Harvesting Suggestions: A Strategy for Promoting Policies Designed to Improve Academic Life for International Students

Han Zhang
Mayagul Satlykgylyjova
Merfat Almuhajiri
Steven Brown
Kent State University

Abstract: *The rise in the number of international graduate students in the United States has placed burdens on the academic community, which has responded by endeavoring to provide services such as writing support, tutoring, and counseling. These top-down responses, helpful as they may be, can be supplemented with procedures designed to determine the desires and needs of client groups as expressed by members of these groups themselves. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the operations associated with Q methodology are applicable to assisting international graduate students to articulate policy preferences that could improve the quality of their lives, and also provide decision makers with procedures for harvesting this information for purposes of implementation. In this study, recommendations designed to improve the lives of students were gathered in face-to-face interviews with a dozen geographically-diverse students, whose recommendations were converted into a Q sample (N=32) that was administered to n=23 students, who were instructed to Q sort these recommendations in terms of the extent to which they more or less approved of them. The factors that resulted revealed three vantage points: (A) Egalitarians, who mainly wish to be fairly treated, especially vis-à-vis American students; (B) Accommodationists, who wish to maintain their cultural habits and customs and for the university to adapt to its new visitors; and (C) Assimilationists, who wish to integrate into their new environment and want the university to assist in this task. This study was extended in terms of Q sorts from a half dozen key university administrators who appraised the same sample of recommendations in terms of their feasibility given budgetary, political, and other constraints. Recommendations are made based on matches between student desire and administrative assessment of what is possible,*

and suggestions are made concerning how the procedures employed in this study could serve as a model for similar searches for solutions in other organizational settings.

Introduction

The number of international students studying in the United States has been on a steady increase for the past half century, standing today at more than three-quarters of a million students (see Figure 1). Of these, more than 26,000 are in Ohio (ranked eighth among the states) and more than 2,000 are at Kent State University (2013). Among the many consequences of this influx is that universities have been increasingly burdened with extra duties designed to facilitate this cultural transition and to provide for international students' special needs so that they can go about their scholarly activities.
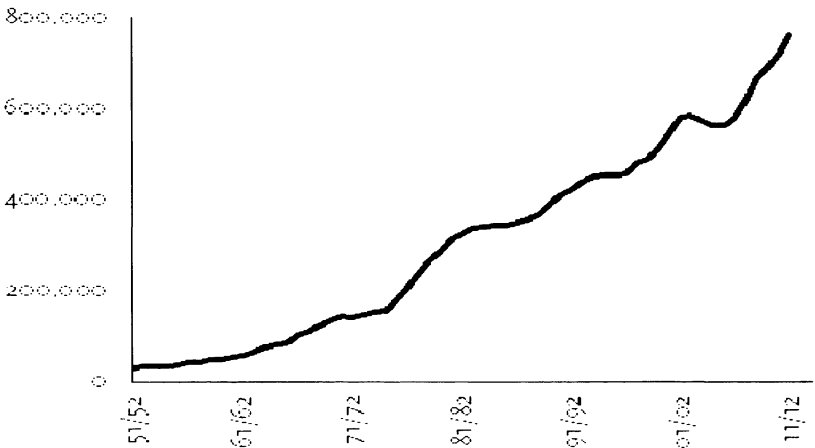

Figure 1: Increase in International Student Population, 1951–2012
(Farrugia, Bhandari, & Chow, 2012, published with permission)

The international student situation is multifaceted. Myers-Walls et al. (2011), for instance, document a number of stressors that international students and their spouses experience upon entering a new environment, including language difficulties, feeling overwhelmed and isolated, marital stress, and such practical matters as locating child care. Many of these same stressors were also found by Sümer, Poyrzli, and Grahame (2008), with the main burden falling on females apparently (Bang, Muriuki, & Hodges, 2008). Negotiating the retention or relinquishing of parts of one's prior identity naturally comes to the fore, as has been addressed by Haugh (2008) and Koehne (2006), as do practicalities such as earning a living. All of this takes place in the context of an institutional setting in which power relations are not equal (Colombo, 2005/2006; Delgado-Romero & Wu, 2010). There are also extra-university factors with which international students must cope,

such as government policies and requirements, as shown in an Australian study by Paton (2007).

The response of the universities has been benevolent for the most part. They have provided courses on English as a second language (ESL), writing and conversation labs, counseling services, legal advice, housing, and tutoring among other services* (see, for example, the Australian study by Schmidt & Miller, 2009). In addition, they have provided the facilities and support for various cultural-recognition events and organizations. Institutional responses such as these can be thought of as *top down* in nature in that they are mainly official responses, initiated with good but varying intent (Pirosca, 2011), that are designed to address problems brought on by the increase in the international student population.

It is not to diminish the importance of top-down solutions to suggest that they can be usefully complemented with recommendations that are *bottom up*; i.e., recommendations that are promoted by members of clientele groups themselves. The harvest of bottom-up policy recommendations will be especially useful if the procedures can be made rigorous and amenable to revealing suggestions that have widespread support and that are at the same time feasible. Moreover, the procedures themselves will be of greater utility if they are sufficiently general as to be applicable in other settings.

Method and Procedures

The procedures adopted for this study are those associated with Q methodology (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012), which has been used for decision making (Durning & Brown, 2007) and in the study of groups that are relatively powerless and marginalized (Brown, 2005; 2006), which often characterizes international students (Goode, 2007). In brief, the process in this study consisted of collecting recommendations from international students concerning steps that their college or university might take to improve their lives, administering these recommendations in the form of a Q sort, and factor analyzing the results. The factors then represent groups of students who have different policy priorities.

In the instant case, the three student members of the research team—themselves international students (from China, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia, respectively)—separately interviewed various other international students from a variety of national backgrounds. To facilitate the process, the structure shown in Table 1 was used to guide

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* In fact, it was a bulletin from a college dean, distributed to all faculty and listing available resources for international students, that provided the impetus for the study reported below.

the search for interviewees. That is, given the local international student population, team members endeavored to select respondents based on the (5)(2)(2)=20 cells of the factorial design: (*afh*) single European female, (*afi*) married European female, ..., (*egh*) single Latin American male, and (*egi*) married Latin American male. Limited time and resources precluded systematic coverage—some cells were overpopulated, others were empty—but the design provided a map that facilitated selection of a more diverse set of respondents than might otherwise have been obtained,[†] and diversity, or representativeness, is the goal in Q-methodological studies.

Table 1: Interviewee Structure

Variables	Levels			N
Region	[a]European	[b]Middle Eastern	[c]Asian	5
	[d]African	[e]Latin American		
Gender	[f]female	[g]male		2
Marital	[h]single	[i]married		2

To extend diversity to the response side of the situation, interviewers were provided with a convenient list of eight values to keep in mind as a checklist during the course of their interviews. The values are as follows, accompanied by hypothetical recommendations to help stimulate interview responses:

Power   Create an office of International Student Ombudsman

Enlightenment   Provide special study rooms for international students

Wealth   Provide more financial assistance for international students

Wellbeing   Make available medical services that include home visits

Skill   Create opportunities to learn and practice lecturing skills

Affection   Establish free-phone rooms so that students can call family

Respect   Organize more opportunities for students to showcase their cultures

Rectitude   Provide space for religious practices (e.g., prayer rooms)

[†] Ultimately, students who participated were from Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Turkmenistan, and Uganda (but none from Australia, Europe, or Latin America), almost 90% of whom were graduate students; representatives of five colleges were included. Of the interviewees, 57% were female and 43% were married. In Q methodology, demographics such as these play a minor role, as will be discussed.

These eight value categories are taken from the policy sciences (Lasswell, 1971), in which the social process is conceptualized as "Participants → seeking to maximize values (gratifying outcomes) → utilize institutions → affecting resources" (p. 18).‡ The focal institution in this instance is, of course, the university, and the participating student is presumably seeking to maximize enlightenment (which affects time, money, and material resources), but other desirable values may also be in play: a desire for respect (through educational attainment), for instance, or for a better livelihood (wealth), or power, or any of the other values. These categories were designed to serve as probes, or reminders, in the event the interviewee failed to touch upon any of these domains.

From the accumulated policy suggestions, a representative sample of $N=32$ recommendations was drawn (see Appendix), each expressed in the form of an imperative sentence, that is, as a demand for action, such as the following:

• Establish something like an international student council through which student concerns, complaints, and suggestions can be brought to the Administration's attention. [power]

• Establish an "academic orientation" comparable to the social orientation that is provided when students first arrive. [enlightenment]

• Improve the allowances for graduate- and teaching-assistant students. [wealth]

• Invite businesses to open locally that are more essential for students (such as ethnic or other affordable cafes) and that are better for them than unhealthy fast food restaurants. [wellbeing]

• Create a course or workshop to help international students learn the language of everyday life—American slang, jokes, the names of fast foods, how to order a latte, etc. [skill]

• Provide advanced information about KSU's Child Development Center so that international students have the opportunity to enroll their children upon arrival. [affection]

• Provide awards (e.g., book discounts, free meals, etc.) as recognition and motivation for international students who excel in their studies. [respect]

• Create quiet spaces within the University where students can meditate, pray, or otherwise pursue spiritual fulfillment. [rectitude]

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‡ The policy sciences also specify a set of seven decisional functions (intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination, and appraisal), of which promotion best characterizes this particular project; i.e., the main goal of this study is to encourage participants to recommend, or promote, preferred outcomes. Selected acceptance of these policy preferences by decision makers and their conversion into authoritative practices is illustrative of the prescriptive function.

The eight value categories appearing in brackets are shown for illustrative purposes only (that is, the value labels did not appear in the statements presented to participants) and provide an indication of the breadth of concern embraced in the Q sample. The statements were then typed one to a card and participants were asked to provide their own recommendations by Q sorting the 32 statements from "those I most approve of" (+4) to "those I most disapprove of" (–4).

Responses were gathered from a sample of n=23 international students (mainly graduate students), with efforts made to achieve breadth by using the scheme presented in Table 1. After providing their Q sorts, participants were interviewed and asked to elaborate upon the reasoning for their preferences; they were also asked to provide basic demographic information. The Q-sort responses were then correlated, resulting in a 23×23 correlation matrix, which was factor analyzed.[§] The factors were rotated theoretically (rather than in terms of the more conventional varimax criteria) based on impressions gained during the interview process (Brown & Robyn, 2004). Specifically, initial interest focused on two students who had been in the United States for three or four years and who displayed a marked desire and capacity to marshal resources on their own: they were therefore isolated first (through judgmental rotation) on Factor A. Two other factors (B and C) were then found that were independent of this first factor. Finally, factor scores (from +4 to –4) were estimated for each statement in each of the factors (see Appendix).

Table 2 shows the matrix of factor loadings and the persons associated with each of the three factors. Based on the standard error formula $1/\sqrt{N} = .18$ (where N=32 statements), those participants with loadings in excess of ±0.46 ($p < .01$) serve to define the factors, which may be considered to represent three different policy agendas. The character of these "decision structures" (Stephenson, 1987) can be grasped by describing and interpreting the factor arrays.

Factor Interpretations

Factor A: The Egalitarians

Factor A was determined via factor rotation by focusing on the two independent-minded students mentioned above—participant no. 20 (Chinese, female, single, 4 years in the U.S.) and no. 22 (Turkmen, female, single, 5 years in the U.S.) in Table 2—and it turned out that other students also loaded significantly on this factor, especially the following: Respondents no. 2 (Ugandan, male, single, 2 years), no. 4 (Moroccan, female, single, 4 months), no. 5 (Kazakh, female, married, 6 years), and

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[§] Analysis was by the centroid method, using the PQMethod software package (Schmolck, 2012).

no. 23 (Chinese, female, married, 3 years). As can be seen, Factor A is no respecter of national boundaries, although it does appear to favor females, those who have had an opportunity to adjust to the United States, and single students, who have different needs compared to married students.

Table 2: Students' Operant Responses

Pts	*Factor Loadings* A	B	C	Pts	*Factor Loadings* A	B	C
1.	*36*	32	−13	13.	03	−31	**46**
2.	**55**	−15	*37*	14.	*36*	23	−12
3.	34	**53**	07	15.	32	01	−09
4.	*40*	−09	04	16.	*38*	−06	**−51**
5.	**65**	23	−19	17.	**48**	−17	*−38*
6.	−11	21	14	18.	−09	16	−04
7.	*−38*	**46**	−20	19.	**47**	−31	*41*
8.	09	**57**	−27	20.	**85**	00	02
9.	**52**	15	**49**	21.	−13	09	**62**
10.	−04	*42*	19	22.	**65**	05	03
11.	−20	**63**	20	23.	*43*	−20	−04
12.	21	−10	−04				

Note: Loadings in boldface significant (p < .01); loadings in italics (p < .05); decimals to two places omitted.

Apart from demographics, the demand structure that Factor A represents can be observed in those recommendations of which this group of participants approves (see in particular statements 1, 14, 23, 24, and 26 in the Appendix), but justification for the label *Egalitarian* comes into focus when attention is drawn to various of the demands that distinguish Factor A from the others, *viz.* (statements to the left for factors A, B, and C, respectively):

+4 0 −3 1. Provide a more equitable tuition fee and make clearer the reasoning behind any remaining inequities.

+4 +1 0 26. Provide equal opportunities for international students to work on campus since on-campus jobs are the only option that they have.

+3 −3 −2 24. Equalize graduate stipends across departments and colleges so as to help students in the non-sciences.

Factor A has already planted both feet firmly in American culture and is now concerned mainly with being treated equally, especially as regards finances. Out-of-state students pay higher tuition, U.S. students are given preference over international students for on-campus employment, and stipends for students in the arts and humanities are

less than in the sciences, and Factor A considers all this unfair and demands an accounting. As student no. 20 remarked in her post-sorting interview, "I have no assistantship and have to rely on my family, and this creates financial problems. I only have an F1 visa, which means I cannot work outside the campus, and U.S. students are given preference for on-campus jobs, then 'non-federal' students….My friends in Chemistry can work in the lab, but we don't have that opportunity in my college [Education]." And as no. 22 remarked, in response to statement Nos. 1 and 24, "Out-of-state fees are unfair and this makes me mad….I have to register for a course in order to work as a TA [teaching assistant], even though I don't need the course….The science students don't do any more than Education students, but they brag about their higher stipends." Equity and respect are core considerations for Factor A.

A glimpse at some of the distinguishing statements at the negative pole of Factor A highlights the issue of these students' marital status:

−4	+3	+2	18.	Gather and distribute information about housemaids, drivers, and other service providers that many international students are accustomed to.
−3	+2	+1	8.	Provide advanced information about KSU's Child Development Center so that international students have the opportunity to enroll their children upon arrival.
−3	0	+1	28.	Gather and distribute information about restaurants and grocery stores that offer non-American foods.

Factor A probably does not doubt the importance of these domestic considerations in the case of other students, but as for themselves, they do not feel any need for assistance from the university or other agencies. Part of this is no doubt due to the fact that most of those in Factor A have already been in the United States and at this university for sufficient time to have found their way around (for example, in locating ethnic grocery stores). At this point, their needs are elsewhere—that is, in the fairness of work opportunities and the distribution of financial rewards within the institution.

Factor B: The Accommodationists

Factor B earns its title due to the fact that the students comprising this group appear to want the institution to accommodate to their needs. Whereas Factor A mainly wanted the institution to level the playing field, Factor B desires that the university respond in a proactive way to facilitate the transition to the U.S. academic culture, as the following statements, at +3 and +4, suggest:

(17) Create a course or workshop to help international students learn the language of everyday life—American slang, jokes, the names of fast foods, how to order a latte, etc.

(18) Gather and distribute information about housemaids, drivers, and other service providers that many international students are accustomed to.

(22) Stop holding international students responsible for contacting their cultural missions (at risk of having their accounts placed on hold) when the University could do this more efficiently.

Unlike Factor A, whose time in the United States can be measured in terms of years, Factor B's time can be measured in months—an average of less than six months for participants 3, 7, 8, and 11 (Table 1), all of whom are married—hence their demand for a workshop on everyday American life and information about housemaids and chauffeurs.**

Additional insights into Factor B can be gained by examining some of the policies that this group promotes, as well as those it opposes, *viz.*:

+1	**+4**	−2	9.	Provide more introductory information about technologies used in classrooms and daily living with which international students may be unfamiliar.
0	**+3**	0	27.	Hire more qualified instructors to teach English language courses.
0	**+2**	−3	10.	Create quiet spaces within the University where students can meditate, pray, or otherwise pursue spiritual fulfillment.
+2	**−4**	0	16.	Create more on-line experiences for international students upon their arrival.
+1	**−4**	+4	32.	Establish a network of international alumni.
+3	**−2**	+3	14.	Provide awards (e.g., book discounts, free meals, etc.) as recognition and motivation for international students who excel in their studies.
+2	**−1**	+2	4.	Establish activities (over and above the Conversation Partner program) to promote communication between international and American students.

** Statement No. 22 emerged as salient for Factor B (also Factor C) in light of the fact that the University places holds on student accounts when the necessary funds are not forthcoming from the cultural mission in Washington. These students want the University to deal with this problem rather than forcing it back on students for resolution.

Although religious affiliation was discretely omitted from the questionnaire, all four students defining Factor B are from Islamic nations, which helps account for the somewhat muted demand for spaces in which to pray (statement No. 10), a practice publically expressed in their homeland but actively discouraged in a secular society. Note that other positive demands (such as Nos. 9 and 27) are for additions in impersonal technology and instructional personnel, whereas demands for practices that would imply greater interpersonal contact (Nos. 4 and 32) are rejected or at least not supported. These students seem reticent to engage in more interpersonal contact at this early stage in their sojourn. In the same vein, the relative rejection of No. 14 may arise from two sources for these new and perhaps uncertain arrivals: (a) a desire to avoid competition, or (b) access to ample wealth from family or government. The fact that Factor B puts in a strong request for "housemaids, drivers, and other service providers" (No. 18), services with which they may have been accustomed back home, is indicative that point (b) may carry more weight.

Factor C: The Assimilationists

Factor C's viewpoint appears to share some concerns with Factor B, but more tentativeness is required since this factor is not well defined, hence is less reliable. As shown in Table 1, only two individuals (nos. 13 and 21) have significant loadings on this factor solely; two others, nos. 9 and 19, have significant loadings on both A and C and are therefore mixed cases.[††] In terms of the number of years spent in the United States, factor C is midway between the newcomers on B and the relative veterans on A.

The desire of this group to assimilate must be qualified: As no. 21 (a married Saudi female) states, "I like to communicate with people, but I don't care about clubs: I have kids"; the assimilation therefore has boundaries. And as no. 13 (a single Chinese female) asserted, "It is our purpose to immerse ourselves into the American environment actively," but these students appear to have an eye on returning home; consequently, their immersion is not aimed at becoming westernized, but at getting the most out of the experience, forging associations, and bringing this intelligence home.

As the distinguishing statements below indicate, Factor C is interested in establishing networks of alumni (no. 32) who could then assist students in the future. Other than that, Factor C does not want any special treatment—no special consideration as far as dorm fees are

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[††] No. 16 has a significant negative loading on C (see Table 1), which suggests the possibility of yet a fourth perspective. The fact that some participants are not significantly associated with A, B, or C (e.g., nos. 6 and 12) hints at yet other agendas not examined in this study.

concerned (no. 31), no change in the tuition schedule (no. 1), and no special provision for religious spaces (no. 10). The denial of interest in clubs and extracurricular activities testifies to an educational and professional immersion rather than social assimilation. As participant no. 21 said above, she has no interest in social clubs and spends much of her weekend bowling until early morning with other Saudi students.

+1	−4	**+4**	32.	Establish a network of international alumni.
−2	−2	**−4**	31,	Change current rules so that international students can stay in the dorms without paying an extra fee.
+4	0	**−3**	1.	Provide a more equitable tuition fee and make clearer the reasoning behind any remaining inequities.
0	0	**−3**	2.	Provide more accessible information about on-campus clubs or other extracurricular activities, especially those activities not geared specifically towards international students.
0	+2	**−3**	10.	Create quiet spaces within the University where students can meditate, pray, or otherwise pursue spiritual fulfillment.

Consensus

One additional feature of this investigation bears mention at this point, the issue of *consensus*, as shown in the factor scores associated with the following statement (other consensual statements can be located in the Appendix):

+3	+2	+2	23.	Establish an "academic orientation" comparable to the social orientation that is provided when students first arrive.

The orthogonality of factors A, B, and C testifies to distinct policy differences, but despite these there are demonstrable similarities in some of the statement scores. Policy preference no. 23, for instance, documents an across-the-board interest in an "academic orientation" comparable to the social orientation that is already provided, and in their post-sort interviews, several graduate students in particular commented about the need for more information about the University's computer system, about regulations concerning human subjects, about the nature of plagiarism, and so forth.

Consensual statements initially hold most promise for prescription and implementation since they are relatively free of opposition, and we will return to this matter momentarily. First, however, it is necessary to turn to the issue of feasibility and to the views of those persons whose

institutional roles place them in a position to determine which of these recommendations can be singled out for authorization.

Desire and Feasibility

The factors described above are the consequence of desire. That is, the Egalitarians desire more equitable tuition fees, the Accommodationists want places to pray and more information about technology, and the Assimilationists want the University to establish a network of international alumni. But are these desires feasible? Is it possible (on the basis of budgetary and other considerations) for the University to respond favorably to these demands?

A short experiment designed to provide at least a preliminary answer to this question was undertaken by asking a half dozen University administrators to Q sort this same set of 32 recommendations in terms of their feasibility; that is, from +4 (most feasible) to −4 (most unfeasible). Three of the participating administrators were deans associated with graduate programs; three other participants were administrators whose primary responsibilities related to international students in general. The results of the correlation and factor analysis of these responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of Administrators' Q Sorts

| | | | | | | | Loadings | |
		Correlations*					X	Y
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
1	—	44	43	17	22	32	54	71
2		—	60	62	46	61	85	11
3			—	59	61	52	85	−04
4				—	55	36	76	−43
5					—	34	72	−40
6						—	71	26

Correlations and principal components loadings (unrotated) exceeding ±0.456 are significant (p < .01); decimals to 2 places omitted.

As might be expected, there was a good deal of unanimity among these administrators, with only one strong principal component (Factor X) underlying their correlations,[‡‡] and with all six administrators significantly associated with that factor. The factor scores for the 32 statements for Factor X are shown in the Appendix, alongside the scores for student factors A, B, and C.

The connections between and among the perspectives represented by factors A, B, C, and X is made explicit in their correlations and rotated factors, as shown in Table 4. As the rotated factors demonstrate, the

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[‡‡] The cross-product of the two highest loadings on factor Y produces a correlation accounted for by the factor, $r = (.71)(.43) = .31$, which is less than twice the standard error.

Table 4: Second-Order Analysis of Student and Administrative Factors

| | Correlations Among First-Order Factors | | | Second-Order Factors | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Unrotated | | | | Rotated | |
	A	B	C	X	i	ii	iii	iv	I	II	III
A	—	-08	-03	11	01	96	00	-28	96	-01	04
B		—	17	30	71	-22	-50	-45	-21	87	02
C			—	23	63	-09	75	-18	-04	11	98
Adm				—	76	27	-16	57	30	72	27

Note: ABC=student factors; Adm=administrative factor; all correlations and loadings exceeding ±0.46 are significant (p < .01); decimals to 2 places omitted.

administrative assessment of feasibility (Factor X) is most strongly associated with the Accommodationists comprising Factor B. That is, first-order Factors B and X, when included in a second-order factor analysis, result in loadings of .87 and .72, respectively, on second-order Factor II. Administrative Factor X is in no way antagonistic to Factors A and C, but it is more compatible with B.

Locating the Common Good

Ferreting out a common good from among the specific desires of the factors can be approximated by examining the factor scores (Appendix) and focusing attention on those policy demands that have broad appeal, such as the following (scores to the left for factors A, B, C, and X, respectively):

+3 +2 +2 **+4**   23. Establish an "academic orientation" comparable to the social orientation that is provided when students first arrive.

+2 -1 +2 **+3**   4. Establish activities (over and above the Conversation Partner program) to promote communication between international and American students.

 0 +1 +2 **+2**   6. Create new opportunities for American students to learn about countries and people outside of North America.

+1 +3 +3 **+1**   17. Create a course or workshop to help international students learn the language of everyday life—American slang, jokes, the names of fast foods, how to order a latte, etc.

Demand no. 23, as discussed previously—"Establish an 'academic orientation' comparable to the social orientation that is provided when students first arrive"—is regarded by the administrators comprising Factor X as highly feasible (feasibility rating f=+4) and it is also judged

desirable by Factor A (+3), Factor B (+2), and Factor C (+2). Approval of its implementation could therefore be vouchsafed, although each factor might have its own reason for approving.

With regard to recommendation no. 4 (f=+3), Factor B's score of –1 indicates little opposition to this idea, which might make this policy worth enacting due to the approval that would be gained with respect to Factors A and C. The same might be said for policy no. 6 (f=+2), which is of little concern to Factor A, but salient to B and C. Finally, recommendation no. 17, with only a mild feasibility score of f=+1 (which is certainly nowhere near unfeasible), suggests that a course on "the language of everyday life" would be welcomed by all three factors.

As a hypothetical matter, it is worth noting that were the scores for each of the above four statements summed for each of the three factor columns, the consequence of implementation would be a net gain of 6 + 5 + 9 = 20 units of indulgence for Factors A through C combined.

Finally, it is also worth noting that there may be other policy initiatives that could be undertaken in response to the desires of individual factors. The following point to this possibility:

+1	+4	–2	**+4**	9.	Provide more introductory information about technologies used in classrooms and daily living with which international students may be unfamiliar.
0	+2	–3	**+2**	10.	Create quiet spaces within the University where students can meditate, pray, or otherwise pursue spiritual fulfillment.
+2	+1	–1	**+1**	20.	Establish something like an international student council through which student concerns, complaints, and suggestions can be brought to the Administration's attention.

Policy recommendation no. 9 is regarded as highly feasible (f=+4) and is of little consequence to Factors A and C, hence might be adopted due to the strong desire of the Accommodationists on Factor B, and the same could be said for statement no. 10. By the same token, policy no. 20 is both mildly feasible (f=+1) and also appealing to the Egalitarians while being of little concern to Factors B and C. We can therefore assume that these recommendations could be enacted with the full approval of the factors most affected and without offending those factors whose feelings are more neutral.

The general principle is that by following the rules and procedures presented above, decision makers can place themselves in a position to discover policy recommendations that are latent in various sentiment groups and, as a supplement, recommendations that are valued by

individual groups but not opposed by others. These decision structures (Stephenson, 1987) clarify directions in which prescription and implementation can proceed.

"They Walk Among Us": Methodological Conclusions

The factors described above—A, B, and C, as well as the administrative Factor X—represent the preference structures of real people; that is, the factors are truly functional and have been rendered manifest due to the operations of study participants with the Q-sort statements. Had there been no systematic points of view, no factors would have been in evidence. In this sense, therefore, we can say that people of these types "walk among us." They carry around their preferences, at least implicitly so, and are capable of expressing them in various contexts when asked to do so, including the raising of their hands in and voting in support of policies x, y, and z. In this regard, the application of Q methodology can be considered a formalized extension of long-standing democratic principles: Participants are asked for their points of view, they render their opinions, these opinions are collected, and then participants are asked to prioritize them (in this case from +4 to −4). The factor analysis simply reveals the various categories of response and makes it clearer to both participants and decision makers the most sensible directions in which to proceed.

In his book on the role of research methods in the study of democratization, Coppedge (2012) focuses exclusively on the nation state and on three methods—case studies, formal modeling, and survey research—that are of utility in studying democratization, with particular emphasis on operationalization, standardization, and testing. There is, of course, no mention of Q methodology throughout Coppedge's voluminous text: It's as if the task of science were only to predict democracy rather than foster it. But Q methodology is thoroughly embedded in operations, yet can proceed without standardization (with the exception of the procedures themselves) and without testing anything. It can nevertheless bring clarity to a decisional situation and help those in authoritative positions find solutions that are already in the minds of their constituents and that merely await proper measurements to render them public.

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Appendix: Arrays of Factor Scores

		Student Factors			Adm
		A	B	C	X
1	Provide a more equitable tuition fee and make clearer the reasoning behind any remaining inequities.	+4	0	−3	−4
2	Provide more accessible information about on-campus clubs or other extracurricular activities, especially those activities not geared specifically towards international students.	0	0	−3	+3
3	Reduce the number of ESL hours that international students have to take.	−4	−3	0	−4
4	Establish activities (over and above the Conversation Partner program) to promote communication between international and American students.	+2	−1	+2	+3
5	Expand opportunities for cultural experiences (as are provided, for instance, by Akron U's Confucius Institute).	0	−2	−2	0

		Student Factors		Adm
		A	B	C	X
6	Create new opportunities for American students to learn about countries and people outside of North America.	0	+1	+2	+2
7	Improve the allowances for GA and TA students.	+2	−1	+1	−3
8	Provide advanced information about KSU's Child Development Center so that international students have the opportunity to enroll their children upon arrival.	−3	+2	+1	0
9	Provide more introductory information about technologies used in classrooms and daily living with which international students may be unfamiliar.	+1	+4	−2	+4
10	Create quiet spaces within the University where students can meditate, pray, or otherwise pursue spiritual fulfillment.	0	+2	−3	+2
11	Encourage businesses like bookstores and clothing stores (rather than bars and other nonsense places) to enter the Kent market.	0	−2	−4	−2
12	Provide information and assistance to international students who are trying to locate a suitable primary or secondary school for their children.	−1	+1	−1	+2
13	Invite businesses to open locally that are more essential for students (such as ethnic or other affordable cafes) and that are better for them than unhealthy fast food restaurants.	−2	−1	0	−1
14	Provide awards (e.g., book discounts, free meals, etc.) as recognition and motivation for international students who excel in their studies.	+3	−2	+3	+1
15	Organize and publicize recreational opportunities for the children of international students.	−2	0	+1	0

		Student Factors		Adm
		A	B	C	X
16	Create more on-line experiences for international students upon their arrival.	+2	−4	0	0
17	Create a course or workshop to help international students learn the language of everyday life—American slang, jokes, the names of fast foods, how to order a latte, etc.	+1	+3	+3	+1
18	Gather and distribute information about housemaids, drivers, and other service providers that many international students are accustomed to.	−4	+3	+2	0
19	Increase efforts to assimilate and integrate students from around the globe.	−1	0	−2	+2
20	Establish something like an international student council through which student concerns, complaints, and suggestions can be brought to the Administration's attention.	+2	+1	−1	+1
21	Initiate a sports insurance program for the children of international students.	−3	−1	−2	−3
22	Stop holding international students responsible for contacting their cultural missions (at risk of having their accounts placed on hold) when the University could do this more efficiently.	−2	+4	+4	−1
23	Establish an "academic orientation" comparable to the social orientation that is provided when students first arrive.	+3	+2	+2	+4
24	Equalize graduate stipends across departments and colleges so as to help students in the non-sciences.	+3	−3	−2	−2
25	Provide opportunities for international students to establish contacts with other international students in other programs and departments.	−1	−3	+2	+1

		Student Factors			Adm
		A	B	C	X
26	Provide equal opportunities for international students to work on campus since on-campus jobs are the only option that they have.	+4	+1	0	−1
27	Hire more qualified instructors to teach English language courses.	0	+3	0	−2
28	Gather and distribute information about restaurants and grocery stores that offer non-American foods.	−3	0	+1	+3
29	Improve the quality and effectiveness of the University's ESL program.	+1	+2	0	−1
30	Increase the number and frequency of bus routes into surrounding urban centers and keep them available during weekends, holidays, and school breaks.	−1	0	−1	−3
31	Change current rules so that international students can stay in the dorms without paying an extra fee.	−2	−2	−4	−2
32	Establish a network of international alumni.	+1	−4	+4	0