Problems and Development in Data Analysis
of Cross-National Comparative Surveys

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ABSTRACT

The issues addressed in this paper are methodological in nature, and deal with the ISSP Religion Module Surveys (1998 and 2008) and Survey on Values and Religious Consciousness in Japan and Germany (2007 and 2008) conducted by myself, each of which are cross-national comparative questionnaire surveys.

There have been numerous discussions on the problems of cross-national surveys. So far, I have investigated these problems by focusing on survey equivalence, the translation of survey questions, the expression of response scale, and survey sampling. In this paper, after examining the problems associated with the data analysis of cross-national surveys, and defining them using ten methodological dichotomies on various devices of data analyses, I propose new strategies to solve these methodological problems.

The ten methodological dichotomies on various devices of data analyses are as follows:
1. cross-national comparison vs. cross-regional/societal/cultural comparison
2. percentage descriptions vs. exploration of meaning
3. denomination vs. faith
4. quantitative vs. qualitative
5. question item vs. dimension
6. description vs. analysis
7. looking at the trees vs. looking at the forest
8. causal laws vs. structural laws
9. hypothesis testing vs. hypothesis exploration
10. measurement model vs. causal model

Key Words: cross-national comparative survey, ISSP, religion, data analysis, methodological problems