Computer Simulations of Voting Behavior by William R. Shaffer
Review by: Samuel L. Popkin
The American Political Science Review, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec., 1974), pp. 1747-1749
Published by: American Political Science Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1959973
Accessed: 05/02/2014 09:27

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

American Political Science Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Political Science Review*.

http://www.jstor.org

This content downloaded from 128.83.205.53 on Wed, 5 Feb 2014 09:27:16 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

would have been preferable, but some attention to conceptual definitions is better than none. On validity, Price primarily reports the research results, the implication being that if the hypotheses were (un)supported, the measures are (in)valid. There is obviously an error here. Examining results for predictive validity is a reasonable start, but only that.

In a concluding chapter, the author recommends the inclusion of instrumentation in all research reports. Further, if eliminated by editors or publishers, the measures should be filed with a general distribution source (e.g., the American Documentation Institute). I agree, for requiring such procedures would not only contribute to better measurement, but would make researchers more thoughtful about the reported meaning and importance of their results.

The book has its ups and downs, one of the latter being unfortunate lapses into elementary-school workbook style, but it definitely is worth consulting by anyone embarking on the instrumentation phase of organizational research, especially surveys.

LAWRENCE B. MOHR
University of Michigan

Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor. By Ellis Sandoz. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971. Pp. 263. $8.95.)

This study of Dostoevsky's Legend of the Grand Inquisitor is an extremely solid, closely thought out, vigorously argued and well-written book. Its aim is to prove that Dostoevsky, in his Legend, has "given mythopoetic expression to an experience of transcendence in the Christian mystical tradition. He has set down an apocalypse." Prof. Sandoz has studied, with a good deal of thoroughness, the social-political background of Russian culture in Dostoevsky's time, the Russian tradition of Orthodox theology on which Dostoevsky draws, and the sectarian mysticism for which he had a good deal of sympathy. All these came together in the Legend to create a powerful synthesis that renews the tradition of Biblical Apocalypse.

Professor Sandoz is a student of Eric Voegelin, and draws on Voegelin's thought for the framework of his interpretation of the political significance of the Legend. Voegelin sees modern totalitarian movements (communism and fascism), as well as a good deal of modern culture, as contemporary forms of the old Christian heresy of Gnosticism. The Legend is Dostoevsky's answer to this heresy as embodied in the radical social-political thought of his time. This, as Dostoevsky understood it, called for the nihilistic destruction of the world and its reconstruction under the aegis of naked human reason. In opposition, Dostoevsky affirmed the transcendence of human freedom to any possible order of immanence, and its subservience only to the divine truth of God and Christ apprehended intuitively by faith.

The reading of the Legend given by Prof. Sandoz is a very strenuous intellectual exercise, and one cannot help wondering whether this comparatively brief text, on the whole quite comprehensible, can really contain all the historical, theological, and political meanings that Prof. Sandoz manages to draw out of it. He certainly makes out a very good (if not entirely conclusive) case for answering this question in the affirmative. Best of all, the weight of his commentary does not interfere with his firm grasp of the existential and experiential core of Dostoevsky's text, which is the source of its power for the common reader.

There is no room here to discuss all the issues he raises, or to quarrel with the fine points of his interpretation. His attempt to turn the Grand Inquisitor into John the Baptist does not seem to me persuasive; and he goes astray in equating the Inquisitor too literally with traditional conceptions of the Anti-Christ. To speak of him as judging mankind "from a nauseous self-awareness of personal decrepitude" (p. 158) just does not correspond to the truth of the text. It is part of the greatness of Dostoevsky that he *does* allow the Inquisitor a good deal of moral sublimity in his own right. Also, while Prof. Sandoz honestly raises the problem of Dostoevsky's own gnosticism—the extent to which he himself nourished millenarian hopes about Russia—he disposes of the matter too lightly. What does it really mean to say that while Dostoevsky did "covet political power and even imperial success for Russia," he did not believe in "the use of power and coercion" to achieve the millennium (p. 235)? This is an issue that needs more elaborate discussion than Prof. Sandoz was willing to give it.

Nonetheless, Prof. Sandoz's book has the great merit of taking Dostoevsky seriously in his own terms, and as a great artist who was also an intellect of notable power. His book is a valuable contribution to the unbiased study of an artist whose work, as Prof. Sandoz amply proves, raises the deepest problems about the meaning and the fate of Western culture in the modern era.

JOSEPH FRANK
Princeton University

Computer Simulations of Voting Behavior. By William R. Shaffer. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972. Pp. 164. $7.50, cloth; $2.95, paper.)

This is not an easy book to review, for seldom has an attack on such an important problem been so mangled and confused as in this volume.

After a fairly straightforward, albeit pedestrian,

This content downloaded from 128.83.205.53 on Wed, 5 Feb 2014 09:27:16 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

discussion of recent voting studies, the body of this book is devoted to a comparison of the voting models of Anthony Downs and the Survey Research Center (SRC). The two models are operationalized and compared using the SRC's 1964 presidential election survey. This is a great idea whose time has certainly come. More and more scholars are beginning systematically to question the SRC model (and the SRC's analyses) for allegedly "downplaying" the role of issues and—implicitly or explicitly—the role of rationality and/or policy evaluation in voting. Since the influence of Downs is apparent in the work of so many of the SRC critics/modifiers, it is about time that the Downsian model was operationalized and subjected to some rigorous testing. While this book has been based on a very good idea, it is not a book that can be built upon. Instead it is one that needs to be done over properly.

In brief, the main branch of Downs's theory requires the calculation of four parameters for each voter: the voter's party differential—the difference the election outcome will make to the voter's utility; the probability that the individual's vote will matter to the outcome and hence to the voter's utility; the utility value to the voter of voting for the long-range value of maintaining elections; and the cost to the voter of the voting act. A voter prefers the candidate who promises to give him the largest expected utility. He casts a vote if the sum of his party differential, multiplied by the probability his vote will matter to the outcome, plus the long-range participation value of his vote are greater than his utility cost of voting.

Professor Shaffer's operationalizations of these parameters, and the way he combines them in his model, are questionable at best. A look at the main branch of his Downsian simulation will suffice to show the flaws in his methods.

For an index of the magnitude of each voter's party differential, Shaffer uses a transformed factor score based on three questions about how closely the election is being followed, how much the voter cares about the outcome, and whether the voter thinks the outcome will make a financial difference to him. The direction of the voter's party differential is determined from the latter question and is simply the party whose victory will benefit the voter the most financially. This procedure implicitly makes a strong and unnecessary assumption, that for all voters the utility associated with personal financial gain is greater than the utility of all other issues that they may be concerned with. Further, Shaffer does not even consider that different voters have different concerns and that no single question (or factor) adequately reflects an index of party differential for all voters, even though the survey contains data which would allow him to do so.

Shaffer's operationalization of the probability that a voter's vote will matter is another transformed factor score, based on the perceived closeness of the election. This may be an appropriate index, but Shaffer appears to enter this index additively rather than multiplicatively in his simulation. It is not certain, however, that he enters this probability parameter improperly because he does not provide enough information about how he processes the data; it would be impossible with only information that the book provides to take the book and the SRC data and replicate his results!

One of the few places where Shaffer is clear enough about his methods to make confident criticism easy is in operationalizing the cost of voting through an index of media usage. Media usage might offer a good lead on how the party differential was calculated, but it tells us nothing about the cost of voting itself. Not surprisingly, Shaffer finds his model more accurate without this parameter, for as he uses it, he is assuming that the more media a voter has consumed, the more likely it is that the voter will abstain.

Even more basic is the absence of discussion of how any of the individual scales were weighted or transformed. When an index of the value of a vote is compared with an index of the cost of the voting act, how is it decided whether the utility of voting is greater than the cost of voting? Does Shaffer assume—as it would seem—that both indices are not only perfectly correlated with utility, but also that both indices are measured on the same scale? Does Shaffer even know he is making assumptions about the weighting of interpersonal as well as intrapersonal utility scales? It would appear he does not. Shaffer's operationalizations are weak and their usage unfollowable, so there is little or no reason to draw anything from his discussion of Downs.

Shaffer's dealings with the SRC model are no more meaningful than his "tests" of Downs. While he has shown himself able to summarize much literature on simulations, he does not seem to understand what he has read. All his tests of the SRC six-component model are trivial. Instead of the SRC method of using least-squares techniques to assign weights to their six parameters, he either assigns weights of 1 to all parameters and calls this result the SRC model, or he assigns 5 parameters weights of 1 and lets the sixth weight range from 0 to 1. In essence, if the sum of a voter's weighted scores is exactly zero he abstains, if positive he votes for one party, if negative for the other. Where did the idea come from that 0 and 1 were natural limits for parameter weights of this type? Apparently Shaffer got this idea from misreading voting simulations where parameters were run from 0 to 1 because the parameters were probabilities and thus had "natural" limits of zero and one. In the SRC case such an assumption is meaningless. Might not

This content downloaded from 128.83.205.53 on Wed, 5 Feb 2014 09:27:16 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

candidate evaluation matter five times as much as domestic policy and three times as much as group benefits? Such a possibility would require more careful thinking about what parameter weights are, and simultaneous parameter testing. Thus, because flow charts and basic data are seldom clearly presented, and because operationalization and testing are sometimes misleading and generally weak, this book provides neither meaningful nor intelligible evaluations of the Downsian or SRC models.

Scholars, like voters, have limited time and money to spend in acquiring information, and, like voters, often tend to go by labels. It is surprising therefore to find a book of such uneven merit under the label of Oxford University Press. I feel obliged to urge readers to look behind Oxford's prestigious label before they purchase this book.

SAMUEL L. POPKIN
University of Texas, Austin

Multivariate Model Building: The Validation of a Search Strategy. By John A. Sohnquist. (Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1970. Pp. 244. $5.00.)

Sohnquist has attempted to shine light into the twilight zone between the platonic heights of empirically grounded theory and the more typical depths of idiosyncratic data-grubbing. Asserting that "theory ought to emerge from . . . data . . . " (p. iii), he and his colleagues (much of the work reported on was done collaboratively) have sought to develop a procedure which can be used to "reveal the structure of relationships implicit in a set of data," (p. iii). Dependent variables in this procedure must be either dichotomies or interval-level variables; independent variables must be coded as nominal (or possibly ordinal).

AID (Automatic Interaction Detection), a computer algorithm based on one-way analysis of variance, is to be used to partition the population sequentially into nonoverlapping subgroups such that each split "provides the largest possible reduction in the unexplained sum of squares" (p. 20), with certain constraints which prevent the process from simply generating all possible subgroups. The end product is a tree structure. In the absence of severe skewness in one or more of the independent variables, this tree will be symmetric when the impact of the independent variables can be represented additively; asymmetries in the structure suggest interaction effects.

The subgroups thus generated by the AID analysis are to be used to create new composite variables for each major "interaction" effect. The transformed set of variables is then entered into an MCA (Multiple Classification Analysis) program. MCA is equivalent to a one-zero dummy-variable multiple regression in which coefficients of each class reflect deviations from the grand mean. (Unfortunately there is a typographical error in the defining equation of the MCA Algorithm in equation (1.7), p. 18: n_{12} should be n_{21}.)

The bulk of *MMB* gives a rationale for these recommendations. One chapter comprehensively surveying the literature on "contextual" (i.e., interaction) effects for nominal-level variables (although omitting important work by James Coleman) reveals that sociologists and political scientists have been slow to grasp the proposition that "variables don't always add." The next chapters compare results of AID and other methods for previously analyzed data and evaluate the ability of AID and MCA to "recover," despite superimposed stochastic noise, the actual forms of relationships of artificially generated processes. In an admirable final chapter Sohnquist is honest about possible lack of replicability of the AID partitions, recognizing that the more complex the statistical representation, the more likely it is to be picking up idiosyncratic features of a particular data base (Fudge's Second Law). His discussion of a variety of graphical, tabular and other special techniques for data inspection is excellent, through abbreviated, and even the statistically sophisticated reader can benefit from it.

AID is basically a technique for *describing*, i.e., parsimoniously classifying, a population in terms of its value on a criterion variable. As such it *may* be a useful preliminary to theory building. However, AID tends to use variables which "divide the sample into subgroups of approximately the same size" (p. 131); thus theoretically significant effects may be overlooked for factors rare in the sample, a problem which Sohnquist dismisses far too cavalierly. Also, since the end product of an AID classification is a nominal level variable, AID seems appropriate to theory building only where level of measurement is weak.

MMB sets an extremely high standard for care and candor in data analysis and concern for the appropriate use of statistical techniques, and it is in no way a statistical cookbook. But like the children of Israel worshipping the Golden Calf, some political scientists may mistake the computer for God (or a sausage grinder), and cry out to it indiscriminately for AID so that their articles may multiply and they may flourish. If, however, they read Sohnquist with the care which he deserves, they should at least know better.

BERNARD GROFMAN
SUNY, Stony Brook

Conflict and Harmony in Human Affairs: A Study of Cross-Pressures and Political Behavior. Peter W. Sperlich. (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1971. Pp. 256. $8.95.)

Students of voting behavior and the sociology (and politics) of knowledge will find Peter Sperlich's book interesting and stimulating. On the empirical level, it presents a careful and detailed

This content downloaded from 128.83.205.53 on Wed, 5 Feb 2014 09:27:16 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions