

## DISSERTATIONS IN PROGRESS

Brian D'Agostino, *American Belief Systems Regarding U.S. Foreign and Military Policy: 1974 to 1986* (Columbia University)

This dissertation will be based primarily on large sample opinion surveys of American elites and the general public conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in 1974, 1978, 1982, and 1986. Differences will be examined between belief systems of elites and the general public, as well as changes in both over time. The dissertation will address the debate over these topics, especially between O.R. Holsti/J.N. Rosenau and E.R. Wittkopf.

The argument will be advanced that much of the confusion in this debate is methodological in origin, and will put forth an alternative methodology as the basis for an original data analysis. The alternative methodology involves Q factor analysis and the representation of belief system change in terms of a Markov process in which changes in the belief systems of individuals are interpreted at the aggregate level as different transition probabilities from one belief system (Q factor) to another.

The hypothesis is that this process of belief system change underlies changes in the political and policy environment. The principal foreign policy example of this in the period under consideration is the impact of the "Vietnam syndrome"--the unwillingness of the American public to support U.S. military initiatives abroad in the wake of the Vietnam War--on the conduct of Nicaraguan policy by the Reagan Administration. Although a thorough analysis of Reagan's Nicaragua policy is beyond the scope of the dissertation, some evidence from the policy record will be examined to determine whether public opinion, acting through Congress, was indeed a constraint in the conduct of foreign policy.

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Patrick O'Brien, *Encoding/Decoding: An Application of Cultural Studies to News Coverage of MOVE* (University of Iowa)

Many authors associated with British cultural studies assert the systematic tendency of commercial journalism toward reportage that supports dominant class and cultural interests. This dissertation will pursue this assertion in application to a case study of local commercial news coverage of a 1985 confrontation between a group of people known as MOVE and the City of Philadelphia.

The theoretical framework for the research is the tradition of critical cultural studies, particularly the theories of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. In *Encoding/Decoding*, Hall suggests that there are at least three discernable reading positions possible for audiences of commercial media: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. With respect to MOVE, encoding will be studied via interviews with commercial journalists who reported the 1985 confrontation and through a qualitative analysis of the commercial coverage in Philadelphia newspapers; decoding will be studied via a Q study of Philadelphia residents' reading positions. Factor analysis of statements about MOVE, the City's and MOVE's actions, and the news media will contribute factor types which can be compared with Hall's hypothesized reading positions.

Comparison of interview material, qualitative analysis of coverage, and factor analysis of readings can produce some sense of the viability of Hall's assertions in the context of American cultures.

#### RESEARCH IN PROGRESS: CENTRAL AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

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On December 14, 1987, the International Commission on Central American Recovery and Development was convened in San Jose, Costa Rica. Stimulated by initiatives by Nobel laureate Oscar Arias, President of Costa Rica, the Commission was proposed by North