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Exploring the Accents of Discourse: Q Methodology, the Essex School, and the Logics Approach

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Abstract: Questions of methodology have been an ever-present and thorny issue for Essex School Political Discourse Theory. Glynos & Howarth's Logics approach represents a significant attempt to develop a series of concepts and research principles that sought to address the Essex School's methodological deficit. The Logics approach requires researchers to use their situated abilities and knowledge to connect theoretical insights to empirical phenomena via appropriate research techniques. One such technique that stands out as being suited to Essex School inspired approaches is Q methodology. Q and discursive approaches are by no means strangers, however, the comparative lack of Q studies that draw from the Essex School and a general lack of contact between respective traditions merits further consideration. The impetus for this article is that the key theoretical and methodological underpinnings of Q and Essex School discourse theory are complementary and can be made commensurate for discourse-inspired Q studies. In bringing these respective traditions into closer dialogue, this article contributes to reinforce and supplement conceptualisations of political subjectivity and discourse as well as the means of interpretating the empirical outputs of Q. In so doing, adding to the methodological toolboxes of both Q and Political Discourse Theory.

Keywords*: Discourse, Essex School, Logics, Political Subjectivity, Q methodology

Introduction

When it comes to questions of methodology within Essex School political discourse theory (herein Essex School or PDT), there is a tension between those who argue that a *de facto* pluralism keeps with its ontological assumptions and those who would prefer some clearer heuristic guidelines (Zienkowski, 2012; Hawkins, 2015). As the influence and reception of the Essex School has grown, so too has the need to translate its theoretical insights into non-positivist ways and clarify how discourse-theoretical inspired research programmes relate to alternative approaches (Glynos et al., 2021). Glynos & Howarth's (2007) Logics of Critical Explanation marked a significant step forward in addressing these issues. The Logics approach requires researchers to use their situated abilities to connect theoretical insights to the empirical phenomenon that we choose to study and to the appropriate selection of research techniques and strategies, provided these can be made commensurate with the key presuppositions of PDT (Glynos et al., 2021, p. 70-71).

However, despite the advancement of the Logics approach, questions regarding its application continue to be pertinent to the development of discourse-theoretical approaches.

From a PDT perspective, establishing research strategies demands familiarity with a wide range of methods and techniques, but it also requires that we engage in sustained practices of reactivation, deconstruction, commensuration, and articulation (Glynos & Howarth, 2019). Therefore, we must acknowledge the different forms of knowledge and data that various methods of empirical analysis both engage with and produce, and what can be drawn from them. Crucially, when addressing questions of method, we must also avoid its fetishisation, adopting a pluralistic and flexible approach that is attentive to the contexts in which we conduct our research. A technique that presents itself as well suited to PDT and the Logics approach is Q methodology (herein Q). Q involves presenting respondents with a set of stimuli (usually statements) and asking them to sort their preferences. The results are then correlated and subjected to factor analysis as a means of revealing the shared subjective meanings participants give to the statements. It is important to stress that Q does not seek to test conjectures, or to establish the extent of agreement on a topic, rather, it provides a means of capturing the high-level contours of debate and how this is ordered by participants, which may produce novel, empirically-based understandings that may push the boundaries of initial hypothesis and insights (Skelcher et al., 2013).

Q and discursive approaches are by no means strangers and there is substantial Q scholarship that has partaken of the discursive turn. In its "home" field of psychology, Wendy and Rex Stainton Rogers, their respective students and alter ego Beryl Curt have written extensively on the utility of Q as a method of discourse analysis in health and social psychology (e.g. see W. Stainton Rogers, 1991; Curt, 1994; R. Stainton Rogers et al., 1995). Beyond psychology, Q has been utilised by various disciplines to investigate a wide range of topics including perceptions of democracy (Dryzek & Berejikian, 1993); public policy (Jeffares, 2014); environmental politics (Addams, 2000); public service management (Sullivan et al., 2012); urban governance (Jeffares & Skelcher, 2011; Skelcher et al., 2013); and critical geography (Sneegas, 2020). Some PDT approaches have sought to deploy Q, although the level of engagement has been more limited (e.g. Griggs et al., 2017 & Norval & Prasopoulou, 2019). More generally, the appeal of Q to discursive approaches lies in the potential for the technique to reveal the topology of shared viewpoints, their character, distinctiveness, and inter-relationships as well as allowing for the elaboration of shared subjectivity in relation to specific issues (Sullivan et al., 2012; Jeffares, 2014).

Despite this uptake of discursive applications, discourse is often "black-boxed," with researchers being more concerned with their justifications for using Q and neglecting to explain their use of discourse as a concept and its role within the analysis (Sneegas, 2020). This is the point of intervention for this article, the ways in which discourse can be conceptualised and applied in the interpretation and explanation of the meaning of the factors. It is important to state at the outset that much of the discussions here are pitched at a certain level of theoretical abstraction and intended to address both Essex School Discourse theorists and practitioners of Q. As such, the purpose is not to provide a comprehensive guide to the mechanics of Q; rather, this article provides an overview and assessment of the utility and complementary nature of PDT, the Logics and Q, specifically in terms of conceptualising political subjectivity, discourse, and the interpretation of factors. To paraphrase and mirror Sneegas, by placing Q and PDT side by side, the aim is to highlight potential blind spots and tensions that inform critical

enquiry, directing us to consider what bodies of knowledge they may produce in tandem that they would otherwise be unable to do separately (Sneegas, 2020).

The article begins by sketching the key philosophical and methodological principles of Q before providing a brief overview of conducting a Q study. Secondly, it covers the key contributions of discursive approaches to Q as a means of contextualising the Essex School's intervention. The article then introduces the PDT and Logics approach and outlines its main theoretical insights. Following this, the discussion moves to consider the complementary nature of Q, PDT and the Logics approach and the ways in which the respective approaches can be made commensurate. In doing so, this article promotes and encourages an open and multi-disciplinary ethos, furnishing Q with a further sophisticated understanding of political subjectivity and discourse that can be utilised in the interpretation of factors and viewpoints, while at the same time providing PDT with a robust methodological research technique for the study of discourse in a variety of contexts.

Q and Subjectivity

The development of Q was part of William Stephenson's critique of the pervasiveness of hypothetico-deductivist approaches in psychology, arguing that there was a need for an attitude of curiosity, in which we seek to learn more about empirical possibilities as opposed to deductive approaches (Stephenson, 1953; Lazard et al., 2011). While the subject matter of Q varies greatly, the purpose remains the study of subjectivity, which is simply an individual's own point of view: "It is neither a trait nor a variable, nor is it useful to consider it as a tributary emanating from a subterranean stream of consciousness" (Brown, 1980, p. 46). Put another way, subjectivity refers to a current point of view on a given issue, it is no more or less than a first-person perspective (Good, 2010; Watts, 2011). Viewpoints only take on a defined form in relation to the individual's immediate environment, thus subjectivity is inherently expressive and tied to human capacity for sharing impressions, consisting of private, public and social utterances which themselves are anchored in self-reference (Watts, 2011; McKeown & Thomas, 2013). This approach to subjectivity reflects a view that anything that can be expressed, will be expressed from a range of vantage points and that these expressions make no *a priori* assumptions about the value or significance of a particular viewpoint (Stenner et al., 2017; Stenner & Capdevila, 2019). For example, when discussing the strengths of Q for feminist research, Celia Kitzinger argues that people have different understandings and definitions of homophobia, racism, and sexism and it is precisely these different perspectives that are explored through Q. While conventional attitude research does not consider these differences worthy of further attention, in Q, they constitute the object of research (Kitzinger, 1999).

The name Q was adopted as a means of distinguishing the technique from its R-based cousins in terms of conducting factor analysis. Where R-based factor analysis seeks out patterns across a set of predetermined variables, in Q, participants are the variables, providing meaning to the items of the study, which itself produces information on the similarities and differences in viewpoints on a topic. Therefore, it is persons and not tests or other types of variables that are of interest to Q, and it is persons who load onto emergent factors (Watts & Stenner, 2005). The factors produced by Q are the outcome of merging responses that share similar patterns, with each factor represented by an exemplified response (a factor array) This is then interpreted by the researcher through thematic or discursive frameworks and a statement's position in the

context of all others in the final factor array (Lazard et al., 2011). Where each specific individual has their own unique preferences, their profiles will not correlate; however, if significant clusters of correlations exist, these can be factor analysed and presented as common viewpoints which can then be interpreted for their character. While this may appear problematic from an orthodox outlook, it is important to stress that R and Q factor analysis serve different purposes (Van Exel & de Graaf, 2005; Willis & Jeffares, 2012). In this sense, the traditional method of formulating and testing of hypothesis is not conducive to Q. This stems from the *a priori* imposition of meaning on variables in hypothetico-deductive methods, where Q, by contrast, seeks to build the interpretative capacity of participants into the measurement process (Glynos et al., 2009). Q is therefore considered as an explanatory technique, providing the opportunity to establish coherence and help us understand the dominant viewpoints within a group of actors and how they interpret and understand the world around them (Watts & Sterner, 2005; Skelcher et al., 2013). Q, then, is more than an alternative methodology with which to conduct empirical research into subjectivity, it is a combined framework of research principles that guide and inform empirical research.

Conducting a Q study

To orientate readers unfamiliar with Q, it would be prudent to offer a brief outline of conducting a Q study. The first task is to capture the concourse of debate, which refers to the range of communication within a given topic. The underlying principle of concourse construction directs us to consider the full range of communication, including interviews, participant observation, popular literature, media reports, magazines, novels, all of which can be considered elements of a concourse (Van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). From these materials, researchers produce an extensive list comprising of anywhere between 100 to 300 statements. These numbers are too large to expect any participant to be capable of sorting adequately and so must be reduced to a more manageable 30-50 statements which are referred to as the Q sample.

The next stage involves participants completing a Q sort which involves a modified ranking procedure, through which respondents rank-order statements in response to a specific condition of instruction. The instruction serves as a reference point for participants and is usually straightforward. For example: "To what extent do you find the following statements agree with your own point of view?" The exact wording and content of the prompt will vary, "hence the utility of a given condition of instruction depends on the pattern of findings ultimately revealed in the factor structure" (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 27). The Q sort follows three basic steps. 1) The pre sort, in which, according to the condition of instruction, participants sort statements into three broad categories of Agreement, Disagreement and Neutral/Unsure. 2) The Q sort, in which statements are sorted onto a grid in the form of an inverted pyramid and along a scale of most disagreement to most agreement as is illustrated below in Figure 1. Participants are free to allocate statements in any order they see fit, however, they are required to allocate only one statement per cell. 3) A post sort questionnaire, which involves a short follow-up interview, allowing the researcher to further investigate how participants interpreted the statements and the context of their positions on the grid; if there are any additional items participants would have included that were absent in the Q set; and if there are any further issues on which participants would like to comment (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

Figure 1

Typical sorting grid for 34 statements

Most Disagreement   **Most Agreement**

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
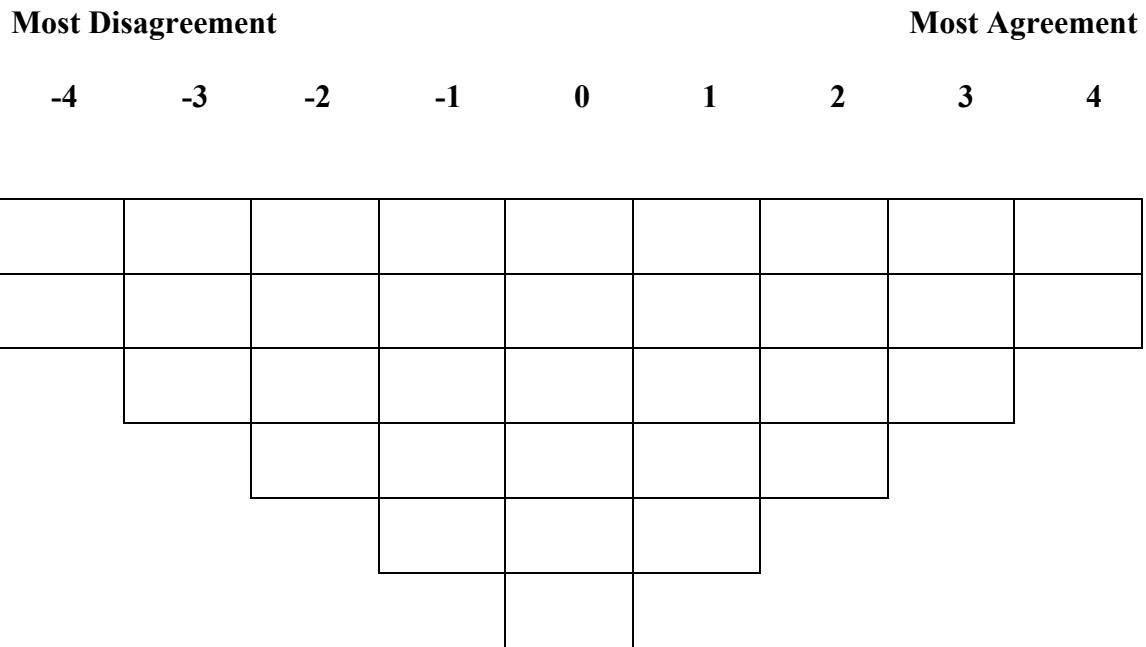
The final stage involves factor analysis of the Q sorts and subsequent interpretation. The intricacies of conducting factor analysis are explored in more detail elsewhere (McKeown & Thomas, 2013), but, in sum, factor analysis in Q correlates people, and if significant clusters of correlations exist, they can then be factor analysed and presented as common viewpoints (Van Exel and de Graaf, 2005; Willis & Jeffares, 2012). The interpretation of the factors produced by the data analysis requires an informed understanding of the research topic and involves a continuous evaluation and revaluation of explanations (Addams, 2000; McKeown & Thomas, 2013). In addition, the interpretive nature of social science directs us to consider that each factor represents a coherent viewpoint and that any inconsistencies also merit our attention (Dryzek & Berejikian, 1993). Therefore, the focus of Q-factor interpretation is not on individual statements or their positioning in the Q sort, rather it is on "reading and assessing points of consensus and indifference to move beyond synthetic factors and generate shared viewpoints" (Griggs et al., 2023, p. 10).

Textuality & Tectonics: Adventures of Q and Discourse

Q and discursive approaches have enjoyed a fruitful relationship in terms of developing research projects across a variety of disciplines. Within psychology, the synthesis of Q and discourse has found its clearest expression through the works of the Reading School or British dialect of Q. According to Wendy Stainton Rogers, the approach is influenced by Foucault's writings on knowledge and power, and while there is interest in how certain ideas are made to hang together, the approach is less concerned with what individuals say in certain settings than with the way in which discourse operates as a social and cultural resource (W, Stainton Rogers, 1996; 1998). For Curt (1994), discourse refers to the constructive, productive, and pragmatic elements of language

use, recognising that language is never neutral and is an active part of the world. Following from this, discourse analysis constitutes an approach that views talk and text as social practices which are productive of experience and construct the realities in which we live and through which text is knowledged into being, including writing, presentation and reading (e.g., promoting an ideology) (Curt, 1994).

There are two key concepts that emerge from this understanding: textuality and tectonics. Textuality highlights the diversity of alternatives, stories, and encourages us to consider the purposes to which these are put. In addition, it acknowledges that there are no set boundaries between different forms of knowledge, promoting a healthy scepticism regarding truth claims and encourages us to consider the purposes to which texts are put. In addition, textuality stresses that all texts are local and contingent, and so "the adoption of textuality as an analytic encourages us to consider how, where, why, and out of what certain texts are knowledged into being in particular circumstances and social ecologies" (W. Stainton Rogers, 1998, p. 13). Textuality itself is not enough to explore the interplay of discourses, and so the concept of tectonics was developed to consider how the different representations from which texts are drawn impinge upon each other as they are being produced. Tectonics, then, is as much about the ways stories and representations are expressed as it is about their production. It is about rhetorical skirmishes, their rivalries and their allegiances, and the playing out of dominance and submission (W. Stainton Rogers, 1998). Additionally, tectonics are not considered as constructs or variables, rather they are analytical devices of narrative. They are dependent upon reading expressed in textuality, which refers to more than text and serves as a means of addressing the expressive surface of text (R. Stainton Rogers & W. Stainton Rogers, 1997, p. 44). Taken together, the adoption of these analytics treats all forms of social reality as textual and focuses on the exploration of the interplay of discursive practices across temporal and spatial dimensions of the social arena. The authors of the Reading School refer to this approach as "critical polytextualism", which emphasises the multiplicity of texts and the importance of addressing their properties, operation, and consequences (Curt, 1994).

What sets Q apart from more traditional forms of discourse analysis in this respect, is that it shares the task of analysis with the participants. While it is true that they cannot tell their stories without the resources provided, patterns emerge because individuals sort in systematically similar ways and in manners systematically different from other Q sorts. Therefore, it is participants' sorts and not the researchers' readings that determine the emergence of factors and where subjectivity is expressed (W. Stainton Rogers & R. Stainton Rogers, 1997). Following from this, subjective experience is constituted in and through discourse and what Q seeks to capture is the expression of a wider discursive position (Stenner & Watts, 1998). This recognises that individuals are not separable from the regulative regimes of acceptable statements that are imposed on them. The concern with subjectivity, then, is with the purposes to which texts are put: what ideas are being peddled? What ideologies are being promoted? What is being covered up and who is being silenced? Who gains and who loses? (W. Stainton Rogers, 1998). Q provides the means to access alternative discourses operating around a topic and provides a stimulus to examine subjective experiences regarding identity, experiences, beliefs, power and the justifications for action or inaction, as opposed to being imposed *a priori* by the researcher (W. Stainton Rogers, 1998; Kitzinger, 1999). Put another way, for proponents of the Reading School, Q is the only technique which places the participants in control of the classification process, and factors cannot emerge unless participants sort items in ways that enable it to do so (W. Stainton

Rogers, 1991). As such, Q is best conceived as a methodology for those dealing with discourse or text and is well suited for the research needs of social science more generally (Cross, 2005).

One of the most influential applications of discourse to Q comes from political science in Dryzek & Berejikian's (1993) study of democratic discourses. The authors' use and understanding of discourse refers to "a shared set of capabilities which enable the assemblage of words, phrases, and sentences into meaningful texts intelligible to readers or listeners" (Dryzek & Berejikian, 1993, p. 51). In this sense, the authors understand discourse as a set of categories and concepts embodying specific assumptions, judgements, contentions, dispositions, and capabilities that can enable or constrain action. In addition, discourse embodies a conception of common and acceptable knowledge; however, they are not surface manifestations, because discourses help constitute identities and interests (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008. This approach has been adopted in a variety of applications of Q. For example, Barry & Proops (1999) argue that the essence of discourses is that they are individual and subjective, representing the way an individual relates to and forms conceptions of the world in certain contexts. Subsequently, for the authors, discourse analysis is concerned with the nature of shared perception or social discourse, and Q facilitates the collation and correlation of individual responses as a means of extracting idealised forms of discourse that are latent within a response set (Barry & Proops, 1999). For Addams (2000), this is related to the communication concourse, and the strength of Q lies in its ability to extract idealised forms of discourse and reveal the inherent structures latent within the response set (Addams, 2000, p. 15).

A further application of this approach to discourse in Q involves the sampling process. Dryzek & Berejikian (1993) argue against rough and ready procedures. Instead, they advocate for the use of cell structures that ensure the key elements that define discourses are captured. This reflects Stephenson's (1953) own advocacy for a more balanced approach to the design of Q studies in the sense that it utilises block designs to produce a structured rather than random Q sample. Such an approach seeks to represent the breadth and depth of the concourse, in such a way that the preconditions for statistical analysis and sound inferences are implicit in the structured samples (Stephenson, 1953). The structuring of a sample provides for its representativeness. Dryzek & Berejikian (1993) employed a 3x3 grid across two dimensions. The first dimension refers to the political aspects of discourse, along which they define 3 elements: 1) a set of entities that are recognised as existing (e.g. class, race, nation); 2) the degree of agency that entities are assigned; 3) the motivations of the respective entities; 4) conceptions of relationships between entities (Dryzek, 1988; Dryzek & Berejikian, 1993). The second dimension, which is more heuristic, refers to the types of claims being made, which Dryzek & Berejikian (1993) identify as including: 1) definitive (meaning of terms); 2) designative (questions of fact); 3) evaluative (questions of worth); 4) advocative (questions of existence) (Dryzek & Berejikian, 1993). In this way, the principles of political discourse analysis become the justification for the sampling of statements which is the grist of Q analysis (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008). This approach to the sampling process has proven highly influential in applications of Q to the study of public service management and local governance. For example, Sullivan et al. (2012) adopt a 3x3 grid inspired by Dryzek & Berejikian in their study of leadership and collaboration in public management. Sullivan et al. (2012) constructed their grid along two dimensions; one focusing on structural and agentic dimensions present in the literature, and the other ensuring coverage of the types of statements being made.

Having provided contextual points to the application of discourse in Q, we can now move to introduce and elaborate on the utility and compatibility of PDT and the Logics approach to Q.

The Essex School and the Logics Approach

Essex School Political Discourse Theory has developed from the collective and individual works of Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, drawing on a range of disciplines including Sausserian linguistics, Derridean deconstruction, Foucauldian discourse analysis and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Howarth, 2000). PDT stresses the importance of language, symbols, and images in the analysis of political and social practices. However, the category of discourse is not limited to language, text or talk in context. Rather, it is conceived as an articulatory practice that connects wider institutions, norms, identities and their associated meanings that are constitutive of social relations (Griggs et al., 2017; Vázquez García & Roussos, 2024). Crucial to this understanding is the concept of articulation. For Laclau & Mouffe, "we will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice we will call discourse" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). Discourse then, is not a contemplative static entity, rather it constructs and organises social relations by incorporating diverse elements, modifying their meaning, and incorporating them into wider relational systems, which themselves are capable of structuring norms and practices (Griggs et al., 2017). However, PDT stresses that all products of articulation are marked by a radical contingency, meaning that all social formations and identities are never fully constituted and are open to contestation. This openness and incomplete nature of discourse is what produces the possibilities for developing novel interpretations and evaluations of the construction of discourses (Laclau, 1990; Glynos & Howarth, 2008). Nevertheless, the impossibility of closure also implies that there are moments of partial fixity which are established through exercises of power that defines the inclusion or exclusion of elements. Thus, any existing practices or discourses are understood as the outcome of hegemonic struggles, in which normative, political, and ideological elements are always in play (Vázquez García & Roussos, 2024). PDT is then post-*structuralist* in its focus on how meaning is established through relations, with the focus on structures of meaning being the analytical lens that informs the approach. At the same time, PDT is also *post*-structuralist in its understanding that meaning is contingent and continuously reproduced and transformed through hegemonic practices (De Cleen et al., 2021).

Building from this foundation, Glynos & Howarth's (2007) Logics of Critical Explanation sets out to develop "an ontological stance and a grammar of concepts, together with a particular research ethos which makes it possible to construct and furnish answers to empirical problems that can withstand charges of methodological arbitrariness, historical particularism and idealism" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 7). The Logics approach consists of five interconnected steps: Problematisation; Retroduction; Logics; Articulation and Critique (PRELAC). Whilst each step may be considered independent in an analytical sense, in practice they are closely intertwined and co-dependent.

Problematisation reminds us that research puzzles are constructions of our own design and that this shapes that way we approach them. In this sense, problematisation works on two levels: On the one hand, we determine our research puzzle, or rather, a given becomes a question; On the other, we are tending to the mechanisms of power that constructed that given in the first place (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Vázquez García &

Roussos, 2024). Retroduction involves an appeal to an alternative form of reasoning, distinct from induction and deduction. Where deductive reasoning purports to prove, and inductive reasoning purports to approximate, retroduction conjectures what is the case (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; 2019). Retroduction follows from problematisation where we observe a puzzling phenomenon; this phenomenon would be explicable as a matter of course if our hypothesis were true, and there is good reason to think that a hypothesis is true. However, any hypothesis is not inferred until its contents are present in the explanation of the observed phenomenon, and the single most important criterion for admitting a hypothesis is that it accounts for the puzzle, however tentatively (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). For example, a straightforward retroductive puzzle may consider the severity of austerity measures implemented across Europe post-Global Financial Crisis in 2008, while a tentative hypothesis may consider how austerity was framed as inevitable owing to the dominant understanding of economics (i.e. neoliberalism). However, retroduction is understood as a cyclical process whereby "we move from one moment to the next, and back again, revising aspects of our accounts considering adjustments made in other moments such that we never return to the same spot" (Glynos & Howarth, 2019, p. 118).

If retroduction is the form of explanation, then logics provides the content. There are several reasons for adopting the concept of logics in developing the Logics approach. Firstly, it draws from Laclau and Mouffe (1985), in which the concept of logics appears often, for example: logics of equivalence and difference in their theory of hegemony. In addition, it enables us to engage more directly with other traditions, offering PDT a language with which it can suggest ways of engaging with questions of explanation and understanding, but in a way that is congruent with its ontological presuppositions (Glynos et al., 2021). Therefore, logic is understood as capturing the point, rules and ontological preconditions of practices and regimes as opposed to causal laws and mechanisms (Glynos & Howarth, 2008). Three logics are employed to this end: social, political and fantasmatic. Social logics refer to particular social practices or regimes that are multiple, conditional, and contextually specific systems of sedimented practices that present themselves as natural (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Glynos et al., 2021). Political logics enable us to explain and potentially criticise the emergence, formation, and maintenance of practices or regimes by rendering social demands and identities equivalent (or different), allowing us to trace the contingency of regimes and practices, facilitating the imagination and construction of new meanings, practices, and identity' (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Glynos et al., 2021). Finally, fantasmatic logics allow analysts to describe, explain and critique the way subjects are gripped by discourses, while at the same time concealing the contestability of social relations (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Howarth et al., 2016). The logics then, engage in a form of middle-range theorising, which endeavours to redescribe the empirical level through operationalising PDT's core assumptions and concepts in the conduct of critical empirical research (Glynos et al., 2021). With regards to the status of logics, it should be made clear that the respective logics always work together, thus critical explanation involves the articulation of different logics with empirical context to produce our accounts, which itself is underpinned by PTD's approach to and understanding of the nature of discourse (Glynos & Howarth, 2007).

This brings us to the role of Articulation, which considers the practices of linking and breaking of elements and the ways that researchers use the logics to develop their accounts. This approach to articulation is based on intuition, whereby, having been immersed in a topic, we draw on our theoretical expertise to make judgements

regarding the importance and utility of elements in addressing research puzzles (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). It is important to note the distinct levels of abstraction that articulation is applied here. On the one hand, articulation says something about the linking and decoupling of elements and considers what moments provide discourse with partial fixity. On the other, we stress the role of judgment, in which a researcher employs their capacity to connect a concept to an object or apply a respective logic to a series of social processes, within a contingent and contestable theoretical framework (Howarth et al., 2016). Finally, critique refers to ways in which our explanations aim to expose the radical contingency of processes and relations, disclosing points of contestation and the conditions of possibility for the emergence of alternative practices, as well as the ways in which individuals identify with these practices (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Howarth et al. 2016). In sum, the Logics approach furnishes PDT with the means to "engage systematically with debates in the philosophy of science, addressing questions of explanation, understanding, causality, testing, case selection, reliability and validity and so on" (Glynos et al., 2021, p. 64).

Ways Forward: Q, Discourse, and Logics

Some members of the Reading School have noted that they tend to speak a different language regarding Q, and whilst they recognise that this language is often couched in difficult and complex terms or concepts, they maintain that these are a necessary evil that is required for their lines of enquiry (Stenner & Watts, 1998). In the same vein, discourse theorists of the Essex School are similarly aware that their language and grammar is often complex and technical. However, this is something they do not and should not make apologies for. Like Stenner & Watts, they maintain that the concepts and grammars of PDT are necessary tools and equipment for conducting empirical enquiry. However, rather than speaking a different language, what they want to argue is that PDT speaks with a different accent. Just as Scots and Welsh speak English with their respective accents, so, too, does PDT speak with a distinct accent regarding discourse and Q. The focus on PDT is not to detract from the valuable contributions outlined above. indeed, as we will see, there are several points of agreement between the respective traditions. The purpose here is to add to and refine the tools of the methodological toolbox for studies inspired by discourse-theoretical ideas that consider Q a viable research technique.

For both PDT and Q, enquiries into method inevitably touch upon ontological and epistemological dimensions, which extend to the selection of techniques of data gathering and analysis appropriate to the case (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). On a more general point, an advantage of qualitative methods is that they facilitate the systematic gathering of data which are not always suitable for quantification. In addition, "to appraise data based on whether or not they have been subjected to statistical analysis is surely a case of misplaced emphasis" (Brown, 1993, p. 107). The task of making PDT and Q commensurate should, therefore, be approached much like "the art of the historian, literary critic, or psychoanalyst as opposed to the spurious scientistic pretentions of positivist social science" (Glynos et al., 2021, p. 70). In this sense, the application of PDT (and discursive approaches more generally) to Q can be thought of through the metaphor of toolboxes, where we use specific ideas and concepts like a screwdriver, and if we use these to short-circuit or break-up systems of power, then all the better (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007). What remains, is to elaborate on how the PDT "head" can be applied to the empirical outputs of Q and how this can encourage the

production of novel understanding and explanations of events and issues we seek to investigate.

Political Subjectivity
A first point we can raise relates to subjectivity. The definition of subjectivity as being operant by practitioners of Q can produce confusion over what exactly is being investigated. Some have defended Stephenson's account on the basis that it avoids a dualism that sees the subjectivity and objectivity as radically opposed (Good, 2010; Watts, 2011). For example, as Steven Brown (2015) argues, the assumption that discourse analysis is cultural and Q clinical is misguided, as when it comes to subjectivity, only the words clinical and cultural create the impression that there is a boundary between discourse analysis and Q. Indeed, it is not the case that Q overemphasizes subjectivity any more than chemistry does elements (Brown, 2015). Discursive approaches more broadly are well equipped to provide a further nuanced interpretation of subjectivity. For example, Stenner & Watts argue that discursive psychology points to the discursive and material conditions which structure the field of human experience. From this perspective, subjectivity cannot be separated from the regulative regimes of practice that are imposed by context and immersed in ongoing social processes. Q factors then represent the voicing of a wider discursive position (Stenner & Watts, 1998). As such, what is decisive in Q is less who said what about X? than what is currently being said about X? which entails a focus on subjectively expressed, socially organised, semantic patterns (Watts & Stenner, 2005). However, a potential weakness here stems from a passive and overly individualistic view of subjectivity, where individuals are viewed as objects of discourse as opposed to active participants who can consent and contest those issues on which they construct viewpoints (Norval & Prasopoulou, 2019). Put another way, there is a danger that such an understanding inadvertently bypasses the complexities of representation and subjectivity, wherein an agent first forms ideas and beliefs and then expresses them (Glynos & Howarth, 2007).

The understanding of subjectivity provided by Stenner & Watts resonates with PDT in the sense that it adopts a perspective that makes intelligible the meanings and reason participants give for their actions and preferences, contrasting with a more objectivist position that attempts to stand outside the social and political phenomenon they investigate (Glynos & Howarth, 2008). Where PDT diverges is that it emphasises a distinction between subject position and political subjectivity. Subject position refers to the plurality of positions individuals can identify with and hold, whereas political subjectivity captures the ways in which individuals act, which emerges from the contingency of those positions as well as discourse more generally (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 2000). And it is precisely because contingency compels action that the subject is not determined by structure, nor do they constitute it, rather, "It is in the process of this identification that political subjectivities are created and formed. Once formed and stabilised, they become those subject positions that turn individuals into social actors with certain characteristics and attributes" (Howarth, 2000, p. 109). This perspective draws from Foucault, where subject position is taken to provide a conceptual repertoire from where individuals see the world from that vantage point and in terms of images, metaphors and narratives that are made relevant within the discursive practices connected to that subject position (Norval & Prasopoulou, 2019).

If an individual's relationship to their words is unique, then when participants interact with statements, the meaning and significance their response holds for them

will differ from the meaning assumed by the observer, or anyone else (Brown, 1980). Therefore, subjectivity can only take a defined form in the moment of relationship between a subject and its object, and the adoption of a viewpoint suggests an orientation of a particular subject in relation to a particular object via any number of pathways (Watts, 2011). Within the context of conducting Q, any individual statement, the Q sample as a whole or the condition of instruction, could be considered as a stimulus that triggers the participants' search for meaning, which can take on a variety of forms (Glynos et al., 2009). Crucially, whilst every Q sort is unique, "We develop our subjectivity socially, and Q allows us to explore the resulting inter-subjectivity, to reveal to what extent the unique subjectivity of one actor overlaps with that of others" (Sullivan et al., 2012, p. 47). Indeed, inter-subjective or common meanings are not reducible to subjective meanings, because any common meaning can only be sustained through collective acts. Moreover, inter-subjective and common meanings are closely interconnected and interdependent, furnishing actors with direction and purpose (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Bringing Q and PDT into dialogue on this basis furnishes Q with further sophisticated understanding of the range and depth of subjectivity, while at the same time, provides PDT with a robust methodological technique for grappling with subjectivity and its myriad expressions (Norval & Prasopoulou, 2019).

Discourse
As noted above, for PDT, the concept of discourse captures the idea that all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning enables individuals to interpret various social and political phenomena (Howarth, 2000; Norval & Prasopoulou, 2019). However, it is not enough to simply state that something has meaning, rather, our role as researchers is to discern the conditions and events that influence and govern the production of discourse. Put slightly differently, the role of the discourse analyst is to better understand how discourses, structure, maintain, and transform social practices and *vice versa* (Glynos et al., 2021; Vázquez García & Roussos, 2024). This position is not at odds with the Reading School's approach; indeed, there are strong resonances between our understanding and application of discourse. The divergence is more in terms of the focus of analysis. For example, Curt notes that discourse analysis is not a search behind the word; rather, talk and text are social practices which are productive of experience and construct the realities by which we live. Thus, discursive practices are activities by which text is knowledged into being (Curt, 1994). Practically speaking, as a Gestalt procedure, Q cannot break up its subject matter into constituent themes, but it can demonstrate the "primary ways in which these themes are being interconnected or otherwise related by a group of participants" (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 70). However, it is also worth noting that while Q may reveal the range and diversity of perspectives, it does not enable the exploration of how people actively construct and negotiate these different perspectives in interactions with others (Kitzinger, 1999).

Like discursive psychology, PDT also emphasises the unstable relations between discourses and how people selectively draw on different discursive resources in different social contexts, focusing on the ways existing structures provide a basis for, *and* are challenged and transformed through language (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002. This is reflected in Rex Stainton Rogers' claim that discursive stabilities are important phenomena in and of themselves, but through their mutual tensions and incommensurability, they also enable the conditions of innovation (R. Stainton Rogers, 1998). It can be argued that an analytical distinction between structure and practice is necessary, and that a single Q study analysis contains a limited number of utterances,

but to claim whether these reproduce or challenge specific discourses, it is essential to place them into context. That is, to have an understanding of the kind of structure in relation to which it should be analysed (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002) The use of Q by the Reading School follows this logic. However, the consequence here is that the order of discourse exists only through implication. Put slightly differently, to avoid reifying discourse and marginalising subjectivity, there is a tendency to neglect how discourse imposes limits on people's actions and speech in social interactions (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

Theoretically speaking, all structures of meaning, at various levels of abstraction, can be considered discourses, but a significant analytical advantage of PDT is that it works to clarify the relations between discourses and the wider structures of meaning they reproduce or contest (De Cleen et al., 2021). Politically speaking, discourses are constituted in relation to other discourses. Therefore, the creation of a dominant or hegemonic discourse is the outcome of complex discursive struggles in which opposed political forces seek to "universalise" their perspective. If we recall the assumption of radical contingency, then we must further recognise that discourses and their respective elements are marked by what Derrida (1972) calls a "logic of iterability", that is, they can be repeated in different contexts and are also shaped by the new contexts in which they operate (Griggs et al., 2017). Such an understanding reflects the fact that PDT is primarily a *discursive approach* and not a *method* for analysing texts. Moreover, PDT emphasises its poststructuralist roots because this shapes its theory of meaning and crucially, because of its macro-analytical focus on discourse as structures of meaning (De Cleen et al., 2021). The utility of this position for Q becomes clear when approaching the concourse. Q is not concerned with the diachronic or temporal unfolding of patterns or views, rather it reveals "how subjective input can produce objective discursive structures that are relatively stable over time" (Glynos et al., 2009, p. 30). Therefore, through PDT the concourse is not conceived as a given set of discrete statements but as a discursive horizon that shapes and sets limits to what can be done within a given terrain (Norval, 2007).

This is acknowledged by the Reading School, which suggests that the concourse is a site of creativity and identity formation, and Q serves to reveal its inherent structures. In addition, it promotes the conception of the concourse as a discursive arena, and that discourses that emerge in differing registers may have differing practices (Brown, 1993; R Stainton Rogers, 1998). PDT is more explicit in this view and its vocabulary of concepts such as discourse, articulation, logics, and subject position highlights its interest in how identities are discursively constructed; the ways in which discourses are structured and their relations to each other; and how different discourses may attach different meanings to the same signifier (De Cleen et al., 2021). Put slightly differently, like the Reading School, PDT analyses all kinds of text, but with the aim of identifying discourses as structures of meaning from which different texts and utterances draw, reproduce and contest. What a combination of Q and PDT offers in this regard, is a macro-level empirical analysis that captures the complexity of subject positions, contextualising this against the backdrop of a discursive horizon that structures the acceptable limits of discourse and subjectivity, foregrounding those interactions that are crucial to the moment of political subjectivity.

Q and The Logics Approach

Having addressed and clarified some important theoretical and conceptual points, we can now turn to considering the application of the Logics approach to Q. Deploying a

Logics approach alongside Q provides one such means for interpreting and working through the meaning of factors. As will be recalled from the above, the Logics approach consists of five interdependent steps represented by the anagram PRELAC, and each step can be applied as a means of elaborating on the process of conducting Q and interpreting factor meanings.

With regards to problematisation, a Logics approach stresses that an object of study is constructed. This means that "a range of disparate empirical phenomena have to be constituted as a problem, and the problem has to be located at an appropriate level of abstraction and complexity" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 167). Another way to put this is to consider what is puzzling about the specific topic or issue that we are addressing, recognising that our puzzles are neither natural nor essential, and so the constitution of a problem will invariably result in the transformation of perceptions and understandings (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). This shares some similarities with the Reading School's concepts of issuance and tectonics, which accept the historical specificity of the conditions in which problems arise. However, where the Logics approach differs is that it is not only focused on the event itself, but the forms of thought which constitute specific efforts to answer the puzzle associated with it. Indeed, any set of problems can generate different and often contradictory answers, therefore, "problematisations do not simply represent concrete problems; they refer to creative work defining the conditions under which certain possible answers may be constructed or created" (Lemke, 2019, p. 358). Take the process of establishing and sampling a concourse as an example. On the one hand, there is a consideration of the materials that are representative of the concourse; primary documents, semi-structured interviews, images, focus groups, media reports etc. However, key questions that stem from the practice of problematisation include what our selection criteria are and what materials are excluded from our concourse? If we assume that there are no fully saturated contexts, where is it appropriate to end problematising? Why is it that certain types of materials are more often used in concourse sampling than others? Does this have something to do with our assumptions about the topic or our assumptions regarding Q itself? What we are doing here is questioning the conventions that construct givens both on the topic and in the techniques we employ. In this sense, problematisation directs us to consider not only what the puzzle is but how we approach this puzzle in the context of our research goals.

Working through these questions brings us to the role of retroduction. A retroductive form of explanation implies that the persuasive aspect of justification extends to convincing the audience about the way the problem has been characterised in positing a hypothesis at the outset (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Given that we assume there is not a neutral way to engage in problematisation and explanation, retroduction serves both instrumental (to convince) and constitutive roles (to return and rethink presumptions and explanations). As noted above, this is not limited to the research object alone as the process of justification folds back into processes of problematisation. Thus, engaging in retroductive reasoning serves to re-inform the purposes, strategies, and methods of research, including our selection of Q as a technique, the ways in which we construct a concourse, as well as highlighting the contingent character of the knowledge (Glynos & Howarth, 2019). Indeed, problem-definition, the process of mapping of the concourse and the identification and naming of viewpoints, are constitutive moments in forming objects of research, or what members of the Reading School have otherwise described as working through a climate of perturbation (Curt, 1994; W. Stainton Rogers 1998). Put another way, the concept of retroduction is invoked here to capture the processes

through which we produce hypothesis and construct theories to account for problematised phenomenon (Glynos & Howarth, 2019).

Take once again the example of concourse sampling. Theoretically speaking, any sample of statements is acceptable, provided care is taken about matters such as conciseness, clarity, and representativeness (Stephenson, 1953). At the same time, we must be wary of selecting statements through controlling for meaning, given that Q is an interpretive process where the object of the study is to examine how and why an issue or element can mean different things to different people. Steps can be taken, however, to minimise this risk (Willis & Jeffares, 2012; Jeffares, 2014). Like Dryzek & Berejikian (1993), PDT advocates for heuristic cell structures to aid the process of reducing statements to a manageable set. Working through the steps of problematisation and retroduction directs us to consistently re-evaluate materials, cell structures and their dimensions, bringing into light new elements that we can then take forward into our explanations and analysis. As such, several combinations may be attempted, but the respective cells of any sampling grid cannot and are not intended to be comprehensive, nor provide a neat fit as statements will often overlap. For example, Norval & Prasopoulou (2019) employ a grid that combined the type of argumentative claims made with identified discursive elements that emerged from close and repeated engagement with the concourse. Similarly, Griggs et al. (2023) devised a grid across dimensions of the discursive content of statements (e.g. motivation) and their characterisations (e.g. evaluative). A key point in this approach is that the representative nature of the statements comes in part from the grid, thus reducing as far as possible the influence and bias of the researcher. Additionally, there is an interest in maintaining a balance of statements that reflects conjectures that emerge in previous research and through engagement with the concourse. On the one hand, *a priori* conjectures provide a theoretically grounded frame within which we can analyse subjectivity, while on the other, they broadly encompass the discursive horizon of the case under study (Skelcher et al., 2013). Such decisions and approaches to problem definition and concourse sampling come down to the actions of the researcher and the best way to justify them is to be explicit and consistent, and the dual process of problematisation and retroduction provides the means of doing so.

A key element in the deployment of the Logics approach, is that researchers use their situated abilities, acquired through practice, to connect key theoretical concepts – such as the respective logics – to our research objects (Glynos et al., 2021). In the context of Q, it is not the case that a specific social, political or fantasmatic logic embodies a factor that emerges from the data analysis. Any potential explanation or hypothesis regarding factors that we might offer will consist of a plurality of logics, and the onus is on the researcher to articulate these as a means of bringing the core features of a factor or practice into view, a practice which facilitates rendering the puzzle intelligible (Howarth et al., 2016; Glynos et al., 2021). Furthermore, the specific contents and nature of the respective logics are recognised as constructions of the researcher, borne out of attentive study, and so any presentation of logics is not reducible to the phenomena, nor do the respective logics possess a transcendental function (Howarth, 2005; Glynos & Howarth, 2008). However, without placing the subject within the context in which meaning, identity and viewpoints are formed, any attempts to account for their observably expressed subjectivity is incomplete. How we then interpret viewpoints or factors depends upon the precise meanings attributed to, and practices associated with them by a variety of actors. It is in this sense that the factors extracted from Q can then be said to constitute specific subject positions from which individuals

can speak and act (Norval & Prasopoulou, 2019). Incorporating social, political and fantasmatic logics into the analysis and interpretation of factors, enables us to highlight their constructed and political character, and then articulate these with related concepts to produce critical evaluations of the social relations and processes that facilitated their expression through Q.

For example, in their study of officer-elected member relations in British Local Government, Griggs et al. (2023) identified various viewpoints. One such viewpoint demonstrated a "steady as she goes" attitude which reiterated a more traditional understanding of these relations. The language of logics enables us to describe and then explain the emergence and constitution of viewpoints within the context of the phenomenon under investigation. Social logics are substantive in the sense that they characterise the practices associated with the roles of officers and members or the viewpoint more generally, whereas political logics help us to explore how these practices are instituted, contested, and defended in context. Finally, fantasmatic logics seek to capture the narratives that grip subjects and the means by which they conceal the contingency of those practices and relations connected to the viewpoint. "Since all dimensions are to some degree present in a practice or regime, each logic has a role to play in furnishing us with a complete explanatory account" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 134).

A critical issue that must be recognised here is that, in interpreting factors, the researcher's own biases and limitations may be most apparent and result in meanings being inadvertently imposed on participants (Kitzinger, 1999). Indeed, the process of factor interpretation is potentially endless as there are always different readings that could be drawn; however, interpretation is also necessarily constrained by the subjective input of the participants (Watts & Stenner, 2005). As noted above, the respective logics do not represent objective causal patterns that are independent of an actor's meaning, and while their discernment must take actors' own interpretations or subjective expressions into account, they also do not simply reflect or transmit these (Howarth, 2018). Indeed, our constructions and presentations of the logics must be respectful of the meanings and interpretations of the participants of Q, and it may well be the case that these presentations will not overlap with participants' understandings as expressed through Q. It will be recalled that the respective logics serve to characterise viewpoints, and they are discerned through a to-and-fro movement between data, observations and our attempts to critically engage with the topic at hand through articulating the logics into an overarching explanatory logic that combines descriptive, explanatory, and critical aspects (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). It is essential then, that our use of logics is developed through iterative, retroductive cycles that evaluate and problematise their utility in dialogue with other researchers and traditions, as well as with the participants of the Q study themselves (Glynos & Howarth, 2019; Glynos et al., 2021).

To re-emphasise a crucial point, PDT conceives discourse as an articulatory practice, where the logic of a practice comprises the rules, as well as the conditions which make the practice both possible and vulnerable (Glynos and Howarth 2007). This means that our ontological perspective is not just concerned with a detailed description of the different meanings and entities in the world, but also with how entities and meanings are the way they are, which requires more general reflection (Glynos & Howarth, 2008). No matter how robust our presentation of logics is, their subject-dependence and quasi-transcendental status remind us that they and our ontological framework are themselves historical, contingent, and contestable (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Indeed,

the discerning reader of Q studies should always bear in mind that labels for factors "are always contestable and are best reflected upon in the light of the factor exegesis" (R. Stainton Rogers & Kitzinger, 1995, p. 105). Moreover, provided that researchers report the full factor array and the set of Q sort items, the adequacy of any interpretation is open to evaluation by the reader. When interpreting factor arrays, researchers are engaging in a form of justification, telling a plausible story about the choices made by the research participants, and seeking to explain the patterns that emerge from the Q study (Kitzinger, 1999).

This leads us to the role of articulation. Both Q and PDT work in an abductive fashion, favouring themes that are generated by participants as opposed to being generated by the researcher. Q begins with opinions, from which concepts develop, and it is this process that facilitates the emergence of new concepts and themes when interpreting factors such that Q is not constrained by an initial choice of concepts (Addams, 2000). Similarly, PDT and the Logics approach emphasise the importance of multiplicity and contingency in opening new ways of articulating and disconnecting elements, which in other perspectives are deemed necessary or essential. As we have discussed above, a key element of articulation within the Logics approach relates to judgement, which is considered as a situated ability in which the researcher will inevitably leave their trace on the research through their choices and analyses. However, this should not be considered a blemish on "pure" analysis. Indeed, regardless of the methods that are adopted, the analytic process involves judgements by the researcher about what the most important views expressed by participants are, as well as their meaning (Kitzinger, 1999). To ensure consistency, we must endeavour to articulate the logics with the theoretical elements we employ, but it must also be recognised that this practice modifies each element, creating context-specific applications of the logics. Articulation then is the process through which the products of our problematisations and retroductive reasoning are pieced together into a robust explanans regarding the interpretation of factors. At the same time, it refers to the process that the analyst must go through to produce a critical explanation, sustaining a necessary and welcome degree of flexibility and pluralism in terms of applying the insights produced by the Logics approach to empirical research (Glynos et al., 2021).

The discussions above lead us to consider the role of critique, or, to put this slightly differently, to ask: Where is the critical dimension in the Logics of critical explanation? More generally, the emphasis on radical contingency is connected to critique in the sense that Q can serve to reveal points of contestation, which in turn are connected to practices of problematisation and political subjectivity (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Howarth et al., 2016). Our critical standpoint then emerges out of the ontological commitments informing our practices of problematisation and characterisation, including the articulatory nature of our judgements (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). For the purposes of PDT, Q can be considered as an exploratory technique that provides the statistical and analytical means of excavating and assessing how participants construct viewpoints. At the same time, we recognise that any apparent discrepancies in factors or viewpoints derive from our personal and political perspectives. What we might see as a discrepancy may not be experienced as such by participants of a Q study who express alternative perspectives, and so it is helpful to be able to draw on the written or verbal comments of participants in explaining these apparent discrepancies (Kitzinger, 1999). Ontological consistency is crucial here for drawing from various disciplines and their concepts, but also in allowing for some measure of generalisation and comparative work. As such, critique presupposes the endeavour to interpret social phenomena from

within, where efforts are made to elucidate the rules and conditions that govern discursive practices. This task is multi-dimensional in that it focuses on a complex set of elements which are dispersed across multiple dimensions. The utility of critique as it is conceived in the Logics approach to the conduct of Q, then, is to highlight the contingency and naturalisation of sedimented relations, identities and subjectivity, while at the same time, serving to raise ethical and normative questions about the relationship between the assertion of universal values and the contexts in which these are affirmed or contested, as well as the discursive construction of alternatives (Howarth, 2013; 2018).

Conclusion

At its core, PDT is a discursive approach with significant theoretical ambitions which remain central to its project However, "it has become increasingly recognised that these theoretical ambitions would benefit from more systematic empirical work" (De Cleen et al., 2021, p. 29). The emergence and development of Glynos & Howarth's (2007) Logics approach stands out as a concerted effort on the part of PDT to address questions of method by developing a robust framework that encourages researchers to use their situated abilities and knowledge to connect theoretical insights to empirical phenomena via the selection of appropriate research techniques. Q methodology has become increasingly popular in the social sciences and appealing to discursive approaches in that it provides a research technique that focuses on the study of subjectivity and can reveal the topology, distinctiveness and character of viewpoints expressed on a given topic. PDT and the Logics approach stand to benefit from an expanded engagement with Q, while at the same time, PDT's strength lies in it being a poststructuralist theory of the social rather than a method for the analysis of discourse-as-text thus offering an alternative focus for Q-inspired research. Compared with other discursive approaches, PDT's focus is on laying bare the "structures of meaning and the logics underlying practices across politics, media and communication, policy, organisational practices, the economy and elsewhere, as well as in its insistence on their contingent and contested nature" (De Cleen et al., 2021, p. 37).

The purpose of this article has not been to provide a step-by-step guide in how to conduct Q from a PDT perspective, rather, in keeping with the principles of methodological pluralism, it has sought to highlight the utility and potential of Q as an empirical research technique available to discourse theorists. To this end, this article has demonstrated how the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of Q, PDT and the Logics approach can be made commensurate and used to inform empirical research that can produce bodies of knowledge that the respective traditions otherwise could not in isolation. Building on several distinct applications of discourse in Q, we have drawn particular attention to how PDT's conceptualisation of discourse as an articulatory practice encompasses wider social relations and how its concept of political subjectivity as being socially constructed emphasises the range and depth of subjectivity. The Logics, through its five-fold PRELAC process has then been explored as a means of operationalising these conceptual points through Q. More generally, this article has sought to open the boundaries and possibilities for both Q and PDT, facilitating a deeper understanding of the political events, topics, and the subjective expressions of those individuals who are active participants. Indeed, in terms of political analysis, a synthesis of PDT, the Logics and Q enables us to highlight the constructed and political character of subjectivity and discourse, "and then to articulate a connected series of concepts that

can help us to analyse social relations and processes, while remaining faithful to our ontological commitments" (Glynos & Howarth, 2008, p. 166). Furthermore, a major strength of PDT and Q can be found in their various applications that produce challenging new work in a variety of fields. This article also contributes to our ability to examine and critically reflect on our respective approach's developments and applications, encouraging productive encounters with a wider variety of disciplines. By synthesising Q, PDT, and the Logics, we can establish a robust conceptual foundation for empirical research that can produce nuanced insights into the patterns and depth of subjectivity as well as the structures of discourse, thus adding another tool to the methodological toolbox of both Poststructuralist Discourse Theory and Q methodology.

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