

BOOK REVIEWS

Morton A. Lieberman and Sheldon S. Tobin, *The Experience of Old Age: Stress, Coping, and Survival*. New York: Basic Books, 1983. 439 pp. \$27.50 cloth.

Focusing on relocation as one kind of radical change in the lives of 639 elderly people, Lieberman (Professor of Behavioral Sciences, University of Chicago) and Tobin (Professor of Social Welfare, State University of New York at Albany) conducted four separate yet associated studies to examine why some persons in this age group adapt successfully to a common, profound crisis while others do not. Each study was multi-methodological in nature, with a number of measures employed to examine a variety of constructs: Stress intensity; threat and loss management strategies; personality dispositions; satisfaction and happiness; psychological, biological, and social resources; and short- and long-term effects of stress. Psychological health as a general framework in which to evaluate overall functioning was assessed through Block's Q Sort, as well as other measures of mental health, including measures of anxiety, depression, and behavioral indices of pathology. Separate chapters in the book are devoted to describing the conceptual basis for the study, its design, and sample, and to explicating the nature of complex interrelationships among variables.

With replications across four relocation situations, these investigators found that the degree of stress was associated with the quality of the new environment and person-environment congruence. The most potent management strategy of these elderly persons was the creation of the view that they had mastery and control over their lives during the crisis of relocation. That aggression, not variables usually associated with healthy adaptation in persons of other age groups, was a significant predictor of successful adaption indicates a need to reframe traditional models of mental health when applied to elder-

ly persons. According to Lieberman and Tobin, psychological work among the elderly is focused on the conservation of self (i.e., maintaining a sense of self continuity, integrity, and identity) within a context of their past life, personal finitude, and personal and structural losses.

During the course of data collection, the major approach to testing the hypothesis that mental health was associated with stress adaptation was through the use of Block's Q Sort. Inconsistent with Q methodology yet in keeping with Q sort as used by Block, a trained rater read a case history which included material from both the current and past life of the subject, and followed a nine-pile, normal distribution to describe the person along a continuum of most-to-least like him or her. Interrater reliability on twelve selected cases was .73. A Q sort for each person was correlated with the sort for the "optimally developed person" as determined by Block (1961), that correlation coefficient being used as the subject's mental health score. Differences in the mental health scores of elderly who did or did not decline in adaptation were reported as not significant.

It is interesting to note that Q sort was used in just two of the four studies. In one study where it was not used, subjects were long-term residents of a state mental hospital and posed difficulty in measurement of any kind; many of them were nonverbal, unresponsive, suspicious, hesitant, or indifferent. In the other study where it was not used, raters found that interviews with subjects were too narrowly focused and insufficiently complex to make the subtle judgments required by the items in Block's Q sort. When judgments were made, raters reported low levels of confidence for many of the items, particularly those that referred to internal states. Therefore, the investigators decided not to use the Q sort with that sample. Such a decision is both ironic and unfortunate since Q methodology is designed for the study of subjectivity, and since the women comprising that sample were capable of providing Q sorts which reflected their own perspectives.

Another form of data analysis applied to the Q sorts was factor analysis, carried out in the tradition of R rather than from the perspective of Q. Items, not persons, loaded on the factors. Five factors were extracted from the Q-sort ratings in each of the studies where Q was used, although the factors were named somewhat differently. In the sample of elderly applicants to three sectarian homes for the aged, the factors were named self confident, intellectual, aggressive-passive, introversion, and socially responsible. In the sample of elderly patients being discharged from a state hospital to other facilities in the community, the factors were named indulgent, ascetic, optimistic-depressed, rational-irrational, aggressive-compliant, and complex-simple. Naming was accomplished by examining factor arrays formed by ranging the items in descending order according to their factor loadings. Ostensibly, factor scores were calculated for each person; the only significant difference between stable/improved and deteriorated/died adaptational status for subjects in both of these studies was on the factor of aggressive-passive/compliant. This significant difference, substantiated by other measures of traits and self concept, led the investigators to conclude that respondents who scored high on aggressiveness were able to adapt and remain intact despite the stress of relocation.

From the use of Q sorts in the collection of data to their analysis and interpretation, Lieberman and Tobin have proceeded in the tradition of R, not in the methodology of Q. Not unlike many Q studies published in the literature, Q sort was implemented as a form of instrumentation without being based on the epistemology that is the foundation for Q methodological research. Although various measures tapped various dimensions of subjectivity, the Q approach to understanding that subjectivity as related to psychological health was not done in a manner which allowed its richness to emerge.

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Stuart T. Hauser and Eydie Kasendorf, *Black and White Identity Formation*. 2nd ed. Melbourne, FL: Krieger Publishing Co., 1983. 252 pp. \$7.50 paper.

The second edition of *Black and White Identity Formation* reexamines data collected between 1962 and 1967 in a longitudinal study of lower class black and white teenagers in New Haven, Connecticut. The monograph, substantially updated and revised since its original publication by Wiley in 1971, offers a useful critique of theory and research on black identity. But readers of *Operant Subjectivity* may be more interested in Hauser's own research strategy, which employed *individualized* Q sorts and operationalized concepts from Erik Erikson's psychoanalytic theory of identity formation in terms of changing correlations among Q sorts over time. Beyond this, however, the research has disappointingly little to do with Q methodology, and in several respects is seriously flawed. (Perhaps fortunately, Stephenson is cited only once--in a footnote!)

The original study began with 23 black and white subjects, all "male, entering [their] sophomore year in high school, from a working class family, and neither delinquent, predelinquent, nor college bound." The boys volunteered to be interviewed and tested yearly, but by the fourth and final year of the project more than half had dropped out, leaving complete data for 7 blacks and 4 whites. Hauser conducted the interviews himself and used this material to construct an individualized Q sort for each youth consisting of "all explicit self-descriptive statements made by the subject [concerning] his attitudes, wishes, feelings, judgements, actions or thoughts." The report notes that new items were added to Q decks each year, but does not indicate how many statements were actually sorted by subjects in the study. There was apparently no a priori scheme for structuring either item samples or the interviews from which they were drawn, except that certain (unspecified) topics were discussed in all interviews.

At annual testing sessions, subjects sorted the prepared Q decks under eight conditions of instruc-

tion: "How I am now," "How I would be if I were a perfect son to my mother," "How I appear in the eyes of my friends," "How I will be in ten years," and so on. The sorting task allowed boys to distribute items freely among 10 categories ranging from "least important" to "most important," provided they placed at least two statements at each extreme.

In presenting their results, the authors use correlations among Q sorts (presumably computed over common items) to operationalize two central components of Erikson's theory: *Structural integration*, referring to the "consolidation" or "coherence" of identity formation at a given point in time, is defined as the average intrayear correlation among a subject's eight self descriptions; the *temporal stability* of self images, on the other hand, is equated with averaged interyear correlations of sorts made under similar instructions.

Complicating matters further, the authors suggest that absolute levels of integration and stability are less important than how these variables change over time. Thus, changing patterns in averaged intra- and interyear correlations are proposed as higher order operational definitions of various "resolutions" of adolescent identity crisis. For example, *progressive identity formation*, the most favorable resolution, is indicated by integration and stability coefficients which increase from year to year. Other possible outcomes include *identity diffusion*, defined by decreasing intra- and interyear correlations; *identity foreclosure*, "a premature fixing of one's self images," represented by stable correlations; and *psychological moratorium*, "finding oneself...making no firm commitments to particular self images," equated with correlations that fluctuate from year to year.

All of this seems confusing and a bit arbitrary. The upshot is a bewildering array of graphs, correlations and nonparametric significance tests purporting to show that black subjects experiences negative identity foreclosure more often than whites. But the quantitative data are simply not convincing. Ironically, despite the authors' reverence for quantita-

tive evidence, the case for racial differences in identity formation is made more strongly in qualitative "clinical" descriptions of the boys Hauser interviewed. For example, themes of inferiority, mediocrity, and degradation were noted repeatedly in interviews with black subjects, yet none of this is captured by the statistics which are reported. One wonders if an alternative strategy, based on factoring rather than averaging correlations among Q sorts, might have provided a richer picture of how adolescent self images changed over time.

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