

Debating the State of Comparative Politics

Views From Qualitative Research

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Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder's analysis is an important effort to systematically characterize the state of comparative politics. The article quite appropriately insists that our portrayals of research practices in the subfield should be grounded in real data. Munck and Snyder's own characterizations accordingly are based on a large-*N* sample of published articles in three leading subfield journals. This data-driven approach to debating the subfield is not often used, and Munck and Snyder are to be applauded for employing it here. The approach helps us move beyond some stale debates that are grounded in false conceptions of research.

In this short reply, I discuss Munck and Snyder's essay from the standpoint of qualitative research and qualitative methodology (my own research orientation). From this perspective, at least two themes from the article are especially noteworthy and merit close consideration. The first concerns the extent to which qualitative research is practiced in the subfield. Munck and Snyder show that 63.3% of articles in the leading subfield journals are mainly qualitative, whereas only 36.7% are mainly quantitative. Furthermore, they find that far less than half of all articles use any kind of deductive methods and only a tiny percentage (4.4%) use formal deductive methods. As Munck and Snyder suggest, however, the situation may be quite different outside of the subfield journals. Hence, we need to look at other journals to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the kind of research that is published on comparative politics.

A second theme concerns Munck and Snyder's discussion of the methodological problems that hinder the generation of knowledge in the subfield. Some of these problems are uncontroversial for qualitative researchers; in

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