Comparative Survey Research and its Infrastructure in Europe

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives a broad overview over comparative surveys in Europe which are so far available in European archives. In contrast to cultural relativism, it defends comparative research as an essential means for deepening our understanding of other cultures and our own culture as well. The article gives a historical overview of the most important comparative surveys with European participation after World War II and ends with the presentation of three large survey programs: the European and World Value Surveys, the International Social Survey Program, and the European Social Survey. Only the latter has succeeded, however, in building up a sufficiently large infrastructure for the support of questionnaire drafting, translation, sampling, data collection, data processing and archiving, and data analysis. We can only hope that a similar infrastructure can be established for other international survey programs in the future.

Key Words: comparative surveys, infrastructure, European and World Values Surveys, International Social Survey Programme, European Social Survey

Publications