

Comparatively Speaking...

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Based on a paper written together with T. Johnson, UIC

Ten minutes can be very long

Comparatively Speaking...

Overview

- 40 years ago – functional equivalence defined by Verba and Scheuch
- 10 years ago advent of 3mc Jowell & Küchler
- Today context information regains importance
- Tomorrow?

40 Years ago

- Functional equivalence
- Verba and Scheuch strongly advocating
- **Context** important for
- **Meaning** of measurement

Context & Situation

- Context - static (structure)
- Situation - variable or a sequence (process)
- Situation though not much used (yet) in comparative methodology

1969 Importance of Context

- Verba / Scheuch refer to context as..
- Context as structural characteristic
- Meaningful comparison needs context information

Verba 1969

- The problem remains, though, that the meaning of any political structure or function that we isolate by assigning it a conceptual label depends to some extent upon the context within which it is found.

Simple solutions rarely are...

- *"The simplest and standard approach is to compare the same "thing" across nations....*
- *But this is deceptive."*
 - 1969 p. 70

Solution - Verba

- (1) the selection and measurement of variables that are embedded in their contexts
- (2) the inclusion of structural characteristics into the survey design
- (3) the inclusion of structural characteristics in the survey analysis.

Definition Functional Equivalence

- *Face similarity may be trivial unless the variable has the*
- *same relationship to other variables in each system,*
- *i.e. functional equivalent across systems.*
- **FN 28**

FN 28 – 4 Requirements and 1 Conclusion

- Know about cultural and structural context within which the measurement takes place
- know a lot about what it is one is studying
- before one starts empirical research

FN 28 – Requirements (2)

- This is especially the case
 - using techniques, such as survey research where the "automatic" nature of the data gathering process
- means that
 - obvious aspects of the data may be overlooked.

FN 28 – Requirements (3)

- .. We conduct the research simply in order to find out about those structural and cultural features that we need to understand in order to
- design the research.

FN 28 – Requirements (4)

- platitudinous maxim about research design:
- that it is only after it has been done
- that one knows what one ought to have done

FN 28 – Conclusion

- obvious conclusion that research programs
- must build their store of understandings of the meanings of the variables that they measure.
- “replicated growth programs”

Replicated Growth Programs

- ISSP (1985), ESS (2002)
- Replicated Growth Programm =
- Continuous Quality Improvement
- Continuously re-inventing themselves
- ?? Time series ??

Scheuch on equivalence

- good deal of uneasiness about putting equivalence of meaning before identical wording,
- Naive realism:
question is not asked in the same way, we cannot compare
- if it has been asked the same way, we can.

Questions as Indicators

- Questions as indicators
- Indicators have a probabilistic relationship to a property to be measured
- Indicators are interchangeable in terms of their functions

Criterion for questions equivalence

- NOT identical or equivalent in their commonsense meaning,
- BUT functionally equivalent for the purposes of analysis
- *Verba: same relationship to other variables in each system*

10 Years ago – Predominance of Functional Equivalence Established

- Jowell on ISSP
- “that translators will resist
- literal transpositions
- in favour of functional equivalence”

10 Years ago – Advent of 3mc

- ISSP about 30 countries
- Data available since 1985
- Eurobarometer
- From comparative surveys
- To Multi-X Surveys
 - Multi national
 - Multi regional
 - Multi-cultural

10 Years ago – 3mc challenges

- Too many M
- Too easy Analysis
- Solutions
 - Rules
 - Specifications
- ESS Blue Print

Too many M

- The nations selected shall be similar in their populations' experience with and exposure to attitude surveys. Moreover, social norms governing behavior related to central topics of the study should be similar.

10 Years ago – Solutions

Specifications Equality of Procedures

- Translation/Adaptation
- Sampling
- Data collection
- Coding
- Data processing

Today – Qualitative Perspective Regains Importance

- Cognitive pretesting
- TRAPD
- Event Data

Tomorrow

Re-marry Context with Survey Data

- How?

