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## Letter from the President Public Policy-Making as Social Resource Creation

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As the principal vehicle for a government's actions, policy-making has long been of interest to scholars of comparative politics. But what are politicians and officials doing when they make public policy? How does policy affect the well-being of individuals and communities? In this brief essay, I revisit these issues from a distinctive perspective in order to connect a number of recent findings in comparative politics and to highlight issues of growing importance on its research agendas.

Most accounts assume that public policy operates through the "authoritative allocation of resources" or the application of sanctions and incentives to secure patterns of behavior that are specified by the policy. Many recent works in comparative politics analyze public policy-making as a process of material redistribution. These formulations describe some policies well and reflect what many policy-makers think they are doing, but they do not capture all the dimensions through which policy affects aggregate social welfare.

Public policy does not simply redistribute resources or enforce specific modes of behavior. It can also alter relations among individuals that are

crucial to the capacities of individuals and communities for coping with the challenges they face. The link between social relations and individual or communal capacities can be understood in various ways. One understanding invokes the collective action dilemmas studied by Ostrom (1990). Another posits individuals whose core competencies depend on relational capacities for coordination, much like those ascribed to firms (Dosi et al. 1998). A third emphasizes the impact of relationships on the emotional or physiological health of the individual and hence on his abilities to accomplish various endeavors (Keating and Hertzman 1999).

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**"Public policy does not simply redistribute resources or enforce specific modes of behavior. It can also alter relations among individuals that are crucial to the[ir] capacities...."**

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In each case, the structure of social relations is said to condition capacities that provide individuals or communities with a basis for solving problems. Because these problem-solving

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capacities are durable and applicable to multiple kinds of issues, they have the potential to improve well-being on a continuing basis. As such, they can be described as social resources, and, by nurturing or eroding the social relationships that sustain them, public policy-making creates or destroys these resources. But we rarely look at policy from this perspective. Effects of this sort are often the unintended consequences of policies designed for other purposes. Much could be gained from paying greater attention to this dimension of policy-making.

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“...social relations are [...] structured in ways that condition the capacities of the individuals operating within them. Policies can alter such structures.”

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The core insight here is that social relations are not random but structured in ways that condition the capacities of the individuals operating within them. Policies can alter such structures. Therefore, how we understand the impact of policy depends on how we construe the structure of social relations. There are several ways to do so, each with distinctive implications for policy-making.

Neo-classical economic analysis has a head-start on such issues because it has long conceptualized the economy in structural terms, as a set of relations structured by markets that are more or less competitive and provide actors with distinctive sets of opportunities. From this perspective, it is natural for the analyst to consider, not only the effects of a policy on its immediate regulatory object, but

also its more general impact on the structure of market competition. Higher levels of social benefits are said to increase the well-being of the recipients but also to have effects, whether desirable or perverse, on the overall structure of competition, thereby altering the opportunities facing many actors in the economy. This approach sees competitive markets as social resources conducive to the creation of wealth, as Adam Smith did two centuries ago.

From an equally structural approach, some comparative political economists emphasize a different set of relationships, namely those involved in strategic coordination among economic actors of the sort found in wage bargaining between unions and employers or collaboration among firms on research and development (Hall and Soskice 2001; Przeworski and Wallerstein 1982). Such analyses argue that more effective forms of strategic coordination improve national economic performance. Accordingly, policies that support some kinds of strategic coordination contribute to the nation's social resources.

Both of these perspectives cast economic policy-making into a new light. We can see that it is often not an effort to redistribute resources or to induce private-sector actors to pursue specified patterns of behavior. Instead, as Culpepper (2003) notes, policy is designed to induce private-sector actors to coordinate more effectively with one another – whether via markets or strategic coordination – a second-order problem that poses difficult challenges for governments and deserves to be analyzed in these terms.

Analogous efforts to understand the wider social impact of policies have been limited by the reluctance of analysts to see social relations in struc-

tural terms. But, when we do so, we can see how policy conditions social resources. Of course, the impact assigned to policy depends on how the social structure is construed. The most prominent recent perspective is provided by Putnam (2000) who argues that frequent face-to-face relations of the sort sustained by membership in a web of secondary associations promote generalized trust and relations of mutual reciprocity that allow individuals to call on others for help to improve their community. Accordingly, he describes relations of this sort as a form of "social capital."

In his initial formulation, Putnam (1993) saw social capital as a feature of civil society formed out of lengthy historical processes largely impervious to the actions of governments. But others have suggested that public policies can influence the level and distribution of social capital. My research (1999) indicates that policies to expand access to higher education and accord voluntary associations key roles in the delivery of social services may have promoted this type of social capital in Britain. Kumlin and Rothstein (2005) argue that the character of social policy may influence levels of generalized trust: recipients of means-tested social benefits seem to be less trusting than recipients of universal benefits, even when other factors are controlled.

When social relations are construed in network terms, we have a good basis for seeing public policy-making as resource creation. There is ample evidence that the networks to which people belong condition their capacities for coping with life challenges. Granovetter (1974) found that the unemployed are more likely to find a job if they belong to networks characterized by "weak ties" to many other individuals with jobs rather than to networks characterized by "strong ties" to a few close friends. Neverthe-

less, governments rarely take the network effects of policy into account. By requiring the unemployed to report to manpower offices, many governments give the jobless strong ties to others who are unemployed instead of more ties to those with jobs (6 1997). Much could be learned from more careful examination of the network effects of public policy.

Concepts of social class provide other important approaches to the structure of social relations. Today, the policies most often associated with class relations are those that redistribute income to the less affluent. Redistribution can enhance well-being, but it does not constitute "social resource creation" in the terms of this essay unless it also changes the structure of class relations. Highly egalitarian redistribution of the sort found in some Nordic nations might do so, by effecting large-scale changes in the relationship between the middle and working classes. But other dimensions of policy can be even more consequential for the structure of class relations.

As members of a society that was once highly stratified in class terms, the British have long been sensitive to such issues. Marshall (1965) argued that "class abatement" depends on the extension of civil, political, and social rights, construed in terms that go beyond the provision of social benefits to include the expansion of public education. Such measures do not simply redistribute material goods. They shift the balance of power among classes, extend opportunities to citizens who would not otherwise have them, and release the potential in individuals a society might not otherwise realize. In Britain, the expansion of public education increased the nation's productivity and improved the well-being of millions, at little cost to those who once monopolized it. In tandem with

a shift toward post-industrial employment, it fueled an expansion of the middle class that reshaped social relations.

However, there is more to class relations than the distribution of education and employment. Class hierarchies also distribute status, and the status that a society ascribes to an individual can affect her well-being through its impact on her aspirations, self-image, and capacities to secure the respect or cooperation of others. There is ample evidence that status conditions even the physical and emotional health of the individual, and the status boundaries that arise between classes and races are clearly social constructs (Lamont 2000; Marmot 2004).

Those who wonder whether governments influence status hierarchies might compare French society before and after the Revolution of 1789. Although status distinctions did not disappear, they had been reconfigured by the time of the Napoleonic regime. But public policy can also influence the distribution of status even in the absence of radical upheaval. Much depends on the respect that governments and their agents display for different types of citizens. That is why "racial profiling" has an importance that extends beyond the control of crime: if the public authorities treat individuals even-handedly, others in society are more likely to do so as well. The respect shown a person feeds directly into his self-respect and hence into his capacities to cope with life challenges. Those capacities constitute a social resource: where they are higher, entire communities cope more effectively with the problems they confront.

Such issues are especially important in ethnically divided societies, where the regard shown by one group for

another can affect the community's capacities for collective endeavor. Miguel (2004) shows that, in closely matched but ethnically divided localities, the citizens of Kenya were less supportive of local education than those in Tanzania, where the government had made concerted efforts to portray all citizens as equal participants in a common national cause. In such respects, a symbolic politics can have material effects. Although appeals to national belonging raise dilemmas of their own, backed by policies that give them force, they may erode status differentials that can divide a society and inhibit collective endeavor.

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**“Like economic relations, the structure of social relations is a national resource.”**

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Nothing in these remarks implies that the redistribution of material goods is unimportant – that is often how governments help people. But redistribution is not the only way in which governments improve national welfare. Economic policies do not simply reallocate income. They condition a nation's capacities to create wealth by shaping the structure of market relations. In much the same way, by shaping the structure of social relations, governments enhance or erode the capacities of individuals to undertake endeavors that increase personal or communal well-being along other dimensions. Like economic relations, the structure of social relations is a national resource.

Of course, this perspective raises issues about the impact of economic reforms on the social relations emphasized here. Although important, that impact is by no means simple. In some cases, introducing mar-

ket relations into spheres previously governed by traditional status relations can be personally enabling and materially fruitful. In settings where one's “voice” was never heard, it can be liberating to secure the option of “exit” (Hirschman 1964). But extending market relations to ever-wider spheres of endeavor does not necessarily improve the capacities of individuals to cope with life challenges. Much depends on the market-power an individual commands, in the form of skills or material resources. Since markets work best for those who bring resources to them, the impact of market reform is invariably unequal.

Moreover, the relevant calculus can never be entirely material. As many have observed, it is not enough to balance market reform with material redistribution, because market competition can erode other relationships vital to the well-being of the individual. Studies of British workers provide a telling example. They show that, while members of the middle class usually have a wide network of relationships, those in the working class typically rely on a smaller number of close friends and neighbors (Oakley and Rajan 1991). Thus, the government's initiatives to render labor more mobile affect the two groups differently. Although it can be inconvenient for those in the middle class to move to a new town in search of work, for many ordinary workers, it means the disruption of virtually all the relationships on which they depend for emotional and logistical support.

There is much we do not know about the impact of public policy on social relations. We need better models of the structure of social relations and a deeper understanding of how they feed into social actors' capacities to cope with challenges. But the contention that public policy can create or erode social resources by altering

such relations is a plausible one. We neglect such issues at our peril. In an era that is mesmerized by the contribution of markets to wealth creation, it is natural to treat social welfare as a matter of market-making and material redistribution. But public policy can have other effects on social well-being that are equally consequential. These deserve, and are beginning to receive, more scrutiny from scholars of comparative politics.

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Note:  
Citations for the remainder of this issue are online at:  
<http://www.nd.edu/~apsacp/backissues.html>.

## Strategies of Analysis for Multi-Country Individual-Level Data\*

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Why do some citizens hold their governments accountable for economic performance more than others, and how is this affected by characteristics of the political system (Powell and Whitten 1993)? Which decision rules do voters employ when deciding how to cast their ballot and how is this affected by their institutional environment (Kedar 2004)? Why are some individuals more likely to turn out to vote than others, and how is turnout affected by characteristics of the party system (Jusko and Shively 2004)? These questions and others, asked by students of comparative politics, involve explanations that incorporate units of analysis nested within one another. Most of these explanations conceptualize individuals as nested within other units (e.g., polities, institutional mechanisms, particular elections) and therefore provide clear

micro and macro components for constructing causal accounts.

The summer 2004 issue of *APSA-CP* called attention to the increasing availability of large collaboratively gathered cross-national datasets of individuals, such as the World Values Survey, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, and the various "Barometer" projects (Norris 2004). Typically, such collaborative data consist of thirty or so surveys, totaling more than 50,000 individual responses. They are excellent vehicles to address multi-level questions such as those noted above, that involve both analysis at the level of individual citizens of countries, and analysis across countries of the effects of macro-variables such as the economy or governmental institutions.

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“...[by] modeling the effects of macro-level variables across clusters, one moves beyond [...] an ad hoc examination of individual clusters, towards a more general understanding of political regularities.”

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Below, we review various strategies to analyze these data sets, concluding that a two-step strategy that takes advantage of the special structure of such data is particularly promising. National surveys are constructed by aggregating clusters of individual data that are large enough to sustain independent analysis on their own. Although the motivation for this note is the analysis of nested sets of national surveys, and although for

purposes of presentation in this essay we provide examples from the analysis of cross-national individual-level data, the discussion that follows applies to any analysis of multi-level data in which micro-level clusters are large enough to sustain independent analysis. Therefore, when discussing research strategies below we use the more general terminology of micro- and macro-effects.<sup>1</sup>

### Working in a Multi-Level World

There are two advantages to modeling such nested data systematically in some form of hierarchic analysis, rather than either approaching the different parts of the data set in an ad hoc way or sweeping them all together into an undifferentiated dataset. First, by systematically modeling the effects of macro-level variables across clusters, one moves beyond the idiosyncratic effects that might be imputed from an ad hoc examination of individual clusters, toward a more general understanding of political regularities. Second, from the other side, acknowledging the clustering of the data rather than sweepingly pooling the micro units allows for causal heterogeneity across macro units without much complication. For example, one can compare the effect of Basque origin on vote choice in Spain to that of Maori origin on vote choice in New Zealand. Furthermore, one can allow for differential effects; the effect of education on turnout in Finland can differ from that of education on turnout in Greece.

What should we desire in a hierarchic strategy for analysis of data such as these? It should be statistically efficient; that is, it should make full use of the information in the data, but without adding any unnecessary additional constraints that do not contribute to explanation of the dependent variable. It should do full justice to both individual-level processes

and to macro-level processes. It should be flexible, allowing us to deal appropriately with complexities in relationships from one macro unit to another. Additionally, it is helpful if the procedures of analysis parallel as much as possible the way an analyst would explore the data: the more transparent the modeling procedure, the greater the possibilities for discovery.

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**“In a hierarchical linear model, all relevant individual-level [and] macro-level relationships [...] are specified in a single model.”**

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The data are often analyzed either by partitioning them or by pooling them. In a partitioned analysis, the relationship of interest is estimated separately for each macro unit, with the results compared across these units fairly casually (e.g., Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky 2002).<sup>2</sup> The main disadvantage of a partitioning strategy is that it provides little basis for evaluating differences in patterns across macro units and does not allow for the incorporation of system-level variables. Also, if the number of countries becomes larger than five or six, it becomes difficult to eyeball the analyses in a useful way.

In a pooling strategy, the analyst pools all of the data into a huge individual-level data set and analyzes the relationship of interest across those individuals, often with some macro-variables included as contextual characteristics of the individuals. Hellwig (2001), for example, investigates the effects of trade openness on patterns of economic voting by estimating a single set of parameters for the

effects of economic evaluations on support for incumbent parties and incorporating system-level variables as moderators of individual-level relationships. Pooling often assumes that the relationship does not vary in expectation across macro-level units – an assumption which is usually untenable.<sup>3</sup> Allowing for the possibility of causal heterogeneity, unless it is restricted to a very small number of variations from a standard relationship, may lead in some occasions to hundreds of parameters to be estimated. Imagine estimating a vote choice model across multiparty systems. Five parties, eight covariates variables, and ten countries will result in  $4 \times 9 \times 10 = 360$  parameters to be estimated. In extreme cases, where all coefficients are allowed to vary by macro unit, a pooling strategy is in essence analogous to a partitioning strategy where the relationship in each macro unit is estimated separately.

Recently, a number of scholars have begun using hierarchical linear models for these data sets. This is a major step forward. In a hierarchical linear model, all relevant individual-level relationships, macro-level relationships, and possible interactions are specified in a single model.

However, at a conference on multi-level analysis held at Princeton University in October, 2004, several scholars came to the conclusion that a two-step strategy is a compelling strategy for analysis in many cases. This deceptively simple strategy is actually a variant of hierarchical linear modeling, but because it breaks the analysis out into two steps it is more transparent and more flexible. Using this strategy the analyst first estimates the quantity of interest for each macro unit. Then, in a second step, she models the quantity of interest (e.g., estimated level, estimated slope) as a dependent variable

across the macro-units, predicted from macro-level variables such as political institutions of the countries.<sup>4</sup> This has several advantages:

- As compared with hierarchical linear modeling, it is possible to use different functional forms at the two steps; for instance, the analysis within countries could use a probit model, while the model at the macro-level could be linear.
- It may be possible to use different right-hand formulations from one macro-unit to another; for example, it might be wise to control for views on Chinese reunification in modeling a Taiwanese sample, but we would obviously not include that variable in other countries' formulations.
- Outlier cases are easily detectable at the second stage, and can then either be incorporated into the analysis or be treated as exceptional.
- While all of these things could be accommodated in a standard one-step hierarchical linear model, the effort quickly becomes very cumbersome.
- And most importantly for us, the two-step strategy is very intuitive and simple, and is therefore a good vehicle for discovery.
- Finally, in the case of cross-national analysis, the two-step strategy to at least some extent helps to bridge the two broad schools of comparative method: those who emphasize analysis of variation across countries, and those who emphasize internal relationships in particular countries.

None of these advantages might be worthwhile if the two-step strategy did not have the desirable properties of a single-equation model like pooling or hierarchical linear modeling, but as Jusko and Shively (2004) prove for at

least one version of the two-step strategy, the two-step strategy estimates parameters without bias or loss of efficiency. This may be one of those rare instances in which the necessities of good statistical generalization and the necessities of careful observation converge. For these data sets there is no statistical loss in careful consideration of the varying nature of processes in different countries. While the two-step strategy certainly does not eliminate the contrast between large-N analysis and case-centered investigation, it does go some way to bridging the two approaches.

Nonetheless, there are two considerations that are worth mentioning. First, the dependent variable in the second step is not known with certainty. Rather, it is estimated in the first step, and therefore its estimation uncertainty must be incorporated into the analysis in the second step. Second, since in the first step of the two-step strategy a model is separately estimated for each macro unit, efficiency rests on an implicit assumption regarding independence of estimates across macro units conditional on the covariates included in each model in the first step. This is intuitive; estimating, say, a decision rule French voters employ separately from that of Japanese voters, probably bears no loss of information. Such a strategy might be costly, however, if one could take advantage of covariation among individual-level observations across polities.

#### On-going and Future Research: An Invitation

The question of approaches for the analysis of cross-national multi-level data has recently generated significant interest among comparativists and political methodologists. At the Princeton conference, the authors and several others presented com-

parative research in which we explicitly considered the question of how to analyze cross-national multilevel data-sets. We have invited others in the field (both comparativists and methodologists) to respond to our discussions, and their comments will be submitted with the original set of papers, as a special issue, to *Political Analysis*. Our discussions continued at the 2005 Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meetings with a roundtable discussion and a panel presentation. We hope that other students of comparative politics will join our conversation about the substantive potential in analyzing such multi-level data as well as the strategies for analyzing them.

#### Notes

\* Authors are listed in alphabetical order.

<sup>1</sup> Of course, the analysis can consist of more than two levels.

<sup>2</sup> In their "first cut," Tucker and his colleagues also pool the data across countries, and estimate a common individual-level model.

<sup>3</sup> Even if a "fixed-effects" model is chosen, in which a dummy variable is included in the analysis as a contextual variable for each individual's country, this only taps varying levels of the dependent variable from one country to another; it leaves intact the assumption that the relationship of interest is the same in all.

<sup>4</sup> The only slight complication is that because sample sizes may have been different there may be induced heteroskedasticity at the second step; this can be corrected either with the Huber-White correction or by using generalized least squares at the second step.

## Should Everyone Do Fieldwork?

### Introduction

For decades the conventional wisdom has held that it is desirable, if not essential, for U.S. graduate students in comparative politics to spend an extended period conducting field research in a foreign country or countries. Now, however, opinion seems to be increasingly divided about whether or not such fieldwork is a necessary component of doctoral dissertation research. As more information becomes available on the Internet, by e-mail, and in libraries in the U.S., some kinds of field research have become less necessary. For example, it is hard to justify months of fieldwork in most countries to collect national election results, economic statistics, or the texts of pending legislation. Some students have the option of analyzing economic statistics, mass surveys, or legislative roll-call data gathered by others. Furthermore, some formal modeling dissertations do not obviously require an extensive period in the field. Nevertheless, many continue to believe that fieldwork is an essential and valuable experience that allows students to understand their subject matter and their country or countries of research more profoundly and with greater insight than could be accomplished otherwise.

This state of affairs raises several questions. Are there dissertation topics in comparative politics for which extensive field research is no longer, or will soon cease to be, necessary? Must students who can write dissertations without doing fieldwork get fieldwork experience to become well-rounded scholars? Is there room in our profession for Ph.D.s without field research experience to be successful scholars and teachers? What infor-

mation can be gathered in the field, and only in the field, and is such information a necessary part of Ph.D. training in comparative politics?

Faced with these charged questions, our three contributors provide answers that fundamentally diverge. Randy Stevenson considers fieldwork to be unnecessary and inefficient if a research program is already blessed with systematic empirical description and either a broad theoretical framework or reliable quantitative data. Soledad Loaeza and Devra Coren Moehler, on the other hand, argue that every graduate student can and should benefit from conducting field research even when data are abundant and theory is well developed. According to Loaeza, reality tends to be more diverse and complex than the universal concepts and models encountered in graduate schools, so fieldwork often “overwhelms concepts and renders pre-established categories inadequate.” The best field researchers allow fieldwork to challenge their preconceptions; the rest give in to the “Procrustean temptation” to understand cross-national differences as deviations from some theoretical norm. Moehler similarly argues that much of the work of theory development – even formal theory development – must take place after, rather than before, off-the-shelf theories confront fresh empirical evidence. She adds that fieldwork also teaches a healthy skepticism about the reliability of the evidence that is available to those who remain in the United States. Furthermore, she argues that fieldwork has value that transcends the dissertation: it is essential for grantsmanship, networking, teaching, and moving on to the next research project. Although Stevenson recognizes the necessity of fieldwork, he consigns it to research programs that

are still in a state of “collective ignorance” and that lack reliable large-N data. He believes that successful careers are more likely to be launched by dissertation research that builds on established theory that is testable with data that has already been gathered. In contrast, Loaeza advises graduate students to develop concepts and theories that are useful for understanding different societies on their own terms rather than merely testing hypotheses developed elsewhere.

Ultimately, the answer to the title of this symposium seems to hinge on beliefs about what one should study more than how one should study it. Some value the testing of hypotheses spun from deductive theories to see whether they are generally true; they confine their attention to islands of highly developed theory and abundant evidence, such as coalition politics, where little additional field research is necessary. Others – probably the majority – see such research as trivial compared to larger and more fundamental issues such as state-building, regime survival, economic development, and the formation of identities, especially in countries that draw attention because of their surprising deviation from theoretical expectations. For the latter scholars, field research will always be essential.



## Concepts That Travel, Scholars Who Don't?

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Changes in communication technology and developments in the discipline – for instance, the increased use of statistical techniques and model-building as well as the appeal of greater generalization and abstraction on the basis of a large number of cases – seem to have rendered fieldwork unnecessary. The usefulness of direct observation and research *in situ* has also been questioned by those who believe that little can be learned from the qualitative study of a few cases. Hence, the doubts around the importance of fieldwork can be seen as part of the debate over the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative and qualitative methods because the concrete experience of traveling and living for some time in a country or countries under study is mostly associated with the latter. I believe that fieldwork is as essential for a successful doctoral dissertation as it is for scholars to complete their training in Comparative Politics, even if they can finish a research project without ever having traveled to the country or countries on which they worked. Furthermore, I also think that this type of experience should not be seen as alternative to or incompatible with the use of quantitative methods. Many predominantly qualitative researchers use them, thus demonstrating that qualitative and quantitative methods can complement one another and improve the final results of research. Recent assessments of the two types

of methodologies indicate a trend towards a revival of qualitative methodology (Weyland 2005).

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“Fieldwork has never meant merely gathering information, just as knowledge is not equivalent to collected data or systematized facts.”

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Fieldwork has never meant merely gathering information, just as knowledge is not equivalent to collecting data or systematized facts. To extract meaning from information, a researcher needs to develop a certain intimacy with her subject. One way of doing this is to go to the primary source of the facts and data on which the research hypothesis will be based. In addition, the experience of living abroad strengthens the natural tendency to draw comparisons between one's own environment and the alien world one enters in a different society. It is an experience that sparks a sense of relativity and fosters an understanding of difference on its own terms and not as deviation from the norm. In her presidential address of September 2004, Susan Hoeber Rudolph called attention to the propensity of the social sciences “to imagine that the world is the same always and everywhere,” as well as the costs this inclination has had in terms of misrepresenting and misunderstanding the meaningful social processes that, instead of being looked at as unanticipated phenomena, were discarded as failures of a predetermined model. To illustrate this point, Rudolph discussed the weaknesses of modernization theory derived from the application of concepts grown in Western societies to experiences in other countries. This

conceptual unsuitability was not always recognized. Instead, differences found in developing polities were perceived as symptoms of systemic incoherence, as opposed to the systemic coherence Gabriel Almond called for. The significance of particular features for the unfolding of certain processes was overlooked or dismissed. The result of a failure to adjust was a partial understanding of the phenomenon under study. For instance, exacerbated political centralization and the development of a hegemonic party system in Mexico in the 20th century are better understood as a response to more than three decades (1910-1940) of fragmentation and instability, than as the resistance to political modernization by local elites.

Today, the expansion of democracy as the only legitimate form of government has reinvigorated the predisposition to reduce the diversity of the real world of politics to the uniformity of an ideal model. In these circumstances, the dynamism and vitality of comparative politics will rest on the ability of specialists to resist the Procrustean temptation, and recognize variation as well as similarity. Experiencing the culture and the politics of the country or countries they study continues to be a key factor in the training of comparativists. Fieldwork is to the social sciences what lab work is to the natural sciences: an exercise in direct observation, data collection, and hypothesis testing. In the field, the graduate student finds that familiar methodologies may prove useless when confronted with the intricacies of actual political games; she will also learn to take the risk of submitting the beauty of an intellectual construction to the messiness of the real world of politics. In the field, the student has to place numbers, facts, and events within the complexity of their natural environment, where analytic lenses may

need revision to remain useful and new theoretical dimensions become pertinent. It is an exercise that challenges her original views on the subject of study, and tests her capacity to adjust or abandon, if necessary, pre-established categories and notions. This is a valuable skill in all comparative research, both quantitative and qualitative.

Some of the finest works on Latin American politics by U.S. scholars would have been unthinkable if the authors had never set foot south of the border to immerse themselves, many of them as graduate students, in the society, culture and politics of the country or countries on which they were working. Certain books — such as Raymond Vernon's *The Dilemma of Mexico's Development* and Robert E. Scott's *Mexican Government in Transition*, both published at mid-century, are classics that retain their explanatory value. They provide a wonderful example of the returns of successful fieldwork. They were followed by many distinguished European and U.S. scholars who have also made influential contributions to the analysis and understanding of Latin American political processes, institutions, and experience. The value of their work lies in the academic rigor of their explorations, the solid evidence they provide, and their arguments; but also in the passionate commitment they brought to their endeavor, as expressed in their determination to speak the native language - Spanish or Portuguese - and to interact locally with as many people as possible. As graduate students or mature scholars they shared the good disposition to listen, look, visit and travel across the country whose politics they were trying to understand. They were eager to meet and to talk to politicians, and militants, taxi drivers, opinion-makers and plain citizens, and in so doing they became intensely familiarized

with the environment. They acquired a profound understanding of the country's debates, of the political actors' stakes, of the dilemmas and contradictions that the locals faced; they sympathized, but never abandoned the principles and objectivity of good academic researchers.

For many Latin American students and scholars the very same reason that made National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger distrust area specialists in the U.S. foreign service — that they “went native” — gave credibility to the work of these *gringos*. In many cases European and U.S. scholarship on Latin America was not only reliable but also path-breaking because political science in Latin America had only recently gained autonomy from Sociology and Law. Numerous students and scholars in the region were introduced to the analysis of their own political reality by the aforementioned foreigners. This would not have happened if these comparativists had not recognized the cultural matrix of politics and had not introduced themselves into Latin American societies almost as if they were anthropologists. Today, thanks to the development of political science in Latin America there is a growing number of serious local specialists, but they continue to benefit from exchanges with foreign colleagues who might spot differences that escape the eye of the locals; the former, in turn, see their own work enhanced by this collaboration.

In the quantitative template, Adam Przeworski, whose work on democracy and development deals with aggregate data and collapses complex social processes into artificial variables (Przeworski et al. 2000) comes to mind. He has deep knowledge from first-hand experience in the United States, South America, and Eastern Europe, and speaks English, Polish,

and Spanish fluently. This knowledge must have been instrumental to a large-N methodological analysis that now stands as a model of quantitative and statistical research.

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“[Fieldwork] fosters an understanding of difference on its own terms and not as deviation from the norm.”

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Thanks to field experience, specialists in Latin America are able to contextualize the information they collect and the evidence they gather locally within a framework of meaning based on the knowledge that the politics of a country lies everywhere within it. They become aware that, as Clifford Geertz (1995) puts it: “To depict power as some sort of featureless, universal force producing an abstract, invariant relationship called ‘domination’ is to block perception of both the texture of politics and its reach, and leaves us with hardly anything to say but that big fish eat little ones, the weak go to the wall, power tends to corrupt, uneasy lies the head, and master and man need one another to exist: the dim banalities of theory.” Traveling abroad enables comparativists to practice situated knowledge: to recognize time, place, and circumstance and to assume that individuals and their capacities are marked by them (Rudolph 2005).

Today when a student or a scholar decides to study a foreign country or countries, she should assume that the diversity of reality is not easily either reduced or represented by numbers, words, or images, and that all of these can only supplement the richness of the actual experience of meeting with the people or the physical environment of a country that is,

or will be for a relatively long period of time, the main object of her attention and reflection. New research techniques improve efficiency and save time, but library work and hours spent in front of the computer will never suffice to develop the ability to recognize similarities and variations, as these kinds of research do not provide an experience as strong as the one encountered when discrepancies challenge theoretical assumptions, or when material evidence overwhelms concepts and renders pre-established categories inadequate.

A great many concepts have no universal meaning. Take, for instance, the examples of liberalism, partisanship, and religiosity. In the U.S. context each of the latter refers to experiences or images very different from those evoked in Latin America, where the sense of liberalism and partisanship is closer to the European understanding of these concepts. Thus, a liberal in Latin America is closer to the ideological right than to the left, and never a radical; likewise, party affiliation does not necessarily imply a strong ideological commitment or blind submission to the party leadership, as was the case in Communist parties, and as is often assumed in the U.S., where the Soviet reference erroneously shaped the notion of partisanship held by area specialists for years. In most cases in Latin America, partisanship instead provides a somewhat tenuous political identity that generally coexists with other loyalties. Religiosity in the U.S. may mean the great influence of religion on individual behavior, not only in aspects exclusively related to religious activities, but also in political and civic activities. In Mexico, by contrast, religiosity has a more private and spiritual ring; it is more rebellious toward the Vatican's teachings and rules than is normally assumed, and it has very few implications in terms of political behavior and attitudes.

Doctoral students doing fieldwork are strange birds. There is glamour in being a graduate student doing fieldwork. When I first meet them in Mexico they show an enviable self-confidence that hides the loneliness that is very much part of writing a doctoral dissertation. Most likely they have successfully completed academic requirements and have been distinguished by having received the resources to devote themselves to a research project that most of them believe is going to be unique. They seem ready to conquer the world. Moreover, during their period of fieldwork they are free from the daily constraints of school demands: weekly seminars, term papers, tutorials, and teaching duties. In short, they are free. However, some are freer than others. Among those who stand out are the students who are prepared to face a different world, and who are also ready to revise their original assumptions and adjust their methods.

After some time during their fieldwork, the best of these students start to worry about the complexity of the country or countries they discover; they also worry about their ability to analyze them. They start realizing the dimensions of the challenge they have undertaken. Some react with caution. If they already know the literature on the subject they are working on they become aware of the explanatory limitations of categories when confronted with reality. There are, however, students who tend to be more reluctant to accept facts, not to mention views, that challenge their assumptions. I am always puzzled by graduate students who work on Latin America but don't know any Spanish or Portuguese; who have not read any material written by Latin American authors, and show a patent distrust towards information from Latin American sources, including official ones, in many cases even

before ever consulting them. The abundant contribution in the last fifteen years of serious analyses of Latin American politics by Latin American authors cannot be neglected by anyone working on the area. Strangely, many graduate students still tend to rely more heavily on personal interviews with members of the local elites and give more credibility to this type of information.

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**“[Fieldwork] is an antidote to parochialism [...]. It is a necessary but not a sufficient experience for doing solid work.”**

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There was once a time when conducting a great number of interviews was considered a warrant of accuracy or analytical depth. Today, this is far from the case. Comparativists do not necessarily have the same training as anthropologists in interview techniques. Many graduate students who rely on the accumulation of interviews do not work on them after collecting them; thus they simply reproduce them in their research in a journalistic manner, overlooking the fact that the interviewee may have given a biased version of the events he was a participant in. More than once, this material was not checked and counterchecked with documentary or other sources that may have told a different story.

Fieldwork is never superfluous but some pitfalls have to be avoided. It is an antidote to parochialism and a destroyer of stereotypes. It is a necessary but not a sufficient experience for doing solid work. For tourists being “there” may be enough, but not for academic researchers. The suc-

cess of their journey requires serious preparations. It demands as much honest curiosity as clarity of purpose. Localism can also be a trap for ingenious travelers who may be tempted to become instant experts or life-long novices. This is especially true when the destination is a developing country or a country in transition, where the satisfying closure of parsimony lies at the end of the road, not at the beginning.

## Making a Contribution: The Role of Fieldwork in Scientific Research Programs

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### The Goal: Contributing to a Scientific Research Program

My starting assumption is that the standard for engaging in any sort of training activity in a graduate program is that it improves the student's ability to make contributions to scientific research. Those activities that are more likely to lead to the greatest contributions (either in number or significance) should be most encouraged. Furthermore, since scientific research builds causal explanations using the tried and true procedures of the scientific method, contributions to specific scientific research programs will fit into one of three general categories: systematic empirical descrip-

tion, theory building and the generation of falsifiable hypotheses, and hypothesis testing.<sup>1</sup> Below I discuss each of these different contributions and the role that field research can play in them.

### Systematic Empirical Description

Systematic empirical description is the starting point for most social scientific research programs because it is what we do when, as a discipline, we do not know very much about something. Indeed, it is perhaps most useful when we do not even know the right kinds of questions to ask. At this initial stage of a research program, comparative scholars who want to produce systematic empirical description will usually need to go into the field. Since the situation is defined as one of collective ignorance, the knowledge necessary to ask the right questions or to identify the most promising potential explanations will require research strategies that encourage the researcher to be flexible - to discover areas of interest and dynamically adjust the research strategy to pursue these leads. For example, a student of mine observed (based on aggregate economic statistics) that Latin American countries differ substantially in the efficiency with which they collect taxes, and he wanted to understand why. He quickly discovered, however, that there was not an established literature that addressed the question or that described the tax collection systems in those countries. Consequently, I encouraged him to use his summer to visit several Latin American countries to gather archival materials and to interview officials within the tax bureaucracies. This experience helped him to determine that the answer to one part of his question was not that interesting (i.e., it was just a matter of differential resources), that it would be much more interesting to focus on regions within coun-

tries rather than across countries and that the most promising theoretical framework from which to begin building an explanation for variation in the efficiency of regional tax collection was principal-agent theory (where the national bureaucracy is the principal and the regional bureaucracies are the agents).

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“...the important question [...] is not whether fieldwork is usually required for systematic empirical description, but whether empirical description is usually necessary....”

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Various formal methodologies have been developed for systematically conducting and documenting empirical description, including participant observation and a variety of different interviewing strategies.<sup>2</sup> To the extent that students are encouraged to contribute through the provision of systematic empirical description, these techniques should be taught in our graduate programs and this kind of fieldwork encouraged.<sup>3</sup>

This suggests that the important question in designing our graduate curricula is not whether fieldwork is usually required for systematic empirical description, but whether empirical description is usually necessary given the state of most research programs in comparative politics. Clearly, some research programs have benefited from previous empirical description that is both extensive and systematic. Consequently, the important contributions to these research programs (at least in the immediate future) are not likely to come from more empirical description. For example, in recent

years researchers have provided systematic descriptions of both the formal and informal legislative procedures in advanced western democracies (e.g., Doring 1995). This body of descriptive work has allowed other scholars to move forward with other contributions to explain the variation in legislative outcomes and legislative organization among western legislatures (e.g., Martin 2004). Because of this, I would not encourage a student interested in contributing to the literature on western legislatures to do so primarily through empirical description.

It is wrong, however, to think that most research programs in comparative politics have already exhausted the potential contribution of new empirical description. In many instances the important cases have never been described, are out of date, or have not been done in a way that is methodologically sound and transparent. A particularly compelling example of the need for empirical description even in a well-developed research program comes from Hernando de Soto's (2000) work on economic development. While his project ultimately offers an explanation for underdevelopment, much of the fieldwork is aimed at describing the extent and nature of extra-legal property holding in the developing world, as well as the requirements for making this property legal. This description sets the stage for de Soto's explanation, which ultimately uses standard microeconomic assumptions about individual economic behavior, but applies them to people acting within the contexts he had previously described.

### Theory Building

Although empirical description is very likely to require fieldwork, this is not true of theory building. Of course, many will object to this statement

because theory building is unlikely to be fruitful without an understanding of the details of the cases to which it is to be applied. I agree. However, we need to distinguish the activity of theory building from that of empirical description discussed in the last section. Theory building is unlikely to be efficient (i.e., lead to empirically useful hypotheses) in a research program that has inadequate empirical descriptions. However, if a research program provides careful descriptions of at least some cases, a student can certainly make a contribution by positing a theory informed by those descriptions. The area of comparative legislatures again provides a good example. We now have a very good understanding of how western legislatures are organized. We also have a good idea of the kinds of things politicians care about in making their decisions (e.g., Mueller et al. 1999). Consequently, a student who is competent in the theoretical tools of the discipline need only become familiar with this descriptive literature to begin the task of theory building.

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**“Although empirical description is very likely to require fieldwork, this is not true of theory building.”**

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In building a graduate curriculum that promotes this kind of activity, we need to recognize that, given adequate empirical description, the most important knowledge necessary for theory building is a broad understanding of the theoretical frameworks commonly used by social scientists to answer social scientific questions.<sup>4</sup> Students who are unfamiliar with the requirements for using these frameworks to construct convincing explanations will find that all the descriptive information

in the world will not help them pen a convincing explanation.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, without this knowledge how can they choose the most promising framework to begin their search for an explanation? Consequently, much of the curriculum in any graduate program must be oriented toward training students how to use various theoretical frameworks to construct convincing explanations.

A particularly clear example of this kind of theoretical contribution is Gary Cox's (1997) work on electoral rules and party systems. When Cox began his work, the comparative study of party systems had already benefited from many careful descriptive analyses and, indeed, had produced a consensus on how to measure the number of parties in a system. Moreover, scholars were well aware of the different electoral rules being used to translate votes into seats.<sup>6</sup> What was needed in this literature, however, was an explicit theory that could explain the connection between electoral rules and the number of parties in the party system that was applicable across different electoral systems. By providing this theory, Cox made an important contribution and certainly no fieldwork was required to do so. Other examples of theoretical contributions that did not require fieldwork abound (e.g., Laver and Shepsle 1996, Huber and Shipan 2002, Warwick 1995, Tsebelis 2002, Lijphart 1999, Powell 2000).

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing requires that we measure our concepts well, that we have adequate variation in the causal variables we measure, and that this variation be sufficiently independent across explanatory variables to allow us to isolate the independent impact of the variables of interest. With the exception of experiments in which treatments are randomly assigned,

the most powerful hypothesis tests come from the analysis of large-N datasets that achieve these criteria.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, if students seek to test hypotheses for which this kind of data is readily collectable and appropriate, they should be encouraged to do so, as well as to learn the methodological skills necessary to the task.<sup>8</sup> An example of a research program in which the readily collectable large-N data is appropriate for testing many of the theoretical hypotheses in the literature is the study of cabinet duration. Since cabinet termination and formation are well-documented events, our measures of cabinet duration are quite good, and we can use readily collectable data to test hypotheses from theories that imply a number of different concepts of duration.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, the predictors of cabinet termination that populate our theories, although they vary from theory to theory, can usually be measured as a deterministic function of party seat shares, the relative ideological positions of the parties, or both. Consequently, most of the concepts in the literature (as well as those likely to emerge from new theories) can be measured well given the readily collectable data (e.g., majority status of the cabinet, the number of parties in the cabinet, the fractionalization of the legislature, the ideological dispersion of the cabinet). Finally, since we have data on several hundred cases of cabinet termination, we have enough independent variation in the data to isolate the impact of individual factors on termination and so test our hypotheses.

In contrast to the literature on cabinet duration, there are many research programs in comparative politics that have produced interesting theoretical hypotheses for which readily collectable large-N datasets with conceptually appropriate measures do not exist. Most scholars are familiar with attempts to test such hypotheses

using readily collectable but conceptually inappropriate data. Such tests are rightfully unconvincing and students should be discouraged from producing them. Instead, these students should be encouraged to build appropriate measures of the concepts necessary to produce convincing empirical work; and in most areas of comparative politics, this will mean sending them into the field.

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“...creative use of new techniques may allow us to substitute computation for the intensive fieldwork once required to produce some kinds of measures.”

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Fieldwork, however, is no panacea. When intensive fieldwork is necessary to measure a concept well, it will often be impractical to produce measures for more than a few cases.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the resulting hypothesis tests may prove as unconvincing as those based on poorly measured large-N data.<sup>11</sup> Of course, comparativists are very much aware of the limitations of hypothesis tests based on a small number of cases. Indeed, real progress has been made in developing methodologies that can help us recognize exactly what information is (and is not) available in our small data sets (e.g., Ragin 1987). However, this recognition, while it may keep us honest, does nothing to solve the underlying problem caused by having too few cases (i.e., inadequate independent variation in the causal factors).

These considerations lead me to the conclusion that when it comes to hypothesis testing, there may be a

tradeoff between inadequate measurement in large-N, readily collectable datasets and inadequate variation in better-measured but smaller datasets collected through careful fieldwork. This is not a necessary tradeoff – there are clearly some fields in which it is easy to collect large-N datasets that measure theoretical concepts appropriately, as well as some projects in which fieldwork can produce a large number of cases. Still, it is likely that many students who want to contribute by testing theoretical hypotheses will face this tradeoff.<sup>12</sup>

I think we can offer two kinds of advice to students about managing this tradeoff. First, if the tradeoff in a given research program is intractable, it is likely better for our long-term progress to have modest conclusions based on a few well-measured and well-documented cases than to produce meaningless conclusions based on conceptually inappropriate measures. In the former case, tests using these cases may not be powerful but they can at least claim to be tests of the hypothesized relationships. In contrast, if our measurements do not reflect the theoretical concepts we are measuring, I am not sure what the resulting data analysis means. A caveat, however, is in order. Since small-N tests are unlikely to provide definitive evidence for or against a hypothesis on their own, it is crucially important that the data that result from intensive fieldwork be very well documented and that the procedures for producing it be transparent. The best way that a small number of cases can contribute to an ongoing research program is not by offering tentative conclusions based only on them, but by adding to (or initiating) a body of evidence that bears collectively on the hypothesis. This kind of accumulation of case evidence will be impossible unless care is taken to make the whole process of collecting the data transparent.

Second, I think that we can do more to produce well-measured, conceptually appropriate, large-N datasets. Specifically, creative use of new technologies may allow us to substitute computation for the intensive fieldwork once required to produce some kinds of measures. For example, Michael Laver, Burt Monroe, and others have explored the use of computer coding of textual materials to create measures of concepts that traditionally required intensive interviewing or textual analysis. They have demonstrated that such coding leads to reliable and valid measures of such things as the policy positions of individual legislators. This, for example, raises the possibility of testing some hypotheses about intra-party politics without the kind of intensive fieldwork that has usually been required to uncover the ideological relationships between members of the same political party. In addition, I think that more can be done to combine the efforts of different students doing fieldwork in similar areas. The discipline should consider supporting grant programs that would fund a number of students who are working in the same area to do coordinated field work that would result in a larger number of well-measured cases than would otherwise be possible. This strategy obviously departs from the more romantic notion of the dissertation as a personal intellectual odyssey, but I think it much more closely resembles the kind of collaborative research process necessary to produce scientific progress in areas in which good measurement is difficult.<sup>13</sup>

### The Bottom Line

Should graduate students do fieldwork? The answer depends on the state of the research programs to which they want to contribute and the kind of contributions they want to make. Successful careers can be

built without fieldwork. Such scholars will likely contribute to established literatures in which there is already adequate empirical description or readily collectable, conceptually appropriate data. Their contributions can include the development and refinement of theory and the use of large-N empirical analyses to test hypotheses derived from those theories.<sup>14</sup> A growing number of comparativists have already followed this path; to the extent that new technologies make previously hard-to-obtain data readily collectable, this strategy will become an even more viable one. However, for students attracted to this kind of career, a word of caution is in order. To make contributions to research programs that are already well developed, one will likely need to master cutting-edge theoretical and data analytic tools. Those who are unable or unwilling to acquire such skills should look to other research areas and make other kinds of contributions.

Although fieldwork is not a necessary part of a career in comparative politics, it remains a central tool for making progress in many research programs. When a research program suffers from inadequate empirical description, well documented “soaking and poking” is likely to provide a boost to the collective process of theory building. Likewise, when conceptually appropriate large-N datasets cannot be readily collected, we have little choice other than fieldwork if we want to move forward. The extent that it moves us forward, however, will depend on how well the results of the fieldwork can be combined with similar efforts. At a minimum this requires careful documentation, but an even better approach would be to encourage coordinated research activities – something that our students should probably be exposed to during their training.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Literature reviews and the like are certainly helpful but I would not consider these to be research in the usual sense.

<sup>2</sup> “Soaking and poking” is only valuable if it is accompanied by the kind of methodological care and transparency that gives other scholars confidence in the descriptions. It is no accident that the most influential examples in political science of this kind of empirical description include not just substantive descriptions but also long treatises on the methodologies employed. For example, Richard Fenno’s (1978) book about U.S. congressmen in their districts includes a substantial appendix in which he describes his methodology (a form of participant observation, see also Fenno 1990). Likewise, Heard (1950) uses a separate article to document the methodology that guided the collection and analysis of the archival materials and interviews upon which V.O. Key’s description of the politics of the American South is based.

<sup>3</sup> More specifically, empirical description that is useful to the development of a scientific research program must be based on information that provides an unbiased picture of the phenomena being described and that is collected and documented in a way that makes this plain to future researchers. If this is not the case, then the description is not useful to other scholars and so does not constitute a scientific contribution.

<sup>4</sup> Some examples include rational choice theory, theories of bounded rationality, social norm theory, evolutionary psychology, and theories of emotional response. Specific frameworks with the rational choice tradition include principal-agent theory, bargaining theory, social choice theory, theories of public goods, and many

others.

<sup>5</sup> For example, if students are going to build a theory that relies on social norms, what is required for it to be convincing? In my view, such a theory must specify the mechanism by which the norm is transmitted and show how the norm is sustained. Often this will involve showing that a norm is self sustaining – that people who act according to the norm (and believe other will do so as well) will have no reason to violate or alter it. Alternatively, a theory based on social norms could show that particular behaviors dictated by the norm are enforced by emotional punishments and/or rewards that are themselves responses to particular external stimuli which the circumstance that elicit the norm systematically invoke. Of course, building such an explanation requires that our students be familiar with current theories of emotional response, which illustrates the need for broad theoretical exposure in our curricula.

<sup>6</sup> Cox also organized much of the previous empirical description of electoral laws into a coherent system and contributed original empirical description to fill in some gaps. The most important contribution of the work, however, is clearly the theoretical one.

<sup>7</sup> Some quasi-experimental designs, like the regression discontinuity design, are more powerful at uncovering causal effects than this, but these cannot be used in most research settings.

<sup>8</sup> When I say data is “readily collectable,” I mean all those cases in which it can be collected without fieldwork.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Laver and Shepsle’s theory of cabinet duration implies that a cabinet terminates when there is any change in the distribution of port-

folios, while Lupia and Strom’s theory implies that a cabinet terminates only when the party composition of the cabinet changes.

<sup>10</sup> This is not the often discussed “too few cases” problem, but the “too little time and resources” problem. The first problem is intractable. If there really are only a limited number of relevant cases available (and no clever change in the level of analysis or other strategy can help), we must simply accept that there are limits to how much the empirical record will be able to help us.

<sup>11</sup> Much has been written about the difference between qualitative and quantitative measurement, but I do not consider this a real difference between large-N and small-N studies. As others (e.g., Ragin 1987) have pointed out, qualitative researchers do measure things and do assign cases to categories. This process *is* quantitative measurement. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how one could communicate any “qualitative” empirical conclusion without categorizing cases in a way that is in fact quantitative.

<sup>12</sup> A popular “combination” method that is often recommended to students is to do comparative case studies as a supplement to a large-N design. However, if the goal is to test a hypothesis, the combination of these two flawed methods does not overcome either of their principal problems. Large-N designs based on poor measures of the concepts and small-N designs that do not have sufficient variation to adequately test the hypothesis are not more convincing because they are included under the same title. Of course, here I am only talking about using both strategies to test hypotheses. Comparative case studies may be used in other ways that complement large-N studies (like providing empirical description aimed

at helping to identify refinements to a theory that has been refuted by a convincing large-N analysis). Evan Lieberman (2005) has suggested a number of ways to think about doing this systematically.

<sup>13</sup> There are two ways I see this as practically possible. One possibility is that a granting organization calls for proposals from individual scholars to join a research team that will address a specific topic and will work out standards of comparability and documentation. Alternatively, the granting organization could leave the topic open and accept proposals from groups of scholars – possibly several students from a single department or a couple of departments.

<sup>14</sup> Nothing in my argument rules out such scholars doing analysis of small-N datasets compiled by others. Indeed, if the universe of relevant cases in an area is small this may be the only option. However, the value that a researcher can add to the analysis of the original collectors of the data (who ostensibly did fieldwork) is likely to be small given the limited information available in the data.

## Off to the Field

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Research in a foreign country or countries remains a valuable part of graduate student training despite the greater availability of information at home and increases in cross-national or formal analysis. Some students may justifiably spend less time in the field, visit multiple sites, or alter the



types of research activities in which they engage, but advisors should still encourage all their comparative politics graduate students to travel abroad for dissertation research.

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**“Students who do not conduct fieldwork [...] are disadvantaged in their future careers.”**

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I firmly believe that scholars should use the methods (usually more than one) that best fit the problem at hand. Why then would I prescribe a single practice for nearly all graduate students in comparative politics? Rather than constraining students, I argue that fieldwork expands the possibilities for the questions asked, sources of information, methodological approaches, theoretical insights, and policy implications. Students who do not conduct fieldwork are constrained in writing a competent and relevant dissertation but, more importantly, they are disadvantaged in their future careers.

Field research improves the quality of the majority of comparative politics dissertations because it provides greater insights into the subject than can be glimpsed from afar. Spending time in at least one of the countries being studied provides access to additional information from personal interviews, observations, everyday interactions, and archives, as well as datasets and literature that students otherwise would not encounter. Often the types of information acquired in the field complement (rather than duplicate) the data that is available in the United States. In-country observations about geography, personalities, common practices, informal rules, and the like are important for under-

standing the documents, accounts, and numbers that can be obtained at home. It is impossible for students to accurately gauge what they are missing beforehand, just as I was not aware of a government archive specific to my research topic until I was in Uganda. Graduate students who spend time in the field are more likely to employ multiple methodologies to analyze a wider variety of data sources and, therefore, produce richer and more insightful dissertations than students who stay home.

In addition to encouraging multiple data sources, field research also provides graduate students with a healthy skepticism about the accuracy and completeness of the readily available data that they utilize. Students who conduct fieldwork are more likely to engage in primary data collection. The biases of secondary accounts are more apparent when one has access to the original historical documents. Watching legislative sessions provides insights into factors that are most relevant for inclusion in a formal model, and also educates about the possible effects of what is left out. It is difficult to understand fully the limitations of surveys without personally conducting interviews and coding responses. For example, when I was in the field pre-testing my survey, I realized that Ugandans without formal education have considerable difficulty providing responses on a numerical scale, which is nonetheless a common form of question wording in cross-national surveys. Even if students rely on data collected by others, those who spend time abroad will gain an understanding of the context from which the data were gathered. First-hand knowledge of the practice and context of data collection is invaluable for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the data, which greatly enhances the quality of analysis.

Along with encouraging the diversification of data sources and understanding the limitations of available data, field experience also facilitates accurate interpretation of data and the development of formal models. There is little substitute for spending time in a place for developing intuition about what a particular finding means in a given context. Furthermore, an important dissertation not only tests existing theories, but develops new theoretical insights. Intimate knowledge of and experience with at least one other political system is invaluable for theory development. Without it, students will be disadvantaged when trying to determine the causal mechanisms underlying their statistical or modeling results.

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**“...field experience also facilitates accurate interpretation of data and the development of formal models.”**

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Finally, the relevance of a dissertation will be greatly enhanced if students establish contacts with academics and policy makers in the country or countries they study. Scholars outside of the United States are much more likely to read a dissertation if the author met with them or their colleagues.

Similarly, policy-makers in other countries can act on research findings only if they are aware of the work. Such contacts are usually made while students are in the field. Students will also become more attuned to the interests and concerns of potential readers outside the United States. Thus, fieldwork greatly expands the size of the audience for the dissertation.

Most dissertations will improve if graduate students conduct research in at least one of the countries that are the subject of their research. However, the greatest value added from fieldwork is not manifested in the dissertation itself, but rather in the enhancement of the students' subsequent careers as scholars, policy-makers, and teachers. Dissertation fieldwork expands the scope of research that scholars are free to pursue later in their careers by establishing credibility with funding agencies, initiating lasting contacts with a community of scholars, and broadening interests and approaches. It also provides a more profound understanding of a country or region that will make them better teachers and advisors.

Experience with primary data collection and field research during the dissertation phase greatly improves one's ability to conduct research abroad in the future. For better or worse, most funding agencies are willing to invest only in scholars with a proven track record for conducting similar research. Graduate students who do not conduct primary research abroad will have difficulty later on competing with their peers for research funding. Those who avoid field research during the dissertation phase may find that they lack the means to carry out significant research abroad for the remainder of their careers. If this pattern took place on a sizeable scale, we could see the Balkanization of comparative politics into data collectors and data analysts - an outcome that few scholars would welcome.

Students also establish contacts during their dissertation fieldwork that are crucial for future scholarship. It is often during their time abroad that students become part of the community of scholars (from the host country and elsewhere) who study a given country or region. These contacts can

provide access to existing information and often bestow some influence on large data collection projects to be conducted in the future. These initial contacts enhance the relevance, not only of the dissertation, but of all future endeavors - especially if the researcher maintains contact with the policy-makers and scholars they first met as a student.

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**“It is difficult to teach and advise students about another part of the world if one has never lived there. [...] Professors who conducted field research are able to breathe life into their classroom subjects by sharing first-hand experiences with their students.”**

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In addition, fieldwork often affects the future research questions scholars ask and the way that they pursue answers to them. Usually Ph.D. students enter the field with their research questions at least partially formed. However, experiences, conversations, and observations during the students' first major research projects will alert them to new issues and topics that are important to people “on the ground” - topics that they can pursue later on. At the same time, students are exposed to a wider variety of methodological and theoretical approaches than those available at their home university, which grants them greater flexibility in designing and conducting future research projects. As a result, graduate students

who conduct field research abroad will produce comprehensive scholarship targeted at pertinent policy questions throughout their research careers.

Finally, field research is invaluable for teaching comparative politics. It is difficult to teach and advise students about another part of the world if one has never lived there. Professors who conducted field research are able to breathe life into their classroom subjects by sharing first-hand experiences with their students. Furthermore, the field researcher is well equipped to understand and explain current events. In short, field researchers often make better teachers.

For the above-mentioned reasons, I view field research as a critical part of graduate training in comparative politics. Of course, advisors should be sensitive to the students' individual circumstances and the requirements of the particular research project. For example, students who have spent considerable time in the country or countries of study prior to entering the Ph.D. program may have already realized many (though not all) of the benefits of fieldwork. Additionally, some students may be prohibited from researching abroad due to lack of funding, family obligations, or serious health issues. Finally, it may be that the traditional year or more of fieldwork in a single country is inappropriate for some of today's research projects. While advisors should be attentive to the particular needs and interests of their graduate students, they should, nonetheless, strongly encourage their comparative politics graduate students to conduct field research abroad whenever possible.

## Daniel Dennett, Comparative Politics and the Dangerous Idea of Evolution

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Recently I asked Penn psychologist Paul Rozin why so little attention in the literature on consciousness focused on dreams and dreaming. The reason, he said, was Freud. The fierce reaction against psychoanalysis among psychologists creates a taboo against thinking about phenomena contaminated by their association with Freudianism. So, not only is toilet training largely absent from psychology textbooks and the research programs of psychologists, but so is dreaming.

Something similar may explain the aversion among social scientists to apply evolutionary concepts and theories in their disciplines. In this essay I will use Daniel Dennett's marvelous book, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, to examine the enormous costs of this aversion and the exciting opportunities open to political scientists ready to overcome it. Indeed, as Dryzek and Schlosberg show in their assessment of the contribution of evolutionary thinking to political science,<sup>1</sup> our discipline has generally disregarded evolutionary theory.<sup>2</sup> Despite work in organizational theory cast in evolutionary terms (e.g. March, Simon, McKelvey, and others); despite commendable interest in evolutionary psychology (how the conditions of man's

ancestral environment shaped the genetic endowments with which humans now struggle to cope with a very different world); despite common invocations of Schelling's theory of how drastic segregation patterns can evolve from distributed interactions based on very low levels of intolerance; despite loose applications of Stephen J. Gould's notion of "punctuated equilibrium" to describe rhythms of change that accumulate into relatively sudden bursts; and despite the important contributions of Robert Axelrod and others in the area of evolutionary game theory and agent-based modeling, most political scientists and other social scientists have generally not treated evolutionary theory as a serious source of insight and researchable propositions.

Of course social scientists do not object to applying evolutionary theory in the life sciences - biology, zoology, botany, etc. Nevertheless, the idea of applying evolutionary thinking to social science problems commonly evokes strong negative reactions. In effect, social scientists treat the life sciences as enclosed within impermeable walls. Inside these walls, evolutionary thinking is deemed capable of producing powerful and astonishing truths; outside them, in the realm of human behavior, applications of evolutionary thinking are typically treated as irrelevant and often as pernicious, wrong, or downright dangerous. This reaction is in part traceable to the revulsion at the warped interpretations of Darwin's theory advanced by Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner, and other "social Darwinists," to subsequent ideologies and theories of racialism associated with social Darwinian thinking, and, more recently to confusions and overextensions of sociobiological theories of inclusive fitness that often indulge in what Dennett calls "greedy reductionism" by ignoring evolutionary forces in culture in an effort to link

human behavior directly to calculations of genetic payoffs.<sup>3</sup>

The enormous merit of Dan Dennett's work on evolution is not that it offers stunning applications of evolutionary ideas to social science problems (it does not). Rather, Dennett shows how costly a mistake it is to think of Darwinism as merely/exclusively a biological, zoological, or botanical theory. This is accomplished by providing the social scientifically inclined reader with access to the real and vital world of Darwinian theory, and to the concepts necessary to appreciate its power for the social sciences - a power that has never been properly harnessed, and which can only now, due to the availability of cheap computing power, be fully exploited.

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"...by understanding evolutionary theory well enough political scientists can vastly improve their arguments, elaborate hypotheses and testable predictions, and benefit from the powerful heuristics associated with disciplined evolutionary thinking."

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The core analytic point is what Dennett calls Darwin's "Dangerous Idea," viz. that vast numbers of algorithmic, unguided, interactions at a micro level can produce trajectories of change and higher orders of functionality at a macro level. Put another way, patterns of unguided but competitive interactions at one level of

analysis can, via evolutionary processes, become mechanisms that operate at a higher level of analysis. These mechanisms may then interact with one another in similar fashion, and the patterns of these interactions can then become mechanisms at an even higher level of analysis, capable of performing other, even more complex, tasks.<sup>4</sup> It is this aspect of evolutionary explanations, namely that they can account for ladders of complexity without resort to unexplained Archimedean points or *deus ex machina* solutions, that is so powerful in Darwinism.

Brilliantly, and with brain-tingling verve and panache, Dennett proceeds to show why this idea is so “dangerous,” or, to be more exact, why so many have for so long viewed this idea as dangerous: It is “substrate neutral.” That is to say, if three conditions are met, evolution simply must occur, regardless of whether the domain is metallurgy, cosmic structuring, genetics, cultural production and transformation, language development, or politics. The three conditions are *variation* in traits among units, *selection* among those varied traits, and a substantial degree of *retention* of those traits over time. What must occur is *not* anything that should automatically be considered “progress” - that depends on the scale of values used to determine preferred vs. less preferred states of the world. Instead what *must* occur is transformation in the distribution of types that reflects different rates of replication (we need not think of biological “reproduction”) of some types (of words, plants, ideas, genes, automobiles, recreational activities, painting styles, eye color, rhetorical devices, cancer cells, bacterial strains, weapons, etc.) over others. Fresh patterns of interaction among arrays of these types can then produce effects that promote the replication of some ensembles at the

expense of others.

Consider language. Millions of language speakers interact under conditions that select, from all possible sounds, specific sounds that survive and are reproduced by subsequent speakers as “words,”<sup>5</sup> whereas other sounds, treated as words by previous generations, may disappear. Thus do languages, at a macro level of analysis, evolve, i.e. they change over time in some traceable direction. Whether this direction is to be considered “progress” is another question entirely. “Snits,” for example, including me, are often outraged at the “decline” in the English language associated with evolutionary trends reflected in replication rates of split infinitives and use of “amount” rather than “number” that are all too high for our taste.

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“...the applicability of evolutionary theory depends on the extent to which outcomes of interest are epiphenomena of large numbers of boundedly rational [...] but collectively unguided interactions.”

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I have purposefully drawn this language example from the cultural domain, not from genetics, botany, zoology, business, or other domains where evolution is typically used to describe the results of vast numbers of unguided competitive interactions. Darwin’s “dangerous idea” is that the full creativity and power of evolution can manifest itself wherever the three conditions mentioned above - variation, selection, and retention - are

present. In other words, to the extent that these requirements are present within cultural, political, and social domains, neither consciousness, intentionality, nor the medium of ideas rather than materiality can prevent evolutionary mechanisms from operating.

Thus from the point of view of evolutionary theory, more specifically from the Richard Dawkins-Daniel Dennett-John Maynard Smith “neo-Darwinian orthodox” point of view, these principles should apply to the domain of politics and to patterns of political change just as they apply to plants, cells, language, or immune systems.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, evolution cannot and does not claim to account for all outcomes, and can never be used to make detailed point predictions. Whenever outcomes are directly traceable to strategic interaction among small numbers of competitors or cooperators, it would be a mistake to apply evolutionary theory. In any domain, including any political domain, the applicability of evolutionary theory depends on the extent to which outcomes of interest are epiphenomena of large numbers of boundedly rational (adaptively oriented) but collectively unguided interactions.

Since that condition is so commonly satisfied in comparative politics, it should not be surprising that many of the best conceptual and theoretical “gadgets” in our subfield involve deployment of key elements of evolutionary theory, even if those who use these ideas usually do not realize they are writing (or reading) “prose.” My point is to suggest that by understanding evolutionary theory well enough to become comfortable with its key concepts and mechanisms, political scientists can vastly improve their arguments, elaborate hypotheses and testable predictions, and benefit from the powerful heuristics

associated with disciplined evolutionary thinking.

Most of us are already familiar with the “good trick” of learning a coherent set of principles associated with a problem set, task environment, or subject other than our own, and then generating new and exciting ideas in our own domain, or with respect to our problem of interest, by applying that set of principles to it. Dennett’s writings, including *Consciousness Explained* (1991) and *Freedom Evolves* (2003), but especially *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* (1995), constitute an excellent, perhaps the best available, way to gain the familiarity with evolutionary theory necessary to make these links between political science and evolution.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, “good trick” is itself a crucial concept in Dennett’s depiction of evolutionary theory.

Understanding the notion of a “good trick” begins with the concept of “design space” or “state space.” A design space includes the set of all possible configurations and behaviors as defined by the laws of a particular universe. For example, the design space of chess is the set of all arrangements of pieces that it is possible to arrive at through legal moves. Despite the enormous number of games of chess that have been played, or imagined, most of these legal arrangements have never been realized. Still they exist in design space. A large number of these possible configurations are far down isolated sequences of legal moves that chess players would almost never follow. Many arrangements, however, are encountered regularly. In these areas of the design space of chess, sequences of legal moves intersect in dense clusters, producing patterns of relationships among pieces that are readily recognized by good players. Indeed, it would be difficult to play a dozen games of chess at a moderate

skill level without encountering either the opportunity or the threat of a knight fork or a discovered check.

To be sure, a poor player may not even notice that conditions are ripe for one of these “good tricks.” But no player can become a good player without learning them, and learning to recognize the situations that tend to produce them. Indeed, we can expect that even without any manual for how to play good chess, players who have mastered the legal rules and played enough times will stumble upon these opportunities, and, with somewhat differential swiftness, add these tricks to their repertoire of stratagems and calculations. Across large numbers of players and chess games, in other words, we should be able to predict that these particular good tricks will be performed regularly and that those who refuse or fail to learn them, will be, in chess tournaments at any rate, quickly eliminated.

As it is in the chess universe, so is it in the natural world. There we see, as Dennett explains, that organisms endowed with locomotion and vision are almost, but not absolutely, required to place their “eyes” facing forward. There is nothing in the laws of physics that would prevent eyes facing backward, but the “good trick” of seeing where you’re going, to avoid danger and find food or mates, has such a high payoff compared to eyes facing backward, to see where you’ve been, that unguided processes of competitive replication and retention under conditions of variability will naturally produce a pattern of “eyes forward,” regardless of whether we consider antelope, fish, frogs, automobiles, or humans.

Notice how in this example, as in any application of evolutionary theory, a key question is to ask by what route a stable pattern we observe could have occurred. In this respect the “histori-

cal turn” that spread from cultural studies to the social sciences, including political science, is a turn toward questions evolutionary theory is particularly well suited to answer. This “how” question reflects not only the centrality of the passage of time in evolutionary thinking, but also its characteristic “engineering” orientation. Indeed, Dennett uses the concept of engineering to describe evolution’s strategy for solving puzzles; a strategy focused directly on *mechanisms* that could have sufficed to produce a puzzling outcome, whether efficiently or not. The metaphysics of evolution demands time and entails history. Looking at politics in evolutionary terms entails a stance that rejects explanations as physics often poses them - the outcome of abstract, timeless bodies and forces of different magnitudes and yielding solutions of maximum efficiency under ideal conditions. From an “engineering” perspective, no explanation of a political pattern - whether of effective rule, stability, governance, stalemate, development, breakdown, or revolution - can be satisfying unless it includes a depiction of the mechanisms that actually could have produced it. In this, and in other key respects, formal theories inspired by evolutionary approaches are “bottom-up” depictions of large masses of interacting agents, be they cells, organisms, species, people, or communities. Accordingly, formal theories rooted in an evolutionary perspective must be based on mechanisms believed to be possible and available, and abjure unrealistic assumptions associated with rational choice and other “top-down” approaches. For example, from a modeling perspective appropriate for evolutionary thinking, it would be fundamentally inappropriate to substitute a two-person game for an arena involving large numbers of actors, or to simplify a problem by assuming that every agent has the same beliefs about the

state of the world, or delicate, precise, and wide-ranging abilities to calculate choices, or information processing techniques to conduct comprehensive reviews of possible counter strategies by other actors. Similarly, from an evolutionary perspective, statistical correlations between predictions of a model and observed outcomes are unsatisfying unless explanations include the specification of mechanisms actually believed to be available to actors.

Another “good trick” in evolution recapitulates a fundamental aspect of the engineering approach: use whatever is lying around to solve the immediate problem. If feathers are readily available in design space, then don’t worry that they emerged as a means for insulation; use them for flying if the need arises, rather than invest time and “design work” in what might be a more elegant or efficient, but not immediately rewarding, blueprint for achieving flight. These “exaptation” arguments are ubiquitous in political science in general, and comparative politics in particular. The Soviet Union may have created Potemkin Republics as vehicles for the subordination of non-Russian regions, but the existence of these frameworks and resources, under changed conditions, provided mobilizational frameworks for challenging the system of domination they were built to support. Women and more recently gays have had substantial though not uncontested success exploiting in an adaptive way (i.e. exapting) the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal protection clause for protecting rights based on gender and sexual orientation even though the clause was originally written with only race in mind. As Stathis Kalyvas has shown, the Catholic Church acquiesced in the creation of Catholic political parties in nineteenth-century Europe to protect its position against mass democracy, but once created those parties were almost everywhere

exapted to serve the interests of lay cadres who controlled them, emerging eventually as bastions of secular democracy.

One evolutionary “good trick” familiar to social scientists is “the market mechanism.” Adam Smith’s invisible hand, Charles Lindblom’s “partisan mutual adjustment,” Gordon Tullock’s theory of social choice, Douglass C. North’s theory of property rights, James D. Thompson’s theory of organizational design, each explain how vast numbers of individual interactions produce unguided or strategically uncalculated regularities - stable prices and supplies, public policies, patterns of resource commitment, levels of performance, and patterns of organizational designs associated with particular combinations of technology and task environment. In each of these examples interesting outcomes observed at a collective level reflect vast numbers of competitive interactions at another (the micro, individual, voter, or household level). This is pure evolutionary theory. The laws of a state establish a space of possibilities of combinations of legal behaviors. If a large number of actors within that space have variable traits and the ability to adjust their behavior over time then some patterns of behavior will be replicated faster than others. The result can be dynamic patterns of convergence on types (prices, organizational designs, policies, etc.) that replicate themselves with more success - a process capable of moving the system through the state space toward outcomes otherwise difficult to obtain. Some resulting outcomes may prove stable, but, at least in their details, neither planned, foreseen, nor permanent.

Of course the collective action problem, that individually motivated activity within a large group does not automatically produce collectively optimal or even rational outcomes, is a funda-

mental tenet of contemporary political science. Unlike most applications of rational choice theory, however, evolutionary theory can explain how stable equilibria, whether collectively irrational or not, can be produced without assuming that each unit at the lower level of analysis adopts an “evolutionarily stable strategy.” An evolutionary perspective stresses not rationality, but adaptation; myopic but not totally random capacities by agents to increase the prevalence of slightly more successful behaviors, traits, or endowments over time. Top-down theoretical approaches, seeking algebraic solutions to problems of collective action, tend to require agents to converge on the same best strategy as a result of (impossible) calculations of optimal behavior. By contrast, evolutionary approaches have an affinity for formalizing the relationship between distributed myopia and collectively effective outcomes by using available social and psychological theories to produce simple algorithms for large numbers of moderately adaptive agents. The interactive results of controlled variation in those algorithms or in the incentive structure to which the collectivity is exposed can then be examined experimentally via computer simulations that implement these agent behaviors virtually - hence, the association of computer simulation assisted agent-based modeling with evolutionary theory. The need for this kind of agent-based modeling, from the “bottom-up,” is a function of the algebraically intractable complexity associated with vast numbers of unguided interactions among multiple players sensitive to initial conditions and interacting with subsets of the entire population. Although some sophisticated statistical approaches can be applied to evolutionary processes, the complexity of these problems generally prevents effective use of the two-actor encounters standardly employed by top-down game theoretic and rational choice theories

that use ex-ante payoff matrices for every possible combination of circumstances and strategies.

In sum, there is enormous potential to improve our work in comparative politics by understanding well-worn but insufficiently systematized arguments as evolutionary prose, thereby exploiting a century and a half of powerful and astonishingly successful evolutionary theorizing and the newer complexity-oriented work that is so closely linked to it. But the importance of this approach is much greater. Here space permits simply the assertion that evolutionary thinking, supported in many cases by computer assisted agent-based modeling, can eliminate fundamental confusions in our field, and move decisively toward solutions of assumedly unsolvable problems. For example, functionalist theories, such as Ernest Gellner's, in which the future seems invoked to explain the present, could escape this fallacy by reformulating the mechanisms at work in evolutionary terms. Clearly distinguishing between "evolution" and "development" could lay the basis for a coherent theory of modernization that could avoid crippling teleological assumptions entailed by the latter but not the former. The famous "level of analysis" problem could be reformulated, not as an unscalable barrier to insight but as the domain for considering theories of emergence that link micro attributes to macro effects (in complexity theory) and that explain leaps in design space by "cranes" (constructed spontaneously via evolutionary processes from the bottom up) rather than by "skyhooks" (to use Dennett's language). A "skyhook" relies for the design or explanatory work it does on some "deus ex machina" factor. It is an element needed in the explanation but itself unexplained, for example, eyes are a gift from God, or the European Union was created by Jean Monnet. A

"crane" is a mechanism within an explanation that itself is explained as a result of earlier processes operating in a manner consistent with the explanation. For example, eyes emerged as a result of natural selection processes rewarding small steps in design space that moved various species from sensitivity to light, via a series of good tricks, toward apparatuses capable of acute vision, or the EU arose due largely to neo-functionalist processes of competitive interaction and the unintended consequences of that competition across and within separate European states. Finally, it is worth noting how the immense confusion surrounding counterfactual reasoning in comparative politics, especially in subfields drawing on historical materials for evidence, can be alleviated at the conceptual level by using evolutionary thinking to translate claims into the language of "possible worlds" within design space. At the investigative level, systematic counterfactual analysis can be conducted by using virtual implementations of assumptions to exert exquisite control over constants and variables.

From a Lakatosian point of view (indeed from an evolutionary point of view), political scientists cannot be expected to abandon methods and approaches that seem to work for them, even if suboptimal, in favor of a somewhat jarring theoretical shift. Evolutionists refer to such practices as corresponding to local maxima on a "fitness landscape" in which substantially more than marginal change in methods and outlook would be required to improve performance in absolute terms. But especially for younger comparative politics specialists, I believe there could be no better investment of time or intellectual attention than a close reading of Daniel Dennett's work.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg, "Disciplining Darwin: Biology in the History of Political Science," in *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions*, James Farr, John S. Dryzek, and Stephen T. Leonard, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 123-144.

<sup>2</sup> Instructively, in an otherwise intelligent effort, these authors mistakenly subsume Darwinian evolution under the heading of "biopolitics," focusing on tropes or ideas (organistic or genetic) that link biological phenomena to politics and then simply use the terms "Darwinism" as a marker for any "biological" argument.

<sup>3</sup> For sober assessments of different versions of sociobiology, including scientifically unacceptable formulations by Konrad Lorenz, E. O. Wilson, and Shaw and Wong, see Joshua S. Goldstein, "The Emperor's New Genes: Sociobiology and War," *International Studies Quarterly* (1987) 31, 33-43; and Anatol Rapoport, "Ideological Commitments in Evolutionary Theories," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 47, no. 3 (1991) 151-165.

<sup>4</sup> Development of this ladder of complexity, which ascends from patterns to mechanisms, and descends from mechanisms to patterns, is the crucial element in the theory of "emergence" that is at the center of complexity science. Evolution itself is understandable in this way as an emergent property of the universe we happen to live in, the laws of which make complex adaptive systems possible. See John H. Holland, *Emergence: From Chaos to Order* (Reading, MA: Helix Books, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Dennett and others use Richard Dawkins's neologism, "meme" as the

analytic equivalent of “gene” in the pool of ideational material within which a distinctively rapid form of evolution, cultural evolution, arises. Words are excellent examples of memes. See also Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> For a serviceable review of rival schools of thought within contemporary evolutionary theory see Richard Morris, *The Evolutionists: The Struggle for Darwin’s Soul* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Dennett, Daniel C. *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1991); Dennett, Daniel C. *Freedom Evolves* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2004).

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### Special Announcement

"New Directions for Agent-Based Modeling in Political Science."

The CP Section is sponsoring a course for this year’s APSA meeting, targeted towards both practitioners and newcomers. The central question for this workshop is: how can we, as a community of political scientists working with computer simulations, deliver the products of our work to the more general political science audience?

Among the topics to be addressed:

- \* Model design: KISS versus verisimilitude
- \* Model validation and falsification
- \* Presenting / publishing ABM research

Those interested in participating should contact Dr. Britt Cartrite (cartrite@sas.upenn.edu) in advance to secure a place in the workshop.

## Dissertations in Comparative Politics 1985-2004\*

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What does comparative politics look like from the vantage point of young scholars beginning their academic careers? What are the dominant themes, intellectual concerns, methodological approaches, and favored regions within our subfield? We sought answers to these questions by surveying 1,018 comparative politics dissertations written between 1985 and 2004 at 148 Ph.D.-granting institutions in the United States. On the whole, our data suggest that the subfield is regionally diverse and stable, methodologically eclectic, events-driven, and increasingly quantitative.

Battles over methods and research questions have dominated comparativists’ efforts to define the field in the past few decades. Nevertheless, as Peter Hall suggested in the summer 2004 issue of *APSA-CP*, the subfield

is best defined as a methodologically diverse one that compares politics across nations. If comparative politics is what comparativists *do*, then it is neither just a method - such as the mere application of Mill’s methods - nor a neatly bounded set of research themes - such as the (rather ethnocentric) “study of foreign governments.” Rather, contemporary comparative politics is, methodologically, an “eclectic messy center” (Evans 1995), theoretically, a deeply rooted three-branch tree (Lichbach and Zuckerman 1997) and, substantively, an attempt to grapple with profound transformations of the political world.

As graduate students learn during the course of their professional training, many of the founding works of comparative politics originally developed as Ph.D. dissertations. Young scholars have often found inspiration for further work in many of the puzzles resulting from that initial immersion into their preferred topic or approach. In some cases, novel research programs developed from exceptional Ph.D. dissertations that challenged the established canon, and stimulated important theoretical and empirical debates. However, aggregate trends in comparative politics dissertations are probably windows on “normal science” rather than harbingers of an impending “revolution.” Dissertations may reflect prevalent standards within the subfield that have been influenced by the academic profile of a given department, the regional expertise of the dissertation committee members, their views on the proper balance of methods, and/or evidence that constitutes a well-crafted argument and adequate preparation for the job market. Most likely, aggregate trends in dissertations in comparative politics reflect the evolution of theoretical debates within the subfield, political developments, and job market considerations.



### Methodology<sup>1</sup>

To the best of our knowledge, the UMI Dissertations Abstracts Database (available through Proquest) is the most comprehensive source for graduate-level dissertation citations and abstracts in the social sciences.<sup>2</sup> In 2004, the database contained 64,154 entries in political science out of 543,545 entries in the social sciences. Since the database does not include useful subfield classifications, we had to classify them on a case-by-case basis. We identified 3,356 comparative politics dissertations from a set of 12,754 Ph.D. dissertations in political science.

Although we appreciate that the boundaries of research fields within political science and social science generally are in flux, we nevertheless opted for a narrow definition of comparative politics that reflects the traditional division of labor within most political science departments. We labeled as comparative any dissertation based on the comparison of two or more countries, regions, or sub-national units; single-country studies *outside* of the United States; or any country comparison *including* the United States. Using this simple rule of thumb we were able to discard all dissertations identified more appropriately with other subfields (Theory, American, and IR), and include those with a clear comparative bent. The trade-offs of this strategy are obvious, as they reflect the rigidity and inaccuracy - as much as the usefulness - of existing boundaries. We struggled, for example, with the notion that a case study of China's economic reform and a comparison of Argentine sub-national government's democratic performance were both comparative, but that a case study of the political determinants of deregulation in the 1980s in the US, or a comparison of voter registration requirements at the state level and

their effect on turnout were not. Although we excluded single-country foreign policy studies from the sample, we included cross-national analyses of foreign policy formation that were based on domestic variables. Given our restricted definition, we chose to risk including rather than excluding difficult cases from the classification. Problematic cases were further discussed with the newsletter's editors.

We randomly selected 30 percent of all the comparative politics dissertations completed between 1985 and 2003 and coded all the registered dissertations in 2004 (as of October) on the assumption that administrative lags in the process of registration can explain the significantly smaller number of dissertations for this year (only 33, or less than 30 percent of a typical year in our sample).<sup>3</sup> Although the first sample included 1024 dissertations due to rounding, we lost some observations when neither the preview nor the abstracts conveyed sufficient information to do the coding, or when classification errors were found at later stages. The resulting database thus contains information on 1018 dissertations from 148 U.S. higher education institutions, recording basic information about the authors, and the substantive and methodological content of the dissertations (see Appendix).<sup>4</sup>

### Comparative Politics: a View from Ph.D. Dissertations

Despite annual variation and some volatility during the 1980s, comparative politics has constituted a stable proportion of the discipline of political science: slightly over 25 percent of all political science dissertations written between 1985 and 2004 were comparative. This figure is not surprising if we assume that the discipline is evenly distributed among the four subfields in many departments, and that the

distribution of graduate student interests closely mirrors these faculty-field ratios. Within the subfield, female Ph.D.s are clearly underrepresented: approximately 34 percent of comparative politics dissertations were completed by women.<sup>5</sup> The 1989-1991 period excepted, the proportion of female comparativists has either declined or remained static. At its peak in both 1985 and 2000, the share of female comparativists in our sample was 45 percent.

Over 40 institutions had only one dissertation in the sample, but the average contribution of a given university to the subfield was 6.7 dissertations over a twenty-year period.<sup>6</sup> The relative salience of some large and prestigious Ph.D.-granting institutions in comparative politics became evident at the onset of the coding stage (see Appendix). Although we cannot make direct inferences about the population without scaling by Ph.D. program size and factoring in other considerations, such as student-faculty ratios and cohort effects, it is worth mentioning that the University of California at Berkeley (54 dissertations), Columbia University (53 dissertations), and the University of Chicago (49 dissertations) have been clearly leading contributors to the subfield, jointly comprising 14 percent of the dissertations in the sample.<sup>7</sup> On this score, the ten highest-volume universities account for 34 percent of comparative politics dissertations, while the top 20 provided for nearly half (503 dissertations). Over time, however, the concentration among the top ten universities for each year steadily declined, suggesting that the subfield's base (i.e. its main contributors) may be diversifying.

The subfield's regional focus is led by East Asia and the Pacific (28 percent), Latin America and the Caribbean (23 percent), and Western Europe (17 percent), which jointly

account for 68 percent of the observations.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, the least explored regions were South Asia (4 percent) and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (5 percent). Across regions, the countries that have been the focus of greatest study are China (8 percent), Russia (7 percent), Mexico (5 percent), Egypt, India, and South Africa (2 percent each). These countries captured the largest share in their respective regions and some virtually monopolized comparativists' attention, and they also had the largest number of occurrences in the sample (percentages in parentheses).

The choice of a dissertation topic is naturally a personal decision that is influenced by a variety of contextual matters. The surprisingly high proportion of dissertations on Asia is probably related to the increasing numbers of Chinese graduate students in the United States. Apart from biographical factors, the choice of country can be a function of its geopolitical power, political events, or a combination of theoretically relevant features. In the light of the historical period at hand, these countries' appeal for the subfield seems natural since they pose fascinating puzzles for both academics and policy-makers. They include instances of unprecedented economic (China, former USSR) and political reform (Russia, South Africa); and cases with theoretically interesting characteristics (India as a poor and stable democracy with formidable religious and cultural diversity; Mexico as a very resilient authoritarian system undergoing liberalization, etc.). Not surprisingly, therefore, our data suggest that the study of regime change and democratic consolidation, mass behavior, and political identities are the comparativist's expertise *par excellence*. The most popular topics of study with in our sample were regimes (34 percent); association and participation (34 percent); and ethnicity, culture and reli-

gion (31 percent); while the study of political parties (15 percent) and social movements and revolutions (19 percent) received less attention.<sup>9</sup> Although contentious politics has traditionally been more closely associated with sociology, and culture and ethnicity with anthropology, it was puzzling to learn that political parties received much less attention than what the proliferation of regime change studies would suggest.

Without question, the institutionalist approach has been ascendant within comparative politics in the last years. Over 55 percent of dissertations written between 1985 and 2004 included an analysis of formal institutions, and their causes or consequences. It was followed by the societal and cultural approaches with 48 percent and 36 percent, respectively. Unlike what would be expected by trends in other subfields, rational choice was by far the least utilized approach by comparativists. Only 4 percent of the dissertations we coded were clearly embedded in this approach. Over time, however, this is likely to reverse, given the strong increase in the usage of rational choice theory within comparative politics during the last four years in our study.

Disentangling the methodological focus of dissertations was a much harder endeavor, and thus we are less confident of this part of the analysis. We were hoping to capture some of the effects of the lively methodological debate of our discipline on young scholars' choices for dissertation. Younger scholars are probably more likely to benefit from methodological innovations and to be more receptive to emerging research programs than established scholars. Unfortunately, in this respect the database was less informative than expected, and we think that some of our coding strategies for methodology<sup>10</sup> imperfectly reflect the methodological dynamism

that comparative politics has experienced since the 1980s.

Methodological categories were not mutually exclusive, but we only found five dissertations that applied three or more methods, which seems very low in the light of recently published books that originated as Ph.D. dissertations that resort to various methods and approaches, such as Isabela Mares's *The Politics of Social Risk: Business and Welfare State Development*, Layna Mosley's *Global Capital and National Governments*, and Evan Lieberman's *Race and Regionalism in the Politics of Taxation in Brazil and South Africa* (all published by Cambridge University Press in 2003). Our data captured this very promising trend rather poorly, but the field is perceived as increasingly leaning toward methodological eclecticism, and thus arguably moving away from the shadow of the "divided discipline" that concerned the late Gabriel Almond (1990).

Quantitative analysis (loosely defined) was the second-most popular category, with roughly one in every five dissertations including some form of statistical analysis. Roughly ten percent of the dissertations report having relied on extensive interviews while, in the lower range of the distribution, only two in every hundred dissertations employed public opinion data, which seems to be a recent trend in the subfield. Given the remarkable reduction in data constraints and survey research costs, we can expect this trend to increase dramatically, and public opinion analysis to proliferate. The increasing need to understand individual-level national traits affecting consolidation, regime performance and models of governance and policy-making, coupled with reliable and accessible data, will certainly encourage the incursion of young comparativists in this endeavor. As the contributors to the *APSA-CP*

Table 1: Summary Table

Category	Number	Percentage
<b>Topics</b>		
Regime	351	34
Assoc. / Participation	343	34
Identity, ethnicity, culture & religion	320	31
Institutions	285	28
Political Economy	251	25
Movements / Revolutions	194	19
Parties	157	15
Other	12	
<b>Regions</b>		
East Asia & the Pacific	284	28
Latin America & the Caribbean	232	23
Western Europe	174	17
Middle East & N. Africa	115	4
USSR/Post Soviet	99	10
Sub-Saharan Africa	85	8
Canada & U.S.A.	57	6
E. Europe & Central Asia	50	5
South Asia	40	4
<b>Approaches</b>		
Institutional	571	56
Societal	492	48
Cultural	371	36
Historical	306	30
Economic	295	29
Rational Choice	43	4
Other	8	<1
<b>Methods</b>		
Archival	952	94
Quantitative	228	22
Interview	102	10
Other	52	5
Public Opinion	26	3
<b>"Most favored" countries</b>		<b>Region's share (%)</b>
China	82	29
Russia	72	73
Japan	54	19
Korea	54	19
Mexico	50	22
Germany	46	26
Brazil	37	16
France	27	16
U.K.	27	16
India	24	60

Symposium of the Summer 2004 Issue suggested, the proliferation of survey resources, methodological tools, and the institutionalization of public opinion research have opened a window of opportunity for cross-national and temporal analyses of values (World Value Surveys), cultural, ideological and political orientations (Barometers) and attitudes (Pew

Global Attitudes Survey) that graduate students and scholars could only dream of some decades ago.

In sum, according to our data, the typical dissertation in comparative politics during the period of our study is one on China revolving around authoritarianism and prospects for regime change or one that explored questions about civil society and social capital. It pays special attention to the role of formal institutions and the determinants and nature of organized political action. This modal dissertation, defended by a male comparativist in 1995 at The University of Berkeley or Columbia University, would have mostly relied on archival research and quantitative analysis and less so on rational choice theorizing and public opinion data.

### Trends in Comparative Politics

The politics of history and the history of political science have undergone formidable changes during the past few decades. The parameters of world politics and national economies have changed in fundamental ways, some of which occurred with a speed and scope that took everyone - political scientists included - by surprise: the fall of the Soviet Union, the emergence of the European Union - the most ambitious and sophisticated political experiment in recent history; the third and fourth waves of democracy, economic liberalization, and everything about international norms and domestic politics associated with globalization. With respect to the discipline's methodological debates, we suspect that a longer time span - including, for example, the decade of the 1970s - would have shown several inflection points due to an increasing methodological awareness and quantitative orientation within the discipline. Nevertheless, our data do reflect the dynamism that stems from our subfield's tendency to address

these major historical transformations.

Variation in comparative politics is clearly larger than across the discipline of political science as a whole, with the subfield generally expanding and contracting with the discipline, but at an accelerated pace. The first half of the 1990s can be best described as the golden years of comparative politics: the number of dissertations almost doubled between 1991 (125 dissertations) and 1995 (245 dissertations), when three out of ten political science dissertations were comparative. Between 1990 and 1994, the subfield experienced a 17 percent average growth, while political science grew 7 percent a year, as compared to 13 percent during the second half of the 1980s. During the second half of the nineties, the subfield grew almost twice as much as the discipline (9.5% and 5.4%, respectively). However, in contrast, the last four years have been years of retrenchment, with an average 8 percent decline in comparative politics, compared to a 4 percent decline in political science dissertations.

These annual averages are difficult to interpret because we have a small sample and relatively few data points. One can imagine, for instance, one-to-two-year randomness in the year of dissertation defense, and both endogenous (university, method, topic-related) and exogenous factors affecting the duration of a successfully completed Ph.D. program of study. Without complementary data on graduate enrollments in political science and the subfield, attrition rates, and some simplifying assumptions, we cannot conclude that the aforementioned increases accurately reflect cohort effects of the subfield's expansion or substantive changes in the internal composition of comparative politics.

With this caveat in mind, we analyzed longitudinal variation in comparative politics on annual and periodic bases.<sup>11</sup> We divided our time frame into four five-year periods and identified critical years or inflection points. In methodological terms, quantitative analysis, defined as the analysis of “at least bivariate relationships among quantitative indicators” increased during the last four years but was statistically trendless over the entire period with the exception of 2004, when we saw a 50 percent increase with respect to the previous year. Fifty-eight percent (19 of 33) of the dissertations coded in 2004 included quantitative analysis, and in a much more sophisticated fashion than required by our broad category. The same applies to public opinion research, which increased during the last four years and peaked in 2004. Archival research was clearly declining between 1984 and 1994, and trendless for the rest of the period. The use of extensive interviews decreased during the first half of the 1990s but increased in the subsequent five years.

Among theoretical approaches, the historical approach clearly lost terrain during the 1990s, while the institutional and cultural approaches became temporarily less relevant between 1985 and 1989. From the mid-1990s forward, the societal, cultural, and economic approaches increased their shares of comparative politics dissertations, while rational choice emerged from being a virtually non-existent approach to experiencing substantial growth in 2000-2004.

Between 1985 and 1989, studies of regimes, non-party institutions, identity, ethnicity, culture and religion declined, whereas dissertations that focused on the state and political parties increased. The former continued expanding during the 1990s along with political economy, which stabi-

lized thereafter. The study of associations and participation decreased slightly between 1994 and 1999, while the study of social movements peaked in 1987 and 1990.

The regional composition of the comparative focus was relatively stable over the period, with only a roughly 30 percent contraction of the East Asia and Pacific share of the subfield during the last half of the 1980s and a surprising and sudden collapse of Eastern Europe and Central Asia dissertations between 1990 and 1994. There was a sharp increase in the number of dissertations on the Middle East during the late 1980s (150 percent growth rate) and in the last four years for Latin America and the Caribbean (15 percent growth rate). The study of the Soviet Union peaked in 1989 when it doubled its share with respect to the previous year and comprised 20 percent of the sample.

### Is Comparative Politics Catching up With the World?

Two decades' worth of data show that young scholars are interested in specific regions and countries that have experienced extensive changes within our period of study. During the coding, we were struck by the number of dissertations that focused on China and Russia. Our time frame does not allow us to compare changing patterns in interest and topical focus on dissertations on the former Soviet Union in the midst of the Cold War but, within our period, there is a clear and sustained increase in the number of dissertations on Russia and former Soviet Union member countries, mostly focused on democratization and the transition to a market economy. In the case of the People's Republic of China, the period under study is one immersed in large-scale and remarkably successful economic reform within relative political continuity. With 82 dissertations, China has

the largest country share in our sample. Most of these dissertations revolve around political economy, the effects of market-oriented policies on the state and its institutions, their impact on the living standards and lifestyles of the population, and the economic and political implications of an unprecedented influx of foreign direct investment.

China's development as an emerging superpower is underscored by several dissertations that were mainly focused on events such as the emergence of Deng Xiaoping as a reformer, the establishment of full diplomatic and amicable relations with the US (1979), the development of Special Economic Zones that opened the country to foreign investment (1980), as well as their accession to the World Trade Organization (2001).

The Russian Federation was second in our sample, with about 7 percent of all dissertations. The dismantling of the Soviet Union clearly stimulated interest in Soviet studies; it refocused doctoral dissertations on the effects of regime change, the timing and consequences of economic and political reforms, the rising role of civil society, and the institutional and cultural transformations underway. In fact, within three years of the fall of the Iron Curtain, Ph.D. students were predominantly focusing on themes pertaining to democratic transition, reaching an estimated 50 percent of all Russia-related dissertations in 1992 and 100 percent in 1993. After 1989, interest in the Russian economy and the development of a commercial partner of the West became a central premise for students who explored the future of the former communist nation. Similarly, dissertations on other “most favored” countries in comparative politics (Germany, India, and Mexico) were clearly aimed at making sense of

recent developments in those systems.

The overall picture suggests that the comparative politics subfield is stable and highly sensitive to overall trends in the production of Ph.D. dissertations in political science. Our data suggest that the subfield is increasingly relying on quantitative methods and analysis, individual-level theory and very sensitive to topical variations over time. On the other hand, however, regional shares and the mix of approaches remain relatively stable. This supports the notion of an increasingly eclectic discipline with a recent emphasis on quantitative and rational choice approaches as complementary rather than alternative approaches. With the exception of historical analysis, which was clearly deemphasized during this period, we find a rich “variety of comparativisms” reflected in Ph.D. dissertations that reminds us that comparative politics - by method(s) and by vocation - is a diverse and open subfield. If methodological pluralism, events-driven concerns and regional diversity are what define comparative politics, then young scholars are taking these features seriously.

**Appendix**

**Table 2: General Information**

Year	Political Science	CP	% CP	N
1985	296	65	22	20
1986	324	64	20	21
1987	354	82	23	24
1988	390	81	21	25
1989	489	101	21	30
1990	552	115	21	35
1991	574	125	22	38
1992	603	191	32	57
1993	708	224	31	63
1994	701	213	30	63
1995	811	245	30	67
1996	819	260	32	79
1997	958	173	18	54
1998	940	286	30	79
1999	897	270	30	79
2000	977	185	21	53
2001	792	224	28	75
2002	779	255	32	79
2003	750	164	21	44
2004	140	33	23	33

**Table 3: Top-20 Contributors to CP**

Institution/ Number of Dissertations	
University of California, Berkeley	54
Columbia University	53
The University of Chicago	40
University of Michigan	37
UCLA	36
Harvard University	34
Yale University	33
The University of Wisconsin, Madison	28
Indiana University	21
Stanford University	19
The Ohio State University	19
University of Hawaii	18
Princeton University	16
Cornell University	15
University of Maryland, College Park	15
University of Washington	14
The George Washington University	13
UNC, Chapel Hill	13
The University of Texas , Austin	13
Michigan State University	12

**Notes**

\* This article was written at the initiative of the editors. The project was jointly developed by Notre Dame political science students. Claudia Maldonado (Ph.D. student) coordinated the project. Funding for Carlos Gutiérrez and Erin Uruhart (Class of 2005) was provided by the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters of the University of Notre Dame.

<sup>1</sup> The original database is available at the APSA-CP website.

<sup>2</sup> The database goes back to the 1940s and offers citations, abstracts, and full-text microfilm access to over 1.6 million dissertations and master’s theses since the 1940s.

<sup>3</sup> The estimated average sampling error is 2.1 percent.

<sup>4</sup> A small number of dissertation code sheets were directly verified and corrected by their authors: We thank José Antonio Aguilar Rivera, Rossana Castiglioni, Wendy Hunter, Joy

Langston-Hawkes, Evan Lieberman, Debra Javeline, Matthew Cleary, Fernanda Somuano, Reynaldo Yunuen and Deborah Yashar for their kind help.

<sup>5</sup> Author’s gender was unknown - due to alphabetic translation - in several Asian names. We assigned these cases a 66:34 male:female ratio.

<sup>6</sup> The standard deviation was 9.2. The frequency distribution is clearly skewed within the 1-3 dissertation range, comprising 77 institutions.

<sup>7</sup> We considered that a given university was overrepresented whenever its contribution (share) to the sample year was significantly larger than the upper bound of the 95% confidence interval of the mean share for that year. Overall, the universities with the largest contributions to the field remained relatively constant.

<sup>8</sup> Although our coding strategy could not easily distinguish large-N cross-regional analysis from dissertations based on cross-regional in-depth case studies and comparisons, we identified 62 dissertations with a clear cross-regional in-depth focus.

<sup>9</sup> Each dissertation could be included in a maximum of three topical categories.

<sup>10</sup> Nearly all dissertations were reported as using the archival method, a category aimed at capturing a specific methodological approach rather than the consulting of records during the research process.

<sup>11</sup> In order to distinguish real trends from random variations within the margin of sampling error, we calculated 95% confidence intervals for yearly variations within each category and regressed our annual percentages on five-year period (1985-1989 through 2000-2004) dummies for all variables.

## Comparing the Global Barometers

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The Global Barometer surveys are one of the few exemplary efforts to provide comparable survey data within and across regions. They are organized by a network of reputable academics and research institutions that combine an expertise in survey research with deep regional knowledge. For these reasons, their efforts promise to benefit the comparative study of public opinion greatly by providing well-informed, reliable, and comparable datasets and a more reliable analysis of public opinion around the world. The Global Barometer consists of four regional barometers (i.e., the New Europe Barometer, the Latin Barometer, the Afrobarometer, and the East Asian Barometer) that cover virtually all the continents, except for the Middle East. Since 1991, this network of survey research has produced over 250 surveys around the world.

The Global Barometer surveys ask a more extensive battery of questions relating to social, economic, and political *conditions* of a country than the World Values Surveys (WVSs), whose main objective is to monitor a wider range of more stable social and political *values*. The instruments are designed to help provide answers to the questions of what people are thinking in the “new democracies” and how people in countries “lacking political stability and transparent institutions” are responding to changing political and economic environments. Key questions of the surveys – such

as the evaluations of the economy – are repeated each year in order to allow for trend analysis. Common questions within and across regions are designed to facilitate cross-national and cross-regional comparisons. Additionally, some of the regional barometers (e.g., the New Europe Barometer and the Latin Barometer) dedicate a segment of their surveys to a topic of special interest; for example, the Latin Barometer added questions about trade, foreign investment, and politics in 1996 and political parties, the economy, and confidence between countries in 1997.

Despite their intention to provide a comparable set of survey data, however, several factors limit a reliable over-time, cross-national – or cross-regional – analysis of public opinion. First, the temporal and spatial coverage of the regional barometers is rather restricted. The New Europe Barometer, for instance, focuses on new member states of the European Union and applicant countries, leaving out poorer nations in Central and Eastern Europe. Similarly, the Afrobarometer includes fewer than half of the countries in Africa. With regard to temporal coverage, most regional barometers have repeated surveys on a regular, but non-annual cycle. The New Europe Barometer has carried out seven rounds of surveys during the last fifteen years, while the Afrobarometer and the East Asian Barometer have completed – or are in the process of completing – three and one rounds of surveys, respectively, over the last five years. Of all the regional barometers, the Latin Barometer has the longest coverage, producing eight rounds of surveys since 1996; however, the comparability of the surveys over time and across space is questionable or problematic due to considerable variation in question design, thematic coverage, and methodology, particularly in sampling.

The Global Barometer surveys show significant divergence in the coverage and the design of the questions across regions.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Global Barometer surveys collect data about different aspects of governance, and for each of the various components of governance, the network presents a list of multiple indicators (see Table 1). Some of the key questions are repeated each year and asked across regions. Yet, there is considerable variation in the temporal and spatial coverage of the components as well as the indicators. For instance, the first round of the Afrobarometer does not include questions concerning religion – a component of governance according to the Global Barometer network – while the second round asks about religious orientation. In addition, the phrasing and the formats of the questions, as well as the order in which the questions are introduced, vary over time and, especially, across space. For example, in order to measure one’s support for a political party – an indicator of political participation and elections, which is another component of governance in the Global Barometer surveys – the New Europe Barometer (2001) and the Latin Barometer (2001) ask about a party for which he/she would vote, while the Afrobarometer (1999-2001) and the East Asian Barometer (2001-2002) inquire about a party to which he/she feels close(st).

While the difference reflects the flexibility and the capacity of the network of scholars involved in the project to develop and employ the questions that are suitable to measure those indicators relating to governance under specific social, economic, and political conditions,<sup>2</sup> it also demonstrates a lack of conceptual development. For governance to be considered a concept with universal resonance, a sound definition of the concept should be developed first.

Although the question design (and the choice of indicators) might vary according to the context, the underlying concept that they are supposed to measure should not.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, no overarching definition or conceptualization is provided by the Global Barometer network or by any of the regional barometers, except the Afrobarometer, which roughly describes it as “the demand for, and satisfaction with effective, accountable and clean government; judgments of overall governance performance.”<sup>4</sup> In light of this deficiency, a collaboration of investigators with expertise in (democratic) governance and further coordination among the collaborators of the Global Barometer surveys across the regions would be welcome.

Third, the detailed description of the methodology employed is generally not available on the web sites related to the Global Barometer surveys. This, along with variance in methods over time and across space, hampers a reliable comparison of the findings.<sup>5</sup> It is only mentioned that the Global Barometer surveys interview nationwide “representative” “random” samples in Africa, East Asia, Latin America, and Central and Eastern Europe. To this the New Europe Barometer adds a discussion of sample size (greater than 1,000 per country), the number of languages in which the surveys are conducted (more than a dozen), and the style of the interviews (face-to-face). In the same manner, the Latin Barometer includes information about variations in sample size (between less than 600 in Paraguay and close to 2,500 in Spain), in the type of the sample (random samples in some countries and in quota samples in others), and in population coverage (between 30 and 100 percent of the total population, in some countries with urban sample).<sup>6</sup> In addition, the East Asian Barometer does not provide any addi-

tional information pertaining to its methods.

Of all the regional barometers, the Afrobarometer provides the most comprehensive discussion of the survey methodology used to collect the data. The principles of the sampling protocol of the second – but not the first – round of surveys are discussed in detail, albeit without the complete discussion of variations across countries. Such details of the survey methodology may sound tedious and unnecessary. However, without the appropriate knowledge of the methodology, it is impossible to identify the potential biases that should be controlled for, or at least need to be taken into account, at the time of data analysis.<sup>7</sup> Without the acknowledgement of the possible or likely biases introduced – either intentionally or unintentionally – in the process of data collection, inferences drawn from the surveys will be misleading.<sup>8</sup> As statistical packages become more sophisticated, allowing for the adaptation of models that are designed to adjust to various sample characteristics, the full disclosure of information relating to the survey methodology should be welcome.

Finally, the limited availability of the raw data inhibits replication of the studies that use the Global Barometer surveys. A limited number of surveys are available to the public. The Afrobarometer deposits data in various archives and its web site, with a two-year lag from the first release of any results of the surveys. Data from the Latin Barometer is available only for purchase, however, and with a longer delay. While the official policy of the funding institutions mandates a four-year lag in the release of the raw data, the *de facto* embargo of the Latin Barometer surveys is six years.<sup>9</sup> Data for the years between 1995 and 1998 can be obtained in tables on a CD-ROM, at a cost of five

hundred dollars per year, and the rest of the data only on a per country, per variable, and per year basis. Finally, the data from the New Europe Barometer and the East Asian Barometer have not been made available to the public, although the results are published in various journals.<sup>10</sup>

Many countries have abandoned authoritarianism during the third wave of democratization. Yet the process of democratization has been uneven and, at times, has suffered serious setbacks. While some scholars dismiss the relevance of public opinion to the quality and the stability of democracy, others stress its importance. Similarly, the students of democracy and democratization are not always in agreement with regard to the manner in which public opinion is related to regime performance. To monitor how people are responding to changing social, political, and economic environments of the country (as one of the mandates of the Global Barometer surveys appears to indicate), and vice versa, it is essential to provide a reliable and comparable set of public opinion surveys over time and across space. Producing a survey is a daunting task; generating large, multi-country surveys that have a solid theoretical basis and are comparable over time and across space can be even more overpowering. Yet, it is fundamental for the advancement of knowledge concerning public opinion and its relationship to democracy. As multi-country survey research proliferates in comparative politics, any efforts at constructing such survey data, as well as the disclosure of existing surveys and the survey methodology, would be appreciated.

## Notes

\*The web site (<http://www.global-barometer.org>) provides links to the

regional barometers discussed in this review.

<sup>1</sup> The WVSs, on the other hand, are designed for global use and, as such, pose a series of questions that are identical in their phrasing and formats across countries and regions.

<sup>2</sup> The web site of the Global Barometer surveys states that “(s)ince the phrasing of questions and responses can differ between continents, the full text of questions is given for each survey. Since circumstances differ between continents, the geographical coverage of indicators varies too.”

<sup>3</sup> See Munck (2005) on the development of measuring instruments of democratic governance.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the lack of definition of the concept itself, the Governance Indicators of the Global Barometer surveys also suffer from a problem of concept-stretching. For example, compare the components of governance in Table 1 with the central elements of governance in Table 19.1 of Munck (2005) – i.e., executive-legislative relations, judiciary, federalism, bureaucracy, and mechanisms of direct democracy.

<sup>5</sup> An open letter that is signed by social scientists in Latin America, North America, and Europe and addressed to the multilateral and bilateral donors of the Latin Barometer surveys mentions the variance in the sample over time and across space. It also raises a concern about the reliability of the reports that base their findings or conclusions on the aggregated scores of the surveys. In general, one should be careful in the treatment of the aggregated scores that are available on the Global Barometer web site (e.g., <http://www.globalbarometer.org/gov->

[ernanceindicators/](#)) and in other publications. Aside from the variance in methods, the sample may include a country that is outside of the universe. For instance, one may be interested in the public opinion of the third wave democracies in Asia, but the aggregated scores available on the web site may include Japanese opinions, as in the case of the Global Barometer web site.

<sup>6</sup> A list of general information by country – the name of the polling firm carrying out the fieldwork, the type of the sample, the period of the fieldwork, the size of the sample, the level of confidence, and the coverage of the population – is available for each round of surveys in the press release published on the web site.

<sup>7</sup> Such “biases,” in some cases, may be inevitable. Regardless of justifications, however, it is important to reveal them so as to permit sound analysis of the data.

<sup>8</sup> The symposium about the proliferation of comparative survey research published in this newsletter (Summer 2004) gives a nice overview, critique, and advice concerning comparative survey research in general.

<sup>9</sup> For a controversy surrounding the availability of the Latin Barometer surveys, see “An Open Letter Addressed to: International and Bilateral Donors Supporting Democracy Surveys in Latin America,” signed by a group of social scientists in Latin America, North America, and Europe.

<sup>10</sup> The results of the New Europe Barometer, containing questions and percentage answers for every country and question, are published as *Studies in Public Policy*.

**Table 1: Governance: Components and Indicators**

<b>Political Participation and Elections</b>	Interest in politics Discusses politics Opinion leader (convince, asked opinion) Supports party
<b>Trust in institutions</b>	Parliament/Congress Police President Political parties Courts Army/Military Television Newspapers Churches Trust most people
<b>Rule of Law and Corruption</b>	Freedom from corruption Corruption less under new regime No experience of corruption Paying all taxes Freedom from Fear Freedom from street crime Freedom from home burglaries Crime and order Freedom from ethnic tension
<b>Identities</b>	Pride in country Identities (ethnic, etc.)
<b>Religion</b>	Nominal religion Religious involvement
<b>Poverty and Destitution</b>	Doing without food Doing without heat or electricity Doing without necessary clothes/shoes Income enough to meet needs
<b>Evaluating Economic Conditions</b>	Current national economy Change from past national economy Future national economy Current household economy Change from past household economy Future household economy Time before content
<b>Market and State</b>	State or private enterprise Controlled or market prices Responsibility for welfare Equal incomes or reward for effort Evaluation of public services Fairness in treatment Getting things done Responsiveness/influence on government Impact of government on daily life
<b>Evaluating Alternative Regimes</b>	Rating current regime positively Rating old regime negatively Future regime Political freedom Freedom of speech Freedom of association
<b>Democracy and its Alternatives</b>	Satisfaction with democracy Extent our country is democratic Preference for democracy Rejection of dictatorship Rejection of army/technocratic rule



## Luebbert Awards

### Best Book in Comparative Politics

Elisabeth Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Elisabeth Jean Wood's [book] sets a new standard for theoretically embedded, empirical work [...]. It demonstrates with exemplary rigor and tenacity that the desire for citizenship rights rather than the short-run calculation of material benefits often constitutes the micro-foundations of rebellion. By tracing the life histories and perceptions of both the supporters of the insurgency and those who opposed it, Wood establishes the link between emotion and collective action and sheds new light on the dynamics of civil war. The result is convincing proof that field research remains central to comparative politics. Based on more than 200 interviews undertaken over many years in an environment that was often difficult and sometimes physically dangerous, *Insurgent Collective Action* shows the enormous risks that people will take in pursuit of human dignity.

### Runners-Up

Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004.

Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Committee: Jeffrey Kopstein, chair (University of Toronto), Barry Ames

(University of Pittsburgh), and Ashutosh Varshney (University of Michigan).

### Best Article in Comparative Politics Co-Winners

Ernesto Calvo and Maria Victoria Murillo, "Who Delivers? Partisan Clients in the Argentine Electoral Market," *AJPS* 48 (October 2004), 742-757.

Scott Basinger and Mark Hallerberg, "Remodeling the Competition for Capital: How Domestic Politics Erases the Race to the Bottom," *APSR* 98 (May 2004), 261-276.

Calvo and Murillo's essay constitutes a rich advance in our understanding of the links between patronage, labor markets, and party politics. [...] The authors link patronage-party dynamics to underlying socioeconomic realities that vary across geographical contexts and shape returns from patronage to parties with different social and geographical constituencies. They provide a "supply side-demand side" model, which is submitted to a number of statistical tests, and identify fiscal and labor market dynamics that lock in partisan advantages and shape policy preferences by parties over time. The essay [is] also theoretically innovative, empirically rigorous, and generalizable.

Basinger and Hallerberg take on a significant and wide-ranging problem, the competition for capital in the age of globalization. They test a new formal model of tax competition and show us how competitive pressures of globalization are mediated by the interaction between domestic and international political dynamics in more nuanced ways than "race to the bottom" models would predict. The model's key insight is that domestic political costs that accompany tax reforms have both direct and indirect

effects on the likelihood and scale of tax reforms in competitor countries. While countries with higher political costs for reforming are less likely themselves to reduce taxes, these costs also reduce competing countries' incentives to reform regardless of their own political costs. The authors provide a corroboration of their argument with advanced statistical techniques. Basinger and Hallerberg essay provides an impressive example of balanced theoretical and empirical research.

Committee: Edward Gibson, chair (Northwestern University), Pauline Jones Luong (Brown University), and George Tsebelis (UCLA).

## Sage Paper Award

### Best APSA Paper in Comparative Politics

Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War: Determinants of the Strategies of Warring Factions."

Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Popular Contention and its Impact in Rural China."

Humphreys's and Weinstein's paper makes a remarkable and original contribution through its unflinching use of data gathered in Sierra Leone to explain the effects of civil war on civilian populations. [...] This accomplishment is a significant step in the scholarly effort to show how the tools of comparative politics can help illuminate the consequences as well as the causes of violent conflict.

O'Brien's and Li's paper makes an exemplary and original contribution by showing how the literature on contentious politics can be applied to

non-democratic countries. The paper helps comparativists see how accountability and policy responsiveness take shape in a regime which for decades remained opaque to most observers. This accomplishment is a significant step in the scholarly effort to show how the tools of comparative politics can enhance our understanding of Chinese politics.

Committee: J. Nicholas Ziegler, chair (Berkeley), Carol A. Mershon (University of Virginia), and Daniel N. Posner (UCLA).

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## CP Dataset Award

For a lasting contribution to the discipline:

### **Timothy Smeeding and Lee Rainwater for the Luxembourg Income Study**

The project has made an important contribution to research on inequality, poverty, redistributive policy, and a variety of related topics. The 22-year-old project provides access to micro-data on income and its distributions in affluent countries since the mid-1970s. The data are of high quality and cross-national comparability, stemming from the cooperation of many national government agencies and from the harmonization work by the LIS staff. The LIS website provides comprehensive documentation, a variety of summary statistics, software that facilitates statistical analysis of the data, and access to working papers (more than 400) that have used the data.

Committee: Lane Kenworthy, chair (Emory University), Thomas Cusack (Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin), and Nicholas Sambanis (Yale University).

## IPSA-CIDE Award Call for Submissions

### **2006 Award for Conceptual Innovation in Democratic Studies**

The Committee on Concepts and Methods (C&M) of the International Political Science Association (IPSA), and the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) in Mexico City invite submissions to the 2006 Award for Conceptual Innovation in Democratic Studies.

The second award, jointly sponsored by C&M and CIDE, will be given at the 2006 IPSA World Congress in Fukuoka, Japan.

#### **Criteria**

The 2006 award will be given to a scholarly work published any time before December 31, 2005.

"Conceptual innovation" is intended to cover concept analysis, concept formation, as well as operationalization, and measurement. The label "democratic studies" includes research on authoritarian rule, democratization, and democratic quality. We seek conceptual innovations that bear empirical implications for further research.

#### **Submissions**

Submissions are open to authors, journal editors, and book publishers. When submitting the work of others, please make sure you have obtained the express consent of the author.

Submissions must include: 4 copies of the work and complete contact information of the author, and person who submits (if different).

Nominations should be sent to:  
Andreas Schedler  
CIDE  
División de Estudios Políticos

Carretera México-Toluca 3655  
Col. Lomas de Santa Fe  
CP 01210 Mexico City  
Mexico

#### **Prize Money**

The winner of the prize will be awarded 1,500 USD.

Deadline for submissions is January 31, 2006.

**Award Jury:** Robert E. Goodin (Australian National University, Canberra), Gerardo L. Munck (University of Southern California, Los Angeles) (Chairperson), and Cindy Skach (Harvard University).

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## Announcements

### James Bryce Endowment Fund Call for Contributions

We Need Your Help!

The James Bryce Endowment Fund for International Political Science was set up in honor of the British historian and politician. The fund will benefit the global study of political life and the internationalization of political science. Income from this fund will support research residencies in the Centennial Center and elsewhere, collaborative research workshops involving political scientists from the United States and abroad, teaching and curriculum development programs for emerging political science communities, and travel grants to the annual meeting.

By contributing today you will help the endowment meet its plan of distributing the first grants in 2005.

To contribute, go to:

[www.apsanet.org/content\\_3914.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/content_3914.cfm)

Or send contributions to: APSA, Attn: Development, 1527 New Hampshire Ave NW, Washington, DC 20036.

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## Brazilian Politics Website and Data

Brazilianpolitics.com is dedicated to advertising studies on Brazilian politics in general and Brazilian legislative politics more specifically. The goal of the website is to provide a locus for discussion and dissemination of information about Brazilian politics. It includes data, papers, news, and a discussion forum. Its address is <http://www.brazilianpolitics.com>.

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## New Annual Meeting Working Groups

APSA has introduced a program of Working Groups on Political Science at its 2005 Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting Working Group is a small group of meeting attendees interested in a common topic who agree to attend panels and plenaries aligned with the topic and convene 2 or more times at the meeting for discussion of them. The idea is to simulate a working group conference experience amidst the panels.

We hope Section Members will be interested in sponsoring or participating in a Working Group in their area of specialization. Those interested should contact Ebony Ramsey at [eramsey@apsanet.org](mailto:eramsey@apsanet.org)

For more information visit:

[www.apsanet.org/section\\_584.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/section_584.cfm)

## CP Section Business Meeting

The annual business meeting of the Comparative Politics Section will be held at the Marriot Hotel, Virginia Room B on Friday, September 2, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

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## Newsletter Editorship

Bids are welcomed, both from the current editorial team at the University of Notre Dame and from other interested institutions, for the next four-year editorship of the Newsletter of the Comparative Politics Section. The next four-year term will begin in the fall of 2006. Those interested in applying should make sure that colleagues and graduate students at their institutions will be available to participate in the editing of the Newsletter and that they have the support of their institutions.

Following its September meeting, the Executive Committee will make available the guidelines that were adopted for the Newsletter in 2001, as amended by recent experience. The deadline for submitting a bid is Dec. 31, 2005. Requests for information from those interested in applying should be sent to Sidney Tarrow, Cornell University, Department of Government, Ithaca, NY 14853, email: [sgt2@cornell.edu](mailto:sgt2@cornell.edu).

## APSA-CP Nominations

### Executive Committee:

#### Vice-President and President-Elect

[Peter A. Gourevitch, University of California at San Diego](#)

Professor Gourevitch is a renowned expert on international relations and comparative politics. He specializes in political economy with a particular focus on international trade and economic globalization, trade disputes, and regulatory systems.

#### At-Large Members of the Executive Committee:

[Anna Grzymala-Busse, University of Michigan](#)

Professor Grzymala-Busse's principal interests include political parties and political competition. She has written about the paradoxical comeback of communist successor parties.

[Elizabeth J. Perry, Harvard University](#)

Professor Perry is an expert on Chinese politics. She has written extensively on popular protest and grassroots politics in modern and contemporary China.

Elections will be held at the annual business meeting of the Section. Alternative nominations may be made at that meeting or by petition to the President. Petitions require the support of at least five section members.

#### Nominations Committee:

Mark Beissinger, chair (University of Wisconsin), Catherine Boone (University of Texas, Austin), Ruth Collier (University of California, Berkeley), Russell Dalton (University of California, Irvine), James Fearon (Stanford University), and Richard Samuels (MIT).

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Summer 2005

## How to Subscribe

Subscription to the APSA-CP Newsletter is a benefit to members of the Organized Section in Comparative Politics of the American Political Science Association. To join the section, check the appropriate box when joining the APSA or renewing your Association membership. Section dues are currently \$8 annually, with a \$2 surcharge for foreign addresses. The printing and mailing of the Newsletter is paid for out of member dues. To join APSA, contact:

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