasing the relevance of survey work. Most of the exciting problems in contemporary comparative politics are problems involving change and development. Survey research, though, has often been time-bound with interviews conducted at one point in time.

For survey research to contribute to the study of political systems in change, its temporal frame of reference will have to expand. There are, however, numerous ways in which this can be accomplished. Within the classical single-interview survey it is possible to ask retrospective questions tapping an individual's political memory. This of course raises a host of questions about the accuracy of such memory, but even if memories are inaccurate they are important. They represent the ways in which past political events are reflected in the present and are well worth studying. Furthermore, such variables as age and length of exposure to some stimulus, —say, for instance, the length of time the respondent has lived in an urban environment—are amenable to study in a single survey at a particular point of time<sup>62</sup>.

Panel surveys and replicated surveys are also potentially useful tools for the study of change. The former has usually involved relatively short-term changes, though some panels have been kept going for extended periods of time<sup>63</sup>. And the rapidity of change in many societies suggests that even short-term panel

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<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, the work of Coleman: 1962.

<sup>62</sup> On this general subject, see Hyman: 1959.

<sup>63</sup> See, for instance, Converse *et al.*: 1961; Converse: 1964a. On this general subject, see Goldfarb: 1960.

studies may offer great benefits. Replication is another technique that particularly recommends itself since it involves few of the technical complexities of maintaining a panel between survey waves and can more easily be carried on after extended gaps of time. Furthermore, it does not necessarily have to involve the same researchers.

The advantages of replicated surveys cannot be overestimated. In a rapidly changing world, they will allow us to chart patterns of change - what groups are becoming politicized and at what rates. And they would be of even greater use if carried on in a multicontextual framework, for one could then chart differing patterns of change in different contexts. Furthermore, replication avoids many of the problems of equivalence cited earlier since comparisons are made, in the first instance, within particular systems. For instance the primary comparison of, say, rates of political participation would be between the rates found within the same system at two points of time. One would then compare across systems, not in terms of absolute levels of participation, but in terms of the rates of change in participation<sup>64</sup>.

If survey research is to contribute to the understanding of political systems it must be grounded firmly in patterns of historical development. This can be looked at both retrospectively and prospectively. Retrospectively, the survey researcher, as any good student of society, must ground his work in the historical background of the system he studies. In general what this means is that survey analysis alone cannot be expected to encompass the variety of approaches and materials needed for the understanding of political systems and the ways in which they change and develop. If it is to contribute to this understanding it will have to be as part of a body of learning that includes other kinds of research as well.

Looked at from the prospective point of view it means that survey researchers must be willing to go beyond their data. Survey studies should not merely test hypotheses about political systems or individual political attitude, they should generate new hypotheses as well. These then can be tested in the next wave of survey or other research. If the pattern of attitudes in a society is relevant to the stability of the political arrangements in that society, the survey researcher should be able to make predictions about the future stability of the system. Furthermore, the predictions may be more precise and complicated than the mere prediction of stability or instability. There may be predictions of rates of attitude change and direction of attitude change in various parts of the population; as well as many other predictions. Later studies would then evaluate the accuracy of the prediction. I am not asking that the survey researcher become a seer or even a political pundit; for it is not that important that he be

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<sup>64</sup> Replication does not necessarily involve the complete repetition of a study at some later date. One of the advantages of the standardized survey instrument is that parts of it can be independently replicated without the necessity of replicating the entire instrument.

right. What is important is that our knowledge gained from survey research be applied to the analysis of political systems, and that we test out the generalizations made about political systems. In this way the gap between the micro- and the macro-analysis of politics will be narrowed.

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