

The revolution in the nature and purposes of comparative politics, to which we were exhorted by Macridis and others in the early 1950s, implied a more comparative and sociological orientation in our teaching and research. By taking a survey of textbooks used in the field and a mail survey of university teachers of comparative politics courses, the author collected data on the teaching enterprise to complement data on research activities. These data show that a majority of the textbooks reflect the revolution in comparative politics in some way but around one-third do not and that 40% of the courses are taught in a country-by-country format. Hence, despite the widespread espousal of its aims, in teaching and textbooks the "revolution" is far from complete, and there may be a slight retrenchment toward more traditional approaches.

## PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH

### Comparative Politics in the 1980s

LAWRENCE C. MAYER  
Texas Tech University

#### I

Every political scientist is now aware of a series of clarion calls and impassioned exhortations, issued beginning mainly in the mid-1950s, for a "revolution" in comparative politics—a revolution to render the field more cosmopolitan in scope, more interdisciplinary in approach, and more "scientific" in method and goal (e.g., Macridis, 1955; Eckstein, 1963). This putative revolution was of course an integral part of the effort to apply the methods and criteria of science to the study of politics in general.

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This latter enterprise, the scientific study of politics, involves a shift in focus from description for its own sake to the goal of explanation and, in a probabilistic sense, increasing predictive power.

This assumes that there are epistemological criteria for scientifically adequate explanations, criteria that apply to both natural and behavioral sciences. Such an explanation consists of a principle or general statement of the relationship between two or more concepts, such that if the principle were true, the particular phenomenon to be explained (the explicandum) logically should occur given stipulated preconditions. Explanations thus take the form of if-then statements (if *x*, then *y*). This form of statement infers that the phenomenon *x* has some direct or indirect causal impact on concept *y*. The explanation thus accounts for the explicandum, a particular case of the concept *y*, by the presence of a particular manifestation of the concept *x*. It is clear then that a given phenomenon is explained according to scientific epistemology by being shown to be a particular case of a generic pattern. Explanation is thus inherently a generalizing activity and inexorably involves the method of comparison.

The field of comparative politics, however, is widely understood to be concerned with cross-national or cross-cultural analysis. Clearly one may formulate general, explanatory principles within the framework of scientific epistemology without engaging in such cross-national or cross-cultural analyses. For example, one may compare regions within a nation or engage in diachronic analysis (Thrupp, 1970). Nevertheless, cross-national analysis has a special contribution to make in dealing with the problems inherent in applying the aforementioned epistemology to the study of politics.

Explanations of political phenomena differ from those of physical phenomena in that the former phenomena are nearly always "overdetermined," the product of a greater number and variety of causes than could ever be encompassed in any single analysis. The unanalyzed or exogenous variables that have a causal impact on the explicandum frequently are attributes of whole systems, such as the cultural and historical contexts in which the explicanda occur. Explanatory principles cannot be isolated from such contexts in the world of human behavior. Hence, when contextual or system-level variables may have an impact on the explicandum in question, one can only try to ascertain the nature and extent of such contextual impacts. This is done by the application of the explanatory principles to the greatest feasible variety of such contexts.

To the extent that such contexts vary among political systems, the problem calls for cross-national analysis (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 51-56). However, as suggested above, contexts may also vary among regions or among points in time within a system.

Moreover, one may contribute to the enterprise of cross-national analysis with studies drawn from a single country. When explanations are drawn from such single-country studies—explanations that have theoretical or potential applicability to other contexts—such studies clearly contribute to the goals of cross-national analysis.

Clearly cross-contextual analysis is one major method for dealing with one of the most critical problems in explaining social or political phenomena, the problem of isolating the impact of exogenous variables. When such exogenous variables are the attributes of whole systems, cross-system or cross-national comparison becomes the appropriate method.

While country studies may contribute to the purposes of comparison as a method, they are far less likely to do so than a cross-national format in writing or teaching. Hence, while not implying that a country-by-country organization is necessarily noncomparative, the distinction between a country-by-country format and a cross-national format is a useful indicator of the extent to which the comparative method has actually displaced the old descriptive purposes of the study of comparative government.

The essence, then, of the “revolution” in comparative politics is that the study of foreign governments is no longer justified for its own sake. Rather, both the *raison d’être* and the essence of the enterprise is the construction of explanatory generalizations that have cross-contextual applicability.

Revolutions, however, have a tendency to generate a flurry of activity without altering the substance of what generated them in the first place. “*Le plus ça change, le plus c’est la même chose*” (cf. Rasmussen, 1972: 71-72). Now that the dust has settled from this particular revolution, it would be useful to determine whether the exhortations to the barriers of the 1950s have resulted in a new order in the scholarly activities in the 1980s or whether they have merely ended with a Thermidorian Reaction. We have preached a “new comparative politics,” but to what extent have we practiced it in our research and teaching activities? This assessment constitutes the purpose of this article.

Scholarly activities are here assumed to take the forms both of writing for publication and of teaching. The question of the comparative

orientation of published research in the field has been eloquently answered by other scholars in the pages of this journal (Sigelman and Gabois, 1982). This article will concentrate on the extent to which the teaching enterprise reflects the goals of the new comparative politics. The teaching enterprise, in turn, consists both in the way courses are presented by the instructor and in the content and organization of the assigned readings. For the investigation of the last variable a survey of textbooks will be used. For the former variable a survey of likely instructors of comparative politics courses was conducted.

The way in which courses in the discipline are taught is of great importance to the success of this revolution, for the teaching enterprise is the vehicle by which entrants to the field are socialized as to its very nature. If we are serious about our putative goal of restructuring comparative politics from a description of selected foreign governments to the development of cross-nationally applicable explanatory generalizations, it would seem that we can best support that new goal by presenting courses in the field accordingly. There may be a danger of the perception of hypocrisy in the instructor's building a case for the comparative method and then proceeding to present the substantive material of the course in a noncomparative manner. At the least students will have a greater opportunity for internalizing the comparative method when they are forced to apply that method to actual data than when they merely hear the method described in the abstract. The undergraduate and subsequently the graduate courses in the field constitute the all-important first impression of that field for its future practitioners, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that this impression could have a powerful and often persisting impact on how these practitioners will perceive the field and their functions in it. Thus it is assumed here that one whose training in the field of comparative politics has been entirely or even preponderantly confined to courses that focus on the description of selected foreign governments on a configurative basis would be less likely to focus his or her scholarly efforts on the construction of cross-nationally applicable explanatory generalizations than would one whose training was preponderantly in comparative analysis as a method.

The training that one receives is affected in turn by two factors: the manner in which the course is organized and presented by the instructor, and the nature of the textbooks and other reading material assigned to the students. Accordingly, two kinds of data relevant to the teaching enterprise are presented in this article: data from a survey of major

textbooks in comparative politics and data from a survey of academics teaching comparative politics courses.

## II

The textbook data were gathered from a survey of available comparative government textbooks at this author's university. Since the concern is with modern comparative politics, no book was chosen with a publication date prior to 1960. Given the efficiency of most publishers in distributing such books over the years, it seemed reasonable to assume that this "convenience" sample would not be unrepresentative of the texts extant in the field. The sample consisted of 61 textbooks (see Appendix). Edited books of readings were not included since these generally consist of selections from the professional literature itself cited below. Moreover, since such readings usually constitute research pieces, they are far more likely to take on a comparative and explanatory focus than would a textbook. Obviously research books such as those normally issued through university presses are not considered textbooks as such, and have not been included in this sample.

Three possible categories of textbook organization were set up: comparative, country-by-country, and topical but country-by-country within each topic. The textbooks were judged with respect to these categories. A few books fell into more than one category when a portion of the book was organized one way and another portion was organized another way.

Two other types of data were also coded for each book: whether the book contained a discussion of the comparative method (often in an introduction)—a phenomenon found in numerous books otherwise organized on a country-by-country basis—and whether the book to any significant and systematic extent went beyond the consideration of governmental structures and laws and included concepts or data from other social sciences (e.g., a consideration of cultural factors, class stratification, or economic variables). Such an interdisciplinary approach is characteristic of the attempt to employ comparative analysis as a tool to formulate explanations. Hence those books that, although organized along country lines, have the attributes of a discussion of the comparative method and of the inclusion of a significant and systematic use of interdisciplinary concepts and data generally take on an

explanatory perspective. Such books are more akin to modern than to prerevolutionary comparative politics in their purpose, method, and outlook. The distinctions between a descriptive and an explanatory purpose is crucial here. A book may be comparatively organized but still primarily consist of a description of facts for their own sake, while another book organized on a country-by-country basis may search for explanations of political phenomena. Books in the explanatory mode all seem to utilize sociological or other concepts and data beyond the structures of government as such; hence this latter datum is a useful, nonjudgmental indicator of whether a book is presented with an explanatory purpose. As discussed above, in order to explain phenomena, one must analyze whatever factors substantially affect the explicandum. Political phenomena occur in a context of many factors external to political institutions. Hence, the inclusion of such concepts or data is assumed to support the goal of presenting comparative analysis as a method of constructing explanations.

Each book is coded with a point for each of the factors that indicate use of the comparative method—a comparative organization, a discussion of the comparative method, and the use of contextual concepts and data. In addition one-half point was scored for a topical organization but country-by-country within each topic, and a point was deducted for a straight country-by-country format that, other things being equal, eschews the goals of cross-national analysis. In this way a rough overall comparativist score may be reached for each book. By averaging scores for books published in the same year and by plotting these resulting data points along a diachronic dimension (by publication date), it is possible to see if any trends manifest themselves with respect to the comparativist orientation of the textbooks surveyed here.

Although conclusions drawn from such data must necessarily be tentative, the data do seem to reflect some trends. In the period of the 1960s there was great variation with respect to the comparative orientation of textbooks reflecting a still-divided field over the issues of the revolution in comparative politics. The popularity of the new comparative politics seems to have peaked in the decade of the 1970s as reflected in the higher average comparative orientation of the texts. The data for the beginning of the 1980s seems to reflect a partial retrenchment from the comparative method in teaching and textbook-writing as professors are rediscovering value in description and in a configurative, country-by-country format for teaching purposes.

The data from the textbook survey are summarized in Table 1. The aggregate data on this topic are moderately encouraging from the

comparative  
orientation score

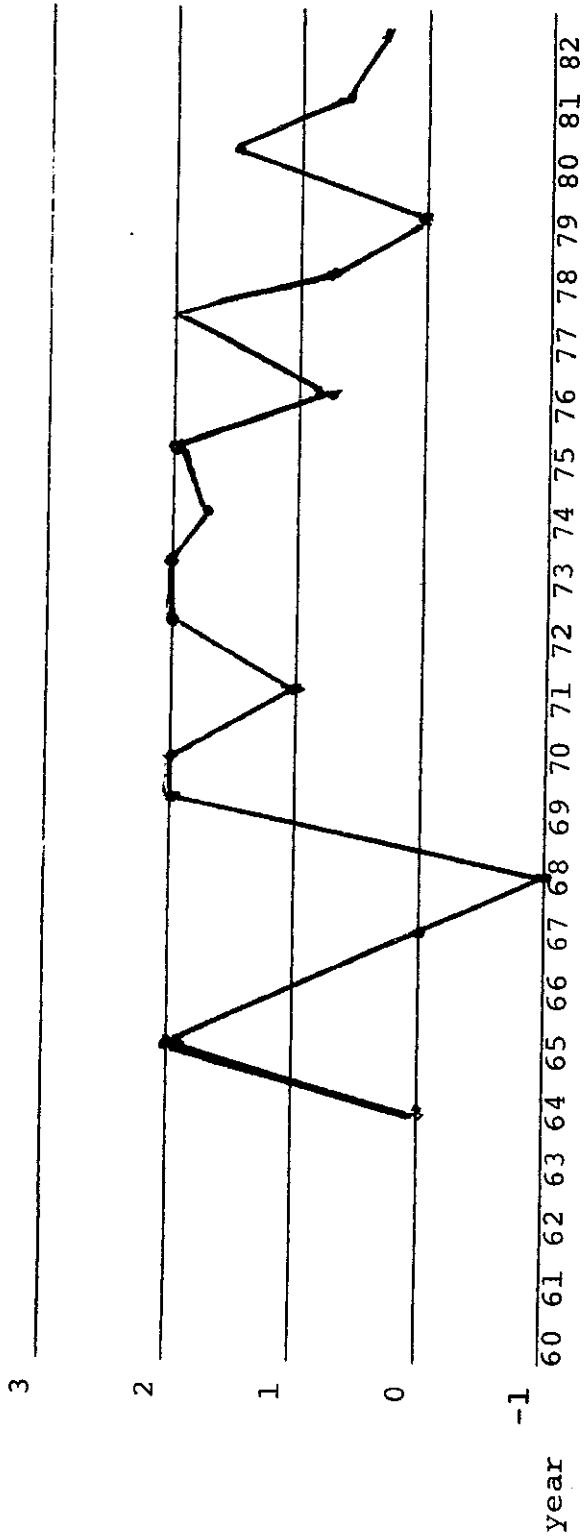


Figure 1: Trends in the Comparative Orientation of Textbooks

TABLE 1  
Textbook Survey

Total	Subject Category	Organized Comparatively	Organized by Country	Topical Country	Discusses Comparative Method	Uses Concepts From Other Social Sciences
23	General Comparative	20	5	2	10	17
16	Anglo and W. European Govt.	7	7	1	3	9
7	Developing Areas	6	1	0	0	7
8	Latin America	4	4	0	0	7
5	Africa	4	1	0	1	5
<u>5</u>	Communist Systems	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
61		45	22	3	14	47

NOTE: The sum of column totals exceeds the grand total because some books are coded twice when part of the book is organized one way and another part of the book is coded another way.



perspective of cooperative analysis as a method. A clear majority of the textbooks surveyed are coded as presenting all or part of their data in a comparative format. Clearly this represents a significant movement in the comparative direction since about 1950. Moreover, it is worth noting that many of the books organized along country lines still contained one or the other of the aforementioned indicators of modern comparative analysis. However, it is worth noting that over a quarter of a century since Roy Macridis's clarion call to a comparative revolution, about a third of the textbooks in the field are being presented either in a straight country-by-country format or in a country-by-country format under topical headings. (Both formats generally eschew an emphasis on generalizing across system boundaries.)

Clearly courses in comparative politics as a field (such as "Introduction to Comparative Politics") lend themselves to a comparative format more easily than do textbooks on the politics of some specified geographical area. A breakdown of the books by coverage into three categories—European and Western areas, developing and Third World areas, and comparative politics in general—supports the expectation that this latter group is the most strongly comparative. Indeed, 19 of the 23 books in this category were organized exclusively along a comparative format, and one more was so organized for a major portion of the book. This is encouraging from a comparativist perspective for two reasons: (1) Such courses are the ones that frequently constitute the impressionable first exposure of the student to the field; (2) these courses frequently purport to present the field as such while many area books operate under no such pretense. A comparative orientation also seemed to dominate the developing areas section, a result that should not be surprising in light of the reality that it has been inherently difficult to conduct research on these areas or on reasons to teach about them in a traditional format. After all, traditional formats involved a focus on Western-type constitutionally designed structures—structures that are frequently either absent in developing areas or that fulfill significantly different functions. Accordingly, it has been in conjunction with the study of such non-Western areas that the nontraditional—i.e., sociological and theoretical—orientation found some of its earliest and most articulate adherents (e.g., Almond and Coleman, 1960; Apter, 1965.)

Even within this category significant differences may be discerned. Within the broader developing areas category, noncomparative texts have been concentrated in the Latin American area while the books in the African and Asian areas seem also uniformly organized along com-

parative lines. The only means of accounting for this pattern may be the fact that the study of Latin America is an older enterprise, while the discovery of Africa and Asia as useful objects for analysis to a large extent coincided with the revolution in comparative politics; hence scholars in the latter two areas may be less traditionally inclined.

The older prerevolution comparative politics that Macridis so devastatingly indicted (Macridis, 1955) was characterized, among other things, by a parochial focus on Western industrial systems. Since the study of these areas characterized traditional comparative politics, it is not surprising to find a greater concentration of traditionally organized, country-by-country textbooks among the books dealing with Western industrial systems. This is the only category that does not have a majority of the books organized along comparative lines. Yet even here, seven of the fifteen books in question were organized along comparative lines, and one used a country-by-country organization within a topical format. Thus it appears that the revolution in comparative politics has penetrated even the study of the so-called traditional areas, albeit more slowly and less extensively than in other areas.

The foregoing data indicate that the orientation toward comparative politics as a method rather than as the study of foreign governments is reflected in the textbooks in the field to a significant but imperfect extent. While there are undoubtedly more comparatively organized texts in the field today than there were a quarter of a century ago, a substantial number of traditionally oriented texts continue to be published. Moreover, the foregoing data do not indicate the relative popularity of the textbooks. In the European area for instance the trends are not overly encouraging to explicit cross-national analysis. Books organized along country-by-country lines (e.g., Macridis, 1978; Beer and Ulam, 1973) are appearing in their third or fourth editions and seem more popular than other books organized along comparative lines (Mayer and Burnett, 1977; Wood, 1978) that have not gotten past a first edition. Meanwhile the most recent additions to the general comparative lists (e.g., Wesson, 1981; Deutsch et al, 1981; Bishop and Meszaros, 1980) are generally country-by-country and decidedly traditional in format. The books stressing comparative politics as a method, all older books, failed to generate sufficient sales to justify second editions (Bill and Hargrave, 1973; Przeworski and Teune, 1970; Mayer, 1972). It appears that the most recent commercial book publishing trends may in fact be in the direction of a country-by-country organization and away from any explicit cross-national organization.

There are several possible explanations for this trend, only one of which is a possible rejection of the goals of the new comparative politics. Scholars may perceive that political information removed from its national context is not comprehensible to beginning students. Thus the trend may indicate a judgment that, however desirable for research purposes, a straight comparative organization is not as appropriate for undergraduate instruction. The point of noting the trend is not to pejoratively judge the merits of a country-by-country organization, but rather to point out that a slight trend does exist that in one sense seems to conflict with the articulated imperatives of the revolution in comparative politics.

### III

The presentation of the course material by the instructor is probably the most crucial single factor in determining the student's orientation toward the field. The instructor determines the order in which material is presented, either through the assigned readings or directly through the class lectures. Moreover, the instructor has the crucial function of evaluating the students by assigning grades; hence the instructor's interpretation of course material is likely to override whatever conflicting presentations may be found in the assigned readings. Accordingly, it is crucial to the purposes of this article to inquire into the organization of courses in comparative politics by the people teaching such courses.

This task was accomplished through a mail survey of people teaching comparative politics courses at four-year colleges and universities in the United States. The sample included those people listed in the 1980 biographical directory of the American Political Science Association listing comparative politics or a foreign area specialty as their first substantive field. (Methodology and positive theory were not regarded as substantive in this sense; people listing these as their first field and comparative politics as their second were included.) Approximately 250 questionnaires were mailed and 159 responses were received in time to be included in the analysis.

The major dependent variable on which the survey has attempted to gather data is the question of whether courses in comparative politics taught during the past five years have been organized primarily comparatively or country-by-country.

It is important to realize that this variable is an imperfect indicator of whether the course reflected a comparative orientation. It is of course possible to continually draw comparative implications while using a country-by-country format. Nevertheless, the decision as to whether a country-by-country course was still presented with a comparative orientation or to what extent it had such an orientation would necessarily be a subjective and imprecise judgment. Moreover, in terms of emphasis, a country organization is likely to place considerably less stress on the method of comparison than a topical and explicitly comparative format. The distinction made in this article seems less ambiguous and provides an indication of the extent to which a comparative orientation pervades teaching in the field. Data were obtained on whether courses were taught in seven categories: (1) introduction to comparative politics; (2) the politics of developing areas; (3) the politics of western Europe; (4) Britian or the older Commonwealth; (5) any nonwestern area course, such as African politics, Latin American politics, or Asian politics; (6) seminar in general comparative politics; and (7) other more specialized comparative courses. Respondents were then asked whether each of the courses taught was organized along comparative lines. If the course was sometimes taught comparatively and sometimes noncomparatively, a third category was created and coded accordingly.

Some caveats should be kept in mind in evaluating the data. It must have been readily apparent that a disposition to teach comparatively was the major variable being elicited, and it might have been perceived that a comparative approach best fits the professional norm (in the sense of what is expected of those at the "cutting edge" of the discipline). Hence respondents might have been tempted to claim a comparative approach, perhaps by stretching the definition of what this approach entails beyond that spelled out in the survey instrument, even when their courses have not actually been so organized. Perhaps even more likely, a self-selection mechanism may have been operating through the response pattern. A traditionally disposed scholar, perceiving that his country-by-country approach was the "wrong" answer or being out of sympathy with what he perceives to be the intent of the survey, might be less likely to respond than comparatively disposed scholars. Hence it is conceivable that the available data underestimates the amount of country-by-country teaching that actually occurs in comparative course. This possibility is exacerbated by the mode of selecting the sample. Members of the American Political Science Association constitute only a fraction of the people teaching political science courses in American colleges and

universities. Moreover, it is likely that such members would tend to be those scholars more aware of and in agreement with the more modern trends in their field and the norms they entail. Hence it is reasonable to suppose that members of the association may be more likely to have a comparative orientation than nonmembers, an eventuality that would skew the results toward more comparative teaching than actually occurs.

As implied above, certain courses or categories of courses are more impressionistically associated with an orientation to comparative politics as a method than are other courses. An introduction to comparative politics as a field may lend itself to a comparative orientation somewhat more than courses defined by a geographic area. Specialized courses dealing with nongeographically defined topics (such as political violence and political behavior) clearly lend themselves to a comparative approach, and the proliferation of such courses has been associated with the revolution in the field. Since the initial attacks on traditional comparative politics contained the charge of a parochial focus on Western areas, there seemed to be some tendency for those identifying with the revolution in comparative politics to focus on Third World areas while more traditionally oriented scholars remained somewhat more concentrated in the Western areas and Soviet bloc studies. A declining percentage of scholars teaching such Western courses relative to developing-areas courses might be one indication of the impact of the revolution on the field.

The data show that a narrow majority (51.5%) of the respondents have taught some non-Western area course in the past five years, and 38.3% have taught a general development areas course. Thus it is clear that the expanded geographical scope of comparative politics called for by Macridis is solidly reflected in the courses being taught. The data also show that a general comparative course, such as Introduction to Comparative Politics, was taught by almost two-thirds of our respondents; however, almost 45% of them taught the course in a foreign-country format. Thus, the comparative course to which the most students are exposed, presumably the first comparative course to which many of them are exposed and perhaps the only comparative course to which many of them are exposed, is presented as the study of foreign governments by just under half of the respondents to the survey.

A comparative organization is employed in a clear majority of all courses taught by our respondents (59%); hence it is clear that the exhortations to be comparative have affected the way courses are taught

**TABLE 2**  
**Percentage of Respondents Teaching Each Course**

Introduction to Comparative Politics	64.7%
Politics of Developing Areas	38.3%
Western Europe	42.1%
Britain and Commonwealth	10.1%
Non-Western Area	51.6%
Seminar in Comparative Politics	54.7%
Other Comparative Courses	37.7%

to a significant extent. Nonetheless, a substantial residue of country-by-country teaching remains—41% of all courses reported in the survey. Therefore, while the opinion leaders of the field may declare that the revolution in comparative politics (or in political science in general) has been won (e.g., Easton, 1971: ix; Holt and Turner, 1970: 5), substantial pockets of traditionalist resistance remain in the teaching enterprise. Nothing approaching consensus has emerged on the nature and purpose of the discipline; while the comparative orientation seems to be “winning,” it has not yet won.

The course-by-course data are summed up in Table 3. The data do confirm the suspicion discussed above that an orientation toward comparative politics is not evenly distributed among the different courses offered. However, the distribution only partly conforms to the aforementioned expectations.

As expected, Western area courses constitute one of the major pockets of a traditional orientation with a slight plurality (49% to 47%) taking a country-by-country approach. British government and Commonwealth courses, when they include Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, offer an almost unique opportunity for a most-similar-systems design approach. Yet 75% of the time this opportunity is eschewed, and either the course is confined to Great Britain alone or the Commonwealth is presented in a country-by-country format.

Somewhat surprisingly, non-Western area courses also emerge as one of the significant pockets of a country-by-country orientation, with 55% of the respondents teaching the course in that fashion, 44% using the comparative approach, and 1% doing it sometimes one way and sometimes the other. Apparently area courses seem to elicit the traditional

TABLE 3  
 Percentage of Respondents Teaching Each Course Comparatively

	Taught Comparatively	Country By Country	Sometimes Each
Intro to Compar Politics	54.4	44.7	1
Politics of Developing Areas	72.1	26.2	1.6
Western Europe	47.8	49.2	2.9
Britain & Commonwealth	25	75	0
Non-Western Area	54.9	43.9	1.2
Seminar in Comparative	80.5	18.4	1.1
Other Comparative	58.3	40.0	1.7
All Courses	59%	40	1.5

approach, regardless of the area. The comparative approach does overwhelmingly dominate courses more generically defined as politics of developing areas (72% comparative, 26% noncomparative, and 2% sometimes comparative), and it is likely that comparatively oriented scholars are more inclined to offer courses so defined rather than a non-Western area course. Moreover, the textbook data seemed to suggest that some non-Western areas (such as Latin America) may be less dominated by the comparative approach than others (such as Africa).

As expected, the introductory graduate course in comparative politics is overwhelmingly comparative (80.5% to 18.4%, with 1.1% listing that they "sometimes" teach it comparatively) This is an important datum and an encouraging one from the comparativist perspective, since this is presumably the first course at the graduate level in which future practitioners of the field are trained. Still, given our ostensibly successful revolution in comparative politics, it is notable that almost 20% of the graduate seminars in the field in general are taught as

country-by-country courses. At this level the impact of the revolution is more obvious but far from complete. Specialized topic courses are taught comparatively in a clear majority of cases, as expected; however, a more substantial percentage of such courses (40%) are still taught in a country-by-country fashion (and 2% taught that way sometimes) than had been anticipated. After all, courses defined topically certainly lend themselves to a comparative organization, and it would seem to require a certain effort to arrange such material along country-by-country lines, especially since most textbooks whose subject is defined by a topic rather than an area are usually organized in a comparative format. (A survey of such special topics books—e.g., the comparative study of violence, of legislatures, and of parties—found 23 of them organized comparatively and only 2 organized by country.)

It seems fair to say, based upon the foregoing data, that the revolution in comparative politics has had a substantial impact on the way courses are taught, but that the comparative politics faculties have incorporated the entailments of that revolution in their teaching to a highly imperfect extent. On the one hand, a majority of all the courses in the field seem to be presented in a comparative format while a generation ago one could find few comparative courses so taught. On the other hand, a substantial minority of the comparative courses are taught as if Macridis and his fellow revolutionaries had never written.

Impressionistically, it seemed as if one could identify stereotypes—ideal types if you will—of the comparatively oriented “modern” scholar on the one hand and the noncomparatively oriented “traditionalist” on the other. As suggested above, there were sound reasons for the comparative revolution having a special appeal to scholars interested in non-Western areas—these areas lacking the institutions studied by traditionalists and these “newly discovered” areas being open to new scholars and new approaches. One might, therefore, picture the comparativist as being interested in a Third World area, being relatively well published as a scholar (since presumably the comparative approach defines the cutting edge of what research is valid), and perhaps having somewhat less longevity (the “young Turks” as opposed to the “old guard”). On the other hand, one might envision the traditionalist as an older, less well-published individual interested in the traditional areas, e.g., western Europe or the Soviet bloc. However, impressionistic stereotypes frequently have an imperfect fit with reality.

Accordingly, cross-tabulations were run to determine if any of the following attributes were related to (i.e., statistically predictive of) a



disposition to teach comparative politics courses in a comparative format: academic rank, the geographic focus of specialization, research productivity, and years in the discipline. None of these attributes proved to be predictive of a disposition to teach comparatively to a statistically significant extent. Apparently the stereotypes do not describe reality. The surprising finding is that the disposition to be comparative or not is fairly evenly distributed about the academic spectrum.

A possible exception may be among those who specialize in Soviet bloc studies, the only specialization in which a majority of the respondents did not report teaching a majority of their courses comparatively. Soviet bloc studies, given the difficulty in obtaining data in that area, have not been a notable haven for the behavioral approach. Moreover, "Kremlinology" courses frequently focus on one nation—the U.S.S.R.—a fact that does not encourage a comparative orientation. Hence it would not be surprising to find more traditional orientations among Kremlinologists than among other comparativists. However, only 23 of our respondents claimed this area of focus; hence any tendencies noted among them should be regarded as very tentative.

#### IV

Comparative politics in the 1980s is a field without a consensus as to its nature or purpose. When scholars such as Macridis and Eckstein wrote their seminal critical assessments of the field they were attempting to conceptualize the field as a method, a tool for dealing with the impact of contextual factors upon our objects of explanation. Implicitly or explicitly, they assumed that explanation is the goal of the scholarly enterprise. The essence of their critique of the traditional approach was that it elevated the description of foreign government to an end in itself. The differences here were not merely methodological; the differences were over the essence of what scholars should be trying to do.

The past three decades have produced a considerable body of exhortation to adopt the scientific approach with its comparative orientation. The opinion leaders in the field have preached this to be the nature of the field. Furthermore, a substantial portion of the most significant (i.e., influential) books and articles by the most reputable scholars in the field constituted the development of conceptual frameworks, paradigms if you will, designed to introduce genuinely comparable

concepts into the discipline (cf. Holt and Richardson, 1970: 21-71). Few of these concepts were ever actually translated into testable propositions or theories about substantive political phenomena, least of all by their own authors. This bifurcation of theorizing on the one hand and "research" on the other, lamented by Easton (1971: 64-69) has paradoxically been exacerbated by the very search for increasingly general theory, which he advocated. Comparative concepts that are empirically empty can generate only metaphysical musings in a Thomistic style, not comparative research (La Palombara, 1970). While we preached empirical or positive theory, our most influential scholars produced abstract, almost metaphysical generalizations that are unaffected by the hyperfactual descriptions of foreign governments others of us were gathering.

Clearly many of the rest of us have not practiced what has been preached in our research, in our textbook-writing and in our teaching. Even these opinion leaders themselves frequently do not practice what they preach; some of the most prominent scholars among the aforementioned exhorters of the revolution are the authors of traditionally organized or noncomparative books and articles in the field (e.g., Macridis, 1978; Macridis and Brown, 1960; Deutsch et al., 1981).

It appears that the revolution in comparative politics has not proceeded in a linear fashion from a traditional orientation to an increasingly comparativist one. Rather, it appears that there was a significant increase in the popularity of the new comparative politics that peaked sometime in the late 1970s. Since then the orientations and values of the new comparative politics seem not to have further penetrated the remaining pockets of traditional orientation, and in recent years a traditional orientation seems to have gained some slight resurgence in popularity, as indicated by our textbook data.

It may very well be that an absence of consensus as to the nature and purpose of comparative politics is the one permanent defining attribute of the field. Certainly no such consensus can or should be imposed among scholars.

It does seem, however, that the proportion of scholars doing comparative politics in a traditional way exceeds the proportion who would say that that is what comparative politics is or ought to be. Even the more traditional, country-by-country textbooks frequently contain long, analytical introductions extolling the blessings of the comparative method before ignoring their own exhortations and proceeding to describe or analyze a select group of nations figuratively. Obviously, cross-

national, empirical studies present serious problems in data collection, conceptualization, and analysis (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 91-131). Organizing courses comparatively generally takes more effort than presenting them configuratively. Comparative analysis in the modern sense is easier to say than to do. Under the pressure of annual reports (what have you published this year?), it is readily understandable why so many single-country studies are ground out and why so many courses are organized in the most convenient fashion.

Ultimately however, a discipline (like people) will be judged by what it does more than by what it says. If, despite all of our exhortations about the virtues of comparison, we teach country-by-country, present textbooks so organized, and publish single-country research pieces, students and future practitioners of the field will come to view the field as a collection of descriptions of foreign governments. Clearly the revolution in comparative politics has had a significant impact on teaching and textbook-writing in the field. Yet, despite all of the flurry and furor, this revolution has left a significant body of our current activities untouched.

## APPENDIX

### TEXTBOOKS INCLUDED IN SURVEY BY CATEGORIES

#### GENERAL COMPARATIVE

- Almond and Powell, *Comparative Politics* (2nd edition)
- Almond et al., *Comparative Politics Today*
- Bill and Hargrave, *Comparative Politics: The Quest for Theory*
- Bishop and Mezaros, *Comparing Nations*
- Blondell, *Comparing Political Systems*
- Caltell and Sisson, *Comparative Politics*
- Carter and Herz, *Government and Politics in the 20th Century*
- Curtis, *The Study of Comparative Government*
- Deutsch, *Politics and Government*
- Deutsch, Dominguez, and Hecllo, *Comparative Government*
- Finer, *Comparative Government*
- Groth, *Comparative Politics: A Distributive Approach*
- Hitchner and Levine, *Comparative Government and Politics*
- Holt and Turner, *The Methodology of Comparative Research*

Irish and Frank, *Introduction Comparative Politics* (2nd edition)  
La Palombara, *Politics Within Nations*  
Mayer, *Comparative Political Inquiry*  
Merkl, *Modern Comparative Politics* (2nd. edition)  
Merritt, *Systematic Approaches to Comparative Politics*  
Przeworski and Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*  
Rasmussen, *The Process of Politics*  
Roth and Wilson, *The Comparative Study of Politics* (2nd edition)  
Scarrow, *Comparative Political Analysis*  
Wesson, *Modern Government*

#### WESTERN DEMOCRACIES

Beer and Ulam, *Patterns of Government* (3rd edition)  
Brady, *Democracy in the Dominions*  
Carter and Herz *Major Foreign Powers* (6th edition)  
Corry and Abraham, *Elements of Democratic Government* (4th edition)  
Dragnitch and Rasmussen, *Major European Governments* (6th edition)  
Groth and Leiber, *Contemporary Politics: Europe*  
Helsler, *Politics in Europe*  
Isaak, *European Politics*  
Lipson, *The Democratic Civilization*  
Macridis, *Modern Political Systems: Europe* (4th edition)  
Mayer and Burnett, *Politics in Industrial Societies*  
Neumann, *European Government* (4th edition)  
Rothman, Scarrow and Schain, *European Society and Politics*  
Smith, *Politics in Europe*  
Wood, *Power and Policy in Western Democracy*

#### AFRICA

Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa*  
Bretton, *Power and Politics in Africa*  
Markowitz, *Power and Class in Africa*  
Potholm, *Four African Systems*  
Rubin, *Introduction to African Politics*

**LATIN AMERICA**

- Burnett and Johnson, *Political Forces in Latin America*  
 Denton, *Latin American Politics: A Functional Approach*  
 Duncan, *Latin American Politics*  
 Edelman, *Latin American Government*  
 Kantor, *Patterns of Politics in Latin America*  
 Kline, *Latin American Politics and Development*  
 Needler, *The Political Systems of Latin America*  
 Williams and Wright, *Latin American Politics: A Developmental Approach*

**DEVELOPING AREAS**

- Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*  
 Gamer, *The Developing Nations*  
 Heeger, *The Politics of Underdevelopment*  
 Hunter, *Modernizing Peasant Societies*  
 Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*  
 Kautsky, *The Political Consequences of Modernization*  
 Schmitt, *Dynamics of the Third World*

**COMMUNIST AREAS**

- Bertsch, *Power and Policy in Communist Systems*  
 Lonescu, *The Politics of European Communist States*  
 Shaffer, *The Communist World*  
 Starr, *Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*  
 Wesson, *Communism and Communist Systems*

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*Lawrence C. Mayer is Professor of Political Science at Texas Tech University. He is the author of Comparative Political Inquiry, principal author of Politics in Industrial Societies and coauthor of American Public Policy. He has published several articles on party systems and is currently investigating shifts in female voting behavior in Western democracies.*