

THE Q METHODOLOGY PANEL AND OTHER Q RESEARCH AT THE 1982 SPSA CONVENTION

The 1982 convention of the Southern Political Science Association was held at the Stadium Hotel in Atlanta on October 28-30. Among the four panels within the Methodology section was one entitled "The Use of Q-Methodology in Political Science," apparently the first devoted specifically and exclusively to Q to be included at a general conference of political scientists. The chair, Robert Rood (University of South Carolina), conducted the panel informally; David Mason (Mississippi State University) served as discussant. Of the small audience in attendance, some indicated, by their questions and comments, a specific interest in Q, others a more generalized concern about methods of political inquiry.

Two papers were presented. The first, "Assessing the Structure of Mass Belief Systems: The Utility of Q-Methodology," was given by Lee Sigelman (University of Kentucky) in the absence of the authors, Stanley Feldman and Pamela Johnston Conover, who were unable to attend. The Feldman-Conover paper was subsequently revised and re-titled "The Structure of Issue Positions: Beyond Liberal-Conservative Restraint." The second paper, "Attitudes and Perspectives of Third Party Leaders: A Q-Methodological Inquiry," was presented by J. David Gillespie (Presbyterian College).

Feldman and Conover are critical of political science researchers who impose their own ideological constructs upon respondents. Because most respondents fail to relate their positions on issues in ways that appear coherent to researchers, the conclusion of such studies has been that most people lack a belief system structure. Such a conclusion may be faulty because it is drawn from research that gives no leverage to respondents to "construct" their own belief systems. Feldman and Conover contend that Q methodology is useful because it sets broad parameters within which respondents may register belief systems if these exist.

In the Feldman-Conover study, 59 introductory political science students were at one session given an issues survey designed to test (in the manner of most traditional research) the ability of respondents to register issue positions that researchers might deem ideologically coherent. At another session, each of the students completed two Q sorts. The first involved traditional policy concerns, particularly with regard to the economy, race, and foreign affairs. The second pertained to social issues, specifically women's rights, morality, religion, quality of life, and civil liberties. (Feldman and Conover do not specify either the sources from which their Q statements were drawn or whether a free or forced distribution was used in directing respondents to register the degree of their agreement or disagreement with each statement.)

The results of the Feldman-Conover issues survey alone might lead one to draw conclusions similar to those drawn in traditional studies. Yet in the Q study the authors found that some 90% of their subjects loaded significantly on at least one of the four factors extracted from their analysis of traditional policy concerns, and likewise that some 90% loaded significantly on one of four factors derived from their analysis of social issues.

Only one factor derived from the first factor analysis--a factor identified by the authors as "racially conservative/anti-welfare"--registered a belief system that might have been deemed ideologically coherent under models that have been employed in traditional research, and only 30.6% of the subjects loaded significantly on this factor. Likewise, one factor--"liberal on environmental and life-style issues"--in the second factor study might have seemed ideologically coherent under the assumptions made in earlier research, and 18.7% of the respondents loaded on this factor.

The utility of Q methodology, Feldman and Conover conclude, is self evident. When (as in Q) respondents are given the latitude to construct and register their own belief systems, most are able to do so.

The Gillespie study sought to characterize and ex-

plain the attitudes and perspectives--the values, social attitudes, and, to some degree, personality traits and self images--of persons who presently lead American third political parties. A Q sample of 55 statements was assembled. The statements were drawn from, or based upon, many articles, papers, and books treating attitudes and perspectives, and from previous studies employing Q methodology. Each respondent, using a forced-distribution structure, designated each statement according to the degree of the respondent's agreement or disagreement with it; seven statements were to be given a neutral rating.

Requests for response were sent to some 50 third party organizations around the country. The eventual response rate was approximately 25%. One or more leaders of twelve parties completed and returned Q sorts. Responses came from every point on the ideological spectrum, from the Nazi right (four leaders from two parties) to the anarchist and Marxist left. Two Libertarian respondents led a party not easily identifiable along the conventional left-right spectrum.

Three clearly differentiated factors were extracted through analysis of the Q sorts. Factor I was labeled "leftist libertarian." Its respondents embraced both leftist and libertarian principles, and repudiated the pragmatic stance which frequently characterizes mainstream politicians. Insurgency, or the rejection of many features of the American political system, was associated with factor I, and there was some (though not conclusive) evidence of "agitator personalities" (Lasswell) among factor I respondents. Respondents identified with factor II ("fascist") also rejected pragmatism, and they embraced both the deterministic theory of history and authoritarian doctrine. There seems to have been both "authoritarian personalities" (Adorno) and "agitator personalities" among leaders associated with factor II. Factor II values, like those of factor I, include a broad rejection of the American political process. The "conservative" factor III conveys values that are more closely associated with the main-

stream. Factor III respondents are pragmatic adherents of many of the principles identified with contemporary American conservatism. Although critical of some particulars, they endorse and support the broad pattern of American politics.

Post-presentation comment, involving discussant, presenters, and audience, was generally low-keyed and friendly. David Mason complimented both papers and Q methodology in general. Mason asked Gillespie whether some operational definition of "party" was used for the selection of organizations from which to solicit response. Gillespie replied that he thought that a narrow definition would violate the intent and spirit of Q, and that he had solicited replies from virtually every available organization which bore "party" in its title, or ran candidates for office, or which had leaders who considered their organization to be a party.

Comments of challenge to Q itself took two somewhat contradictory directions. On the one hand, Q was considered by some to be, in the words of one audience participant, "anti-theoretical" because it seemed not to emphasize carefully designed models, hypotheses-testing, and the like. Some, on the other hand, offered the opinion that Q, in common with more traditional research, features its own forms of closure, notably statements selection and forced distribution. Discussion ensued on these points. One member of the audience said that she was impressed by Q, and that she had considered using the method for her recently-completed dissertation, but had settled instead upon intensive interviews in the style of Robert Lane.

John M. Scheb (University of Tennessee) presented "Role Orientations of Judges on Florida's District Courts of Appeal: A Q-Methodology Study" on a panel entitled "Models of Judicial Behavior." Scheb tested a typology of judicial role orientations suggested by the Ungs and Baas study of Ohio judges (1972). Utilizing the Ungs and Baas Q sample, Scheb factor analyzed the Q sorts of 39 (of 43) judges on Florida Courts of Appeal. He hypothesized that he would find the same set of role types, with the exception of the

"trial judge" since trial judges were not included in his study. While Ungs and Baas had relied upon a mail survey (securing responses from 48 of 109), Scheb took his Q sorts during interviews. (A summary comparison of the Ungs-Baas and Scheb studies is in *Operant Subjectivity*, 1982, 5, 115-122.)

Scheb settled upon a three-factor solution: I. The law interpreter, II. the justice seeker, and III. the lawmaker. Factor I was the only factor with close correspondence to the Ungs and Baas study. Factor II showed some overlap with two of the Ungs and Baas factors, but factor III bore no close relationship to any of the Ohio factors.

A number of possible explanations for the different findings of the Ohio and Florida studies are posited by Scheb. The most obvious involves the effect of the exclusion of trial judges in Scheb's study. The presence of the lawmaker in Florida and not in Ohio is viewed as a possible consequence of "substantial differences" between the two systems or to the elapsed time--nearly 10 years--between the two studies. Methodological possibilities include differences in technique--mail survey vs. interviews--and different response rates, it being possible that the Ohio study did not uncover all role types. Many Ohio lawmakers may well have declined to return their Q sorts, for the lawmaker is a controversial role.

Scheb did find certain conventional background variables which were moderately successful in explaining role type variations. The most significant were educational background, age, and length of service. This seems to indicate that "socialization is the key to understanding role type variation," with the law school experience of particular importance. It also suggests that socialization is ongoing and that judicial role orientations are "malleable and sensitive to experience while on the bench."

Scheb concluded that Q methodology is well suited to the study of role orientations, but that refinement of the instrumentation and theory is needed.

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