

Tomescu-Dubrow, Irina. 2008. "Decomposition of Long-Term Changes in Political Opinions According to Group-Specific Markov Processes." *ASK. Research&Methods* 17:101-13.

Abstract:

In this paper I use longitudinal data for Poland to test the assumption that political opinion change through time is not entirely due to some universal and time-constant processes; rather, it depends on the initial conditions in a person's state. Information on Poles' evaluations of the past socialist regime available for repeated intervals, and over a sufficiently long time period – ten years – allows me to decompose long-term changes in assessment of socialism into short-term change, and the reliability of responses according to group-specific Markov processes. I obtain three types of stochastic matrices: $M_{t, t+10}$, $M_{t, t+1}$, $M_{rel} = R$, where M refers to a matrix of opinions in time t by opinions in subsequent time, t refers to specific years, and R is the reliability matrix from the measurement of opinions in one-month period. To assess the fit of the observed transition matrix for the 10-year period as a linear combination of matrices $M_{t, t+1}$ and M_{rel} , I apply the random effect maximum likelihood function in STATA, with the bootstrap option for obtaining the standard errors of the coefficients. Results demonstrate that Markov-type processes do not have significant explanatory power for long-term change in opinions about socialism. Substantively, this means that the 'subjective' legacy of the past, namely peoples' views of the former regime, matters.