

# Comparative Political Science: An Inventory and Assessment since the 1980's\*

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What have political scientists in comparative politics published over the last 15 years? What methods have they employed? And what do the recent trends in the journal literature suggest about where the field of comparative politics will (or should be) headed during the next 15 years?

Lee Sigelman and George Gadbois published the last systematic review of comparative politics journals in 1983. Since that time, new theories, methods, and interests have inspired political scientists. I have conducted a similar review of the journal literature through 1997 in the hopes of providing comparativists with an empirical benchmark from which to judge the progress of the field.

This article is divided into three sections. In the first part, I summarize the theoretical development of comparative political science since the 1950s. In the second section, I explain the method that I employ in my descriptive statistical analysis of comparative politics articles published since 1981. In the concluding section, I outline my findings and suggest directions in which comparativists might direct their focus.

## The Behaviorist Revolution in Comparative Politics

Comparative political science, like most of the discipline, experienced a behaviorist revolution during the 1950s and 1960s. Macridis's 1955 critique was the first volley and was followed by Eckstein's (1963), Almond and Powell's (1966), and Ver-

ba's (1967) constructive attempts at renovation. As Almond (1960) pointed out, the adoption of behavioralism represented a rejection of the classic formal-legalism that had long informed most work in political science.

According to Sigelman and Gadbois (1983, 276), the aims of the revolution were profound: greater comprehensiveness of comparative political science, freedom from the then-dominant formal-legal approach, an enhanced empiricism, and more theory building. As various historians of the social sciences have remarked (Blalock 1968; Riker 1977; Stinchcombe 1968), since behaviorists have assumed the aim of science to be to move from description to explanation, from concepts supported by intuition to concepts supported by postulation, whatever could not be operationalized had to be eliminated. In the hands of the behaviorist, comparativist, idiographic case studies, once treated as ends in themselves, became fuel for theory generation (Eckstein 1975; George 1979; Lijphart 1971). Some effort was spent transforming specific, culture-bound descriptions of political development into more general indicators of universal political behavior (Blalock 1969; Przeworski and Teune 1970). The formation of the Social Science Research Council also did much to nurture an entire generation of scholars devoted to practicing a more "realistic" and "grounded" comparative political science (Wiarda 1985).

Yet, even as Almond and Powell (1966) and Verba (1967) were heralding the victory of behavioralism, Sigelman and Gadbois (1983) and Mayer (1989) were less sanguine. Verba (1967), in fact, lamented the rejection of formal institutions as objects of analysis and decried what he considered the fallacious divide between idiographic and deductive-nomological methods. Sigelman and

Gadbois (1983, 301) illustrated that case studies and Western European parochialism continued to dominate comparative politics between 1968 and 1981, well into the period of behavioralism's alleged ascendancy. Even Almond (1983), in a later assessment, admitted that comparative political science remained divided and that the cumulation of knowledge was minimal. Mayer (1983; 1989), still hopeful but less optimistic than Verba (1985), exhorted political scientists to reject the parochialism he saw pervading the discipline. Geddes (1991), claiming that no single paradigm—not even behavioralism—could ever dominate the practice of comparative political science, has concluded that the discipline is motivated by fashion, not substantive debate.

In sum, behaviorists (and many recent commentators) believed that the field needed to become more scientific, to develop a consistent direction and focus in its research interests, and to aspire to create better axioms derived from rigorous empirical methods. Despite some encouraging assessments, they continue to believe that these needs have not been met.

## A First Assessment of Comparative Political Science

Sigelman and Gadbois's 1983 inventory and assessment of comparative political science provided a much-needed evaluation of work in the field. They undertook a descriptive statistical analysis of 565 articles and research notes published between 1968 and 1981 in *Comparative Politics* and *Comparative Political Science*. They coded these articles into 28 categories, the most crucial ones being theoretical-conceptual, empirical, world region (i.e., "First," "Second," and "Third"), number of nations, and substantive focus. Their conclusion was that comparative po-

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litical science remained a Eurocentric, case-study-oriented field. Comparative and theoretically driven research represented an increasing, though still relatively small, fraction of the articles published in the two main journals. Only roughly 9% of the articles were statistical large N studies, a finding that cast serious doubt on the claim that behavioralism was the dominant paradigm (300).

Unfortunately, Sigelman and Gadbois's article suffered from poor conceptualization. For example, the authors conflated "paradigm," "theory," and "method" under the rubric of "substantive focus" and equated the dominance of a particular "topic" with the dominance of a "paradigm" (292-94). Moreover, the authors' idea of "empirical analysis" was not well defined. Case studies were coded as a form of "longitudinal analysis" because, Sigelman and Gadbois argued, "[they] essentially amounted to an account of events presented chronologically" (279). This is very different from the most common understanding of a longitudinal analysis—a statistical investigation of the relationships among independent and dependent variables through time. Furthermore, articles were "replicative" if they were "consciously patterned after methods, hypotheses, or measures that had previously been employed in another study" (279). This is a much looser definition of replication than that employed in the "hard" sciences: the exact repetition of another's research design and experiments to assess if the same findings and conclusions can be reached.

Despite these conceptual pitfalls, Sigelman and Gadbois's work has yet to be surpassed. Though there have been a handful of subsequent synthetic nonempirical studies of recent work on comparative politics (e.g., Crotty 1991; Finifter 1983), there has been no systematic review of comparative political science.

## Data and Methods

I analyzed the content of every article and research note published in 59 issues of *Comparative Politics*

(January 1982 through July 1996), 61 issues of *Comparative Political Studies* (January 1982 through August 1996), and 50 issues of *World Politics* (January 1982 through February 1997). This amounted to 727 articles: 312 in *Comparative Politics* (CP), 295 in *Comparative Political Studies* (CPS), and 120 articles in *World Politics* (WP). Like Sigelman and Gadbois, I ignored book reviews but, unlike them, I included exchanges between authors. As I stated earlier, Sigelman and Gadbois's definitions of empirical and longitudinal analyses and replications were problematic. (In my study, an article that employs quantitative analysis, qualitative software such as SPSS or Nudist, content analysis, or structured interviews was classified as being empirical. In other words, in my categorization, empiricism does not equal quantification.) I also defined longitudinal analysis more narrowly than my predecessors, and placed only articles that employ longitudinal empirical methods (e.g., time series regression) in this category. Similarly, I restricted the replication category to reinterpretations of or attempts to recreate others' data.

I reviewed each article carefully and coded it using a 20-item checklist. I coded each article as either "yes" (1) or "no" (0) for each criterion. For example, if an article presented a theory or concept, I coded the article a "1" for the "theoretical-conceptual" category. I then carefully reviewed my coding before entering my data, and, as a final check, compared the spreadsheet against the corrected code sheets.

I coded two other items—substantive issue and nation—in separate data files. Each time a nation was studied in an article, I noted it (once) in the file. I gave each article two codings for substantive issue focus. In general, I assigned issue codings based on the titles of each article; I derived the remainder from articles' introductory sections. I did, however, read each article in its entirety. I coded articles on two issues when possible because most examined relationships between two variables. The list of issues I coded for mirrors

that used by Sigelman and Gadbois, although I added four categories: state-society relations, democracy, gender, and the environment. In a separate item, I also coded articles according to whether their authors explicitly positioned their work within one of three "research programs"—rational choice, culturalist analysis, and historical institutionalism. These three were chosen for two reasons. First, each has a venerable tradition in political science and, second, they provide a convenient measure by which to gauge knowledge cumulation (See Lichbach 1997).

My statistical analysis is descriptive and most of my findings are reported as frequencies and percentages. I used SPSS to analyze my data.

## Findings

One of the principal goals of the behavioral comparativists was to fashion a political science that operated like the natural sciences. For instance, the natural sciences are marked by collaboration; over 70% of the total articles in these fields have two or more authors (Sigelman and Gadbois 1983, 279). In comparison, of the 727 articles in CP, CPS, and WP only 23.3% were collaborations. Researchers in the natural sciences also engage in more replication and hypothesis testing than comparativists. In the three journals I reviewed, only 29 of the 283 empirical studies (10.3%) were replications of others' work, and 162 (57.2%) were hypothesis tests or models. On a more positive note, hypothesis tests and models accounted for 41.8% of the empirical articles identified by Sigelman and Gadbois (1983, 279). Obviously, there has been some progress in hypothesis testing, but little has been made in replicative research.

Of the 727 articles I reviewed, a total of 128 (17.6%) were cross-sectional, 77 (10.6%) were longitudinal, and 48 (6.6%) were both. Using the much looser criteria, Sigelman and Gadbois designated 53.2% and 46.8% of the articles published between 1968 and 1981 as cross-sec-

tional and longitudinal, respectively; they had no category for both. The types of article that could be labelled properly scientific are clearly the minority of recent articles published in comparative journals.

### The Question of Comparative Scope

Though there still is no consensus on what constitutes a comparative study, two definitions appear valid. First, one can define as comparative any study that involves an analysis of two or more nations. Second, any study that employs a strong theoretical-conceptual component or reports a hypothesis test or model also could qualify as comparative. I will evaluate the field by both criteria.

Table 1 provides an overview of the number of nations studied in any article published between 1982 and 1996. Of the 623 articles in which one or more nations were studied, 335 (53.8%) are single-country analyses (i.e., case-studies). Among articles categorized by Sigelman and Gadbois, 61.7% were case studies. For the period I investigated, 244 (33.6%) of the articles compared more than two but less than 30 nations; only 17.8% of the articles coded by Sigelman and Gadbois fell into this small N category.

Articles with a significant theoretical or conceptual element can be considered comparative since their

frameworks may be applied by other researchers to different countries or topics. Of the 281 N=1 studies published in *CP* and *CPS* between 1982 and 1996, 157 (55.9%) had a substantial theoretical component; this is an increase over the number of such studies published between 1968 and 1981 (24.8%). When *WP* is included, the increase (335 N=1 studies, 202 [60.3%] of them with a theoretical component) is even more pronounced. However, the number of studies that present explicit tests of a hypothesis (22.3% in my survey) has declined (from 35.8% in Sigelman and Gadbois's).

Using the broadest definition (i.e., the use of hypothesis-testing and a theoretical component), 520, or 71.5%, of the articles I reviewed were "comparative," compared with 63.3% of the articles Sigelman and Gadbois reviewed. By this broad measure, comparative politics has become more comparative; fewer than three out of every ten articles published since 1982 have been case studies.

### The Question of Parochialism

Behavioralists often critiqued traditional comparative political scientists for being overly focussed on Western, especially West European, political systems. Similarly, they denounced cross-national comparisons, when they could be found, for being intra-regional rather than cross-regional. Verba's (1967, 111–12) conclusion that European politics was on the verge of marginalization, however, has been proven wrong. As can be seen in Table 2, Western Europe continues to be well-represented in the comparative literature.

I recorded a total of 1,188 mentions of any nation or region. Germany, Great Britain, and France continue to be the most heavily researched nations (accounting for 15.3% of all mentions), while other European nations continue to receive short shrift. Eastern European countries also have been ignored. The USSR was mentioned only 45 times in the articles I reviewed, and the U.S. and Canada also received surprisingly little attention.

Countries in Latin America and

the Caribbean were mentioned in 1.6% of the articles; minimal representation was accorded important nations like Argentina, Chile, and Mexico. This mirrors the pattern identified by Sigelman and Gadbois. For Africa, the picture is even more bleak. Nations of regional importance (e.g., Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa) were mentioned less than two dozen times. For the Middle East, only Israel, Turkey, and Egypt received some coverage. Asia and the Pacific (with the exception of Japan) was ignored: India has been studied only six, Taiwan eight, and Indonesia four times over the past 15 years. No doubt the difficulties of research and travel in these nations partly explains these oversights. In some cases, knowledge of a language and culture present demands that most comparativists cannot meet. Even so, the lack of coverage is notable.

In brief, a moderate (between 3–6%) decrease in research on Western Europe and a slight increase in research on Latin America (mainly Brazil) can be detected in recent comparative articles. Pacific Asia and the Middle East have also experienced a slight (1–2%) increase in coverage, while Eastern Europe, North America, and sub-Saharan Africa have experienced a slight decrease. The dominant focus for comparativists, however, continues to be Western Europe and North America. Africa and the Middle East have received the least coverage. On the other hand, more nations *within* regions have been the subject of comparative analysis than ever before.

### The Question of Substance

There is a longstanding debate in political science on the amenability of the field to paradigmatic knowledge, a debate that remains (probably indefinitely) unresolved. No single research program or theoretical approach dominates the field. Neither rational choice, nor culturalist theory, nor historical institutionalism have attracted the majority of researchers. As Sigelman and Gadbois stated in 1983 (291), referring to Holt and Richardson (1970), in comparative political science, not even several "clearly articulated par-

**TABLE 1**  
Comparative Scope of Articles in Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, and World Politics, 1982–1997

Number of Nations	Frequency	Percentage of the Articles
0	104	14.3
1	335	53.8
2–3	114	15.7
4–9	69	9.5
10–19	53	7.3
20–99	41	5.6
100+	11	1.5
	727	100

**TABLE 2**  
**Coverage of Nations in Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, and World Politics, 1982–1997**

Nation	Number of Times Coded	% of Nation Codings	Nation	Number of Times Coded	% of Nation Codings	Nation	Number of Times Coded	% of Nation Codings
<b>Western Europe</b>	70	6.0	<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	21	1.8	<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	25	2.1
Great Britain	70	8.0	Brazil	35	3.0	Nigeria	9	0.9
West Germany	61	5.2	Argentina	23	2.0	Kenya	7	0.6
France	51	4.4	Mexico	19	1.6	South Africa	6	0.5
Italy	33	2.8	Peru	18	1.5	Zambia	4	0.4
Sweden	27	2.3	Nicaragua	14	1.2	Ivory Coast	3	0.3
Netherlands	17	1.5	Chile	14	1.2	Ethiopia	2	0.2
Denmark	18	1.5	Venezuela	10	0.9	Ghana	2	0.2
Belgium	14	1.2	Costa Rica	8	0.7	Senegal	2	0.2
Spain	14	1.2	Uruguay	8	0.7	Swaziland	2	0.2
Ireland	10	0.9	Cuba	7	0.6	Zimbabwe	3	0.3
Switzerland	10	0.9	Colombia	5	0.4	Angola	1	0.1
Norway	10	0.9	El Salvador	5	0.4	Botswana	1	0.1
Finland	7	0.6	Honduras	4	0.3	Lesotho	1	0.1
Greece	4	0.3	Bolivia	3	0.3	Liberia	1	0.1
Iceland	2	0.2	Guatemala	3	0.3	Malawi	1	0.1
Luxembourg	2	0.2	Jamaica	3	0.3	Mozambique	1	0.1
Portugal	2	0.2	Dominican Republic	2	0.2	Niger	1	0.1
Total for Region	422	36.3	Ecuador	2	0.2	Rwanda	1	0.1
<b>Eastern Europe</b>	16	1.4	Trinidad	2	0.2	Somalia	1	0.1
(Former) USSR	45	4.0	Panama	2	0.1	Sudan	1	0.1
Hungary	12	1.0	Guyana	1	0.1	Togo	1	0.1
Poland	12	1.0	Paraguay	1	0.1	Zaire	1	0.1
(Former) Yugoslavia	11	0.9	Haiti	1	0.1	Total for Region	77	6.6
(Former) Czechoslovakia	9	0.8	Total for Region	211	18.0	<b>Asia &amp; the Pacific</b>	18	1.5
Bulgaria	3	0.3	<b>Middle East and North Africa</b>	5	0.4	Japan	37	3.2
Rumania	3	0.3	Israel	26	2.5	China	34	2.9
(Former) East Germany	9	0.8	Turkey	14	1.2	Australia	16	1.4
Total for Region	120	10.3	Egypt	10	0.9	South Korea	16	1.4
<b>North America</b>	11	0.9	Iran	10	0.9	New Zealand	15	1.3
USA	51	4.4	Tunisia	3	0.3	Philippines	8	0.7
Canada	27	2.3	Algeria	2	0.2	Taiwan	8	0.7
Total for Region	89	7.7	Iraq	2	0.2	Malaysia	6	0.5
			Lebanon	2	0.2	India	4	0.4
			Morocco	2	0.2	Sri Lanka	4	0.4
			Cyprus	1	0.1	Pakistan	3	0.3
			Jordan	1	0.1	Vietnam	5	0.4
			Kuwait	1	0.1	Indonesia	4	0.3
			Libya	1	0.1	Thailand	3	0.3
			Qatar	1	0.1	Singapore	2	0.2
			Saudia Arabia	1	0.1	Cambodia	2	0.1
			Syria	1	0.1	Fiji	1	0.1
			Total for Region	83	7.1	Total for Region	186	15.7

**TABLE 3A**  
**Substantive Focus of**  
**Articles in Comparative**  
**Politics, Comparative**  
**Political Studies, and World**  
**Politics, 1982–1997**

Topic	% of Substantive Codings
Development	10.9
Policy	10.5
Political Parties	9.0
State-Society Relations	7.9
Voting and Elections	7.3
Democracy	6.4
Ethnicity-Pluralism	4.2
Interest Groups	4.2
Stability/Instability	3.7
International	3.5
Information-Communication	3.4
Nonelectoral Participation	3.2
Elites	2.5
Miscellaneous	2.5
Socialization	2.5
External Influences	2.2
Gender	2.2
Military	1.8
Research Methods	1.8
Legislatures	1.5
Environment	1.3
Executive	1.3
Ideology	1.1
Administration	1.0
Courts	0.9
National Integration	0.9
Religion	0.9
Subnational Politics	0.9
Support-Efficacy	0.5
Political Behavior	0.2
Colonialism	0.1
Separatism	0.1
Constitutions	0.0
	100.4

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

adigms compete for dominance.” In an attempt to identify the primary foci for comparativists, Sigelman and Gadbois listed 29 categories. As I noted previously, they employed the word “paradigm” rather loosely, conflating “topics,” “approaches,” and “theories” with the term. Because of problems in measurement, I used Sigelman and Gadbois’s topic

listings, but will not hazard any guesses on the cumulation of knowledge, since this measure shows only what researchers have studied, not whether they have built on earlier knowledge. I also found it necessary to create four additional topics: state-society relations (covering the statist and society approaches), democracy (including transitions and political liberalization), gender, and the environment (see Table 3A).

To get a better grasp of the extent to which researchers have explicitly positioned their work within nascent research programs, I also coded articles by whether their authors explicitly cast them as rational choice, culturalist, or historical institutionalist. If an article employs a theory or method from a particular research paradigm, I coded it as being within that paradigm. These figures were tallied separately from the topic codings and the results are shown in Table 3B.

As can be seen in Table 3B, there is no dominant paradigm in comparative politics. Rationalist, culturalist, and institutionalist paradigms were represented in a total of 8.6% of the articles published between 1982 and 1997. Since Sigelman and Gadbois provided no comparable figures for the period they studied, it is impossible to deduce any trends regarding the cumulation of knowledge. Still, it is obvious that work done within clearly delineated research programs represents only a minor component in the field.

Issue consensus is also absent. I attempted to code each article on two issues, ultimately ending up with 1,163 codings. State-society relations, development, parties, policy, voting and elections, and democracy were the most researched themes, though none represented more than 10% of the codings. These six topics account for 50% of the codings. The only changes between the 1968–81 and 1982–97 periods are that research methods has fallen from the top six rankings as the new statist approach stimulated research on state-society relations.

In an attempt to make sense of this plethora of themes, I decided to group them. After a careful review of the subjects, I concluded that most of the themes can be grouped

under five separate rubrics: interests, ideas, institutions, international processes, and miscellaneous (see Table 3C).

Articles that focus on interests—their representation, aggregation, and competition—are 38.9% of the total. Articles that address institutions constitute 43.8% of the articles coded, making this the most common focus for comparativists. International processes and ideas are relatively underresearched; they respectively account for 5.8% and 4.5% of the articles I coded. The remaining 8.1% of the articles fall into the miscellaneous category.

Formal-legal institutions continue to be little researched in the field, with constitutions receiving no coverage and courts being treated only 9 times.<sup>1</sup> Religion, meanwhile, represented 0.9% of the codings.

New themes barely receive any attention. Gender as an explicit or implicit theme appeared 23 times (2.2% of the total). Ethnicity-pluralism, a theme coded by Sigelman and Gadbois, experienced a slight increase from 3.4% to 4.2%; the environment was mentioned a mere 14 times (1.3%).

It appears that comparative politics has found a nucleus of research issues. This nucleus, however, is more evident in my grouping of themes than in the journals, where replication of studies remains rare. No consensus on paradigm has been achieved, and in, fact, the most relevant (rationalist, culturalist, and institutionalist) have been utilized in only one out of every seven-and-a-half articles.

**TABLE 3B**  
**Number of Times a**  
**Paradigm Was Employed in**  
**Comparative Politics,**  
**Comparative Political**  
**Studies, and World Politics,**  
**1982–1997**

Paradigm	Percentage of Articles
Rationalist	3.4
Culturalist	2.8
Institutionalist	2.4

**TABLE 3C**  
**Grouped Foci of Articles in**  
**Comparative Politics,**  
**Comparative Political**  
**Studies, and World Politics,**  
**1982–1997**

Topic	% of Substantive Codings
<b>Interests</b>	
Political Parties	9.0
State-Society Relations	7.9
Democracy	6.4
Ethnicity-Pluralism	4.2
Interest Groups	4.2
Non-electoral Participation	3.2
Elites	2.5
National Integration	0.9
Subnational Politics	0.9
Political Behavior	0.2
	<u>39.4</u>
<b>Institutions</b>	
Development	10.9%
Policy	10.5
Voting and Elections	7.3
Stability/Instability	3.7
Information-Communication	3.4
Military	1.8
Legislatures	1.5
Executive	1.3
Administration	1.0
Courts	0.9
Support-Efficacy	0.5
Constitutions	0.0
	<u>42.8</u>
<b>International Processes</b>	
International	3.5
External Influences	2.2
Colonialism	0.1
	<u>5.8</u>
<b>Ideas</b>	
Socialization	2.5
Ideology	1.1
Religion	0.9
	<u>4.5</u>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Miscellaneous	2.5
Gender	2.2
Research Methods	1.8
Environment	1.3
Separatism	0.1
	<u>8.1</u>
	<u>100.4</u>

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

### Three Worlds of Comparative Analysis

Though the distinction no longer appears as clear-cut as it once was, I also coded articles by the “world” with which they dealt: first, advanced Western democracies including Australia, New Zealand, and Japan; second, former Communist bloc nations; third, “less developed” areas; or some combination thereof. Of the 727 articles I reviewed, 674 (83%) dealt with at least one world. Of these, 301 (41.4%) were first world studies, 64 (8.8%) were second world, and 227 (31.2%) were third world. Only 82 (11.3%) treated more than one world (see Table 4). Comparison across “worlds,” then, is a minimal element in comparative politics; as I noted earlier, however, the degree of comparison within worlds (as reflected in the larger number of comparative analytic articles) has increased.

The differences in methodologies used to study countries in different worlds are striking. Table 5 lists the quantitative techniques and the type of data researchers employed when focussing on one or more countries in one of the three worlds (not combinations, which were few anyway). Over two-thirds of the second- and third-world studies were nonquantitative, whereas less than half of the first world studies were. First-world studies were also twice as likely to be statistically sophisticated (i.e., to use at least multiple regression analysis) than second- and third-world studies. First-world studies were also more likely to employ survey techniques and opinion data (33.6% did) than either second-world (17.2%) or third-world (18.9%) studies. No doubt this reflects, in part, the relative availability and reliability of data in the advanced industrial democracies and the political sensitivity, paucity, or unreliability of such data elsewhere.

### Comparing CP and CPS

In Sigelman and Gadbois’s study, the distinction drawn between articles published in *CP* and *CPS* was more of degree than kind. The former journal published fewer sta-

**TABLE 4**  
**Research Coverage among**  
**the Three Worlds**

World(s)	Number of Codings	% of Codings
First	275	45.8
Second	34	5.7
Third	190	31.7
First & Second	2	0.3
Second & Third	5	0.8
First & Third	22	4.0
First, Second, & Third	26	4.0
Not Applicable	46	7.6
Total	<u>600</u>	<u>100.2</u>

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

tistically oriented articles than the latter. *CP* also published “a much higher percentage of single-country analyses.” (1983, 298). Overall, though, the differences were minor.

Between 1982 and 1996, however, the two journals have become markedly less and more quantitative. Almost eight out of every ten articles in *CP* were nonquantitative, whereas six out of every ten articles in *CPS* employed some degree of quantitative sophistication. In addition, the latter journal’s articles were nearly four times more likely to involve a hypothesis test.

In comparison with the earlier period, however, both journals published fewer single-country studies and a majority of their articles utilized a substantial theoretical component. *CPS*, however, has continued to publish more multination ( $N > 5$ ) studies, more than twice as many as *CP* did.

Since 1981 there has been a decline in the number of crossnational studies that employ a high level of statistics and in the number of single-country studies. In other words, the number of medium- $N$  studies has increased since Sigelman and Gadbois published their review.

Overall, the trend has been toward more comparative and theory-driven analyses. It would appear that  $N > 1$  studies are now the norm in comparative politics. The three jour-

**TABLE 5**  
**Comparison of Studies of the Three Worlds (% , N = 674)**

	First World	Second World	Third World
Nonquantitative	49.8%	75.0%	66.5%
Lowest-Level Quantitative	9.6	9.4	11.9
Medium-Level Quantitative	13.6	7.8	13.0
Highest-Level Quantitative	30.6	12.5	14.5
Official Data	66.1	57.8	60.4
Survey Data	33.6	17.2	18.9

nals I studied, however, are distinct species with regard to quantification: two remain largely nonquantitative while the other is predominantly quantitative. What was originally a difference in degree between *Comparative Politics* and *Comparative Political Science* has evolved into a difference in kind.

## Conclusions

Developments in comparative political science emerging from the behaviorist revolution have had a differential impact upon the field's three leading journals. At the same time, newer trends are barely reflected in the journal literature. Comparative, theoretically-driven research is now the mainstay of the discipline; case studies are still a significant plurality of published articles, but are no longer the majority, and formal-legalism is extinct. The main journals now differ significantly on the importance they place on quantification (statistical analysis).<sup>2</sup> Parochialism continues in comparative politics, with the majority of research still concerning North Atlantic nations. Britain, France, and Germany are still the most commonly researched nations, while other important nations (e.g., Egypt, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, and South Africa) receive little if any attention. One welcome trend, however, is a slight increase in interest in Latin America. Yet there is still significant work ahead. In other words, Geddes' (1991) assertion about the transient nature of research in political science has some merit.

More noticeably, my analysis of recent journal literature revealed the

continued absence of a consensus on research programs. Most authors continue to refrain from comparing and contrasting different research programs; and very few design explicit tests to determine the greater explanatory or heuristic value of any approach. Bates (1997) has suggested that there has been progress in the rational choice research program. If this is correct, it is reflected in books and not articles. In sum, there appears to be a growing tendency to focus on capitalism, democracy, and state-society relations. Still, no other inferences about the cumulation of knowledge can be made.

Some issues of prime importance, especially religion and gender, remain underdeveloped. This dearth of research is especially perplexing considering the growing recognition of impact that both have on politics in the United States and abroad.

Why the absence of research on women and gender? Is it reflective of low submission rates of such essays to comparative journals? Is it reflective of low acceptance rates for such essays? Perhaps it reflects the nature of the discipline: the norm of starting from the literature when formulating theories may limit students' opportunities to move *beyond* the literature and incorporate new perspectives. As a corollary, maybe the risks (at the dissertation, conference, article submission, and junior faculty levels) are too high, and the rewards too low, to warrant engaging in innovative research.

Why the virtual absence of research that employs the newer approaches in political science? Rational choice may be increasing in popularity, but this is not reflected in the articles published in the three

main comparative journals. Formal models are practically nonexistent, as is the "new" institutionalism. Are the limitations of journal space the explanatory factor? Perhaps research on paradigms is submitted but not accepted. Perhaps most researchers believe that philosophy of science is *passé* and/or irrelevant.

And what about the focus on quantification? Has the increase in articles that employ quantitative methods lead to an increase in knowledge? Or are researchers merely spinning their wheels, devoting their attention to the bells, whistles, and minutiae rather than the motive power of politics? The philosophy of science literature is replete with debate on just these questions.<sup>3</sup> It would seem as if comparative political science has accepted the rationale of quantitative work, but has hardly (or just?) begun to build an edifice of general axioms or theories using its tools. As an example of the uncertainties of quantification, the debate on replication in political science remains unresolved (see Ames 1996; Hernson 1995; King 1995; Lustick 1996; Maisel 1995; Meier 1995).

And finally, what has been gained from more comparative and theoretically-driven research? Are conclusions more valid and reliable? Do recent insights at least match, if not supersede, those of earlier researchers? Or has there been a decline in quality? Tensions persist in this particular academic community between so-called "area specialists" and so-called "comparativists" (by no means two mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories), with some analysts asserting that favorable answers to the above questions are already in evidence with the marginalization of area studies (Bates 1997). Others, however, counter that area studies need not conform to a hegemonic standard of comparability and replicability because research in this field already has its own tools for replication, validity, and reliability (Lustick 1997; Maisel 1995). More moderate commentators, though, suggest that political science is harmed by the marginalization of area studies research (Bates 1996a, 1996b; Laitin 1996).

In conclusion, the aims of the behavioralist revolutionaries—greater comprehensiveness, more realism and precision, and the development of theory and concepts—have been

met with modest success. Some concerns, such as the ignorance of gender, the value of quantification, the negligible impact of new approaches and paradigms, and the utility of

comparative-quantitative “versus” case-study-qualitative research, remain. These questions warrant the attention of concerned observers and shapers of the disciplines.

## Notes

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1. If *CPS* had not published a special issue on courts, this theme, too, would have been absent from the list.

2. Whether quantitative or qualitative work means greater reliability and validity is uncertain, and is a debate which I am reticent to engage in.

3. See for example Budziszewski (1984); Feyerabend (1978); Hempel (1966); Hollis (1994); Kuhn (1970); Lakatos (1978); Winch (1958).

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