

SUBJECT: Subjective Measures of Group Affiliation
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After collecting information from respondents on the names of the groups with which they are affiliated, and the level of activity in which they engage, the question Frank Baumgartner and I are proposing for the NES includes another follow-up question (J3) which reads: "Does (GROUP MENTIONED BY RESPONDENT) take stands on or discuss public issues or try to influence governmental actions?"

Data collected from this question allow us to divide groups into politically active and inactive types objectively according to the group type, or subjectively according to the respondent's own report about the political activities of the group. We believe that the subjective measure of political activity is more useful than the measure based upon the nature of the group because we have evidence from studies of the group system that many charitable, cultural, and recreational groups have become involved in political advocacy in recent years. Many of our respondents may be joining nominally non-political groups with the knowledge that these associations have clear political purposes. Other respondents may become affiliated with nominally political groups but still remain unaware of the group's political activity. If one is aware of the political activities of the group to which one affiliates, the chances increase that one's political behavior will be affected.

During the discussion of the results of the Pilot Study one week ago, questions were raised about the usefulness of J3. Several members of the Committee speculated that respondents with high levels of political efficacy would more likely be aware of the political activities of groups to which they were affiliated. The subjective political affiliation score

being used in our paper was thought to be a kind of proxy for political efficacy. Since eliminating J3 might save as much as 45 seconds to a minute, suggestions were made that that portion of the question be dropped.

We are convinced that the subjective measures of group affiliation are much more useful than the objective ones, and that the increase in analytical power provided by J3 justifies the cost of the extra time used on the questionnaire. In order to demonstrate the relative usefulness of the subjective and objective measures of group affiliations, we regressed each of them upon the same additive index of political participation employed in our earlier paper, with controls for political efficacy. The results are displayed in Table One for an index of all group affiliations, the subjective index of affiliations with non-political groups, the subjective index of affiliations with political groups, and the objective indices of affiliation with non-political and political groups.

TABLE ONE HERE

There are two clear results of this analysis. First, the data show that affiliation with political groups, no matter how they are measured, has an independent impact upon political participation, even when controls for political efficacy are in affect. Much more analysis is needed before the question is entirely settled, but enough is shown in this Table to be certain that group affiliations seem to have an affect beyond the psychological predispositions of the respondents.

Second, the data in Table One demonstrate the superiority of the subjective approach to the identification of political and non-political groups. Although there are no appreciable differences in the Betas or the percentage of variance explained when the political nature of the groups is measured by the objective or subjective methods, when we compare the impact on political participation that stems from affiliation with political

versus non-political groups, we see almost no difference when the objective method of identifying groups is used, while we consistently find bigger differences when we use the subjective method.

Another piece of evidence that points to the superiority of the subjective method of identifying political and non-political groups is contained in the Figures One and Two. In these figures scatter plots are displayed showing the relationships between the subjective measures in Figure One and the objective measures in Figure Two. The differences portrayed in Figure One are much cleaner and definitive than the differences portrayed in Figure Two.

FIGURES ONE AND TWO HERE

Much more analysis would be required to make a definitive case for J3, but I believe that the data presented in Table One and the two Figures are quite persuasive. The data on group affiliations based upon the respondents own reports of political activity is more useful than the data produced when investigators identify political groups objectively by their names. The improvement in flexibility and analytic power seems well worth the extra time needed to collect the data.

TABLE ONE

Regression of Five Indices of Group Affiliations
 Upon an Index of Political Participation,
 Controlling for Political Efficacy

Group Affiliation

<u>Index</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>R²</u>	<u>T-test</u>	<u>(Probability)</u>	DIFFERENCES	
					<u>Beta</u>	<u>R²</u>
All Groups:	.26	.18	4.81	.000		
Subj Political:	.29	.19	5.37	.000	.21	.07
Subj Non-political:	.08	.12	1.54	.121		
Object Political:	.25	.18	4.73	.000	.08	.04
Object Nonpolitical:	.17	.14	3.15	.002		

Figure One

Scatter Plot Comparing Subjective Measures of Group Affiliation

X = Political
Y = Non-Political

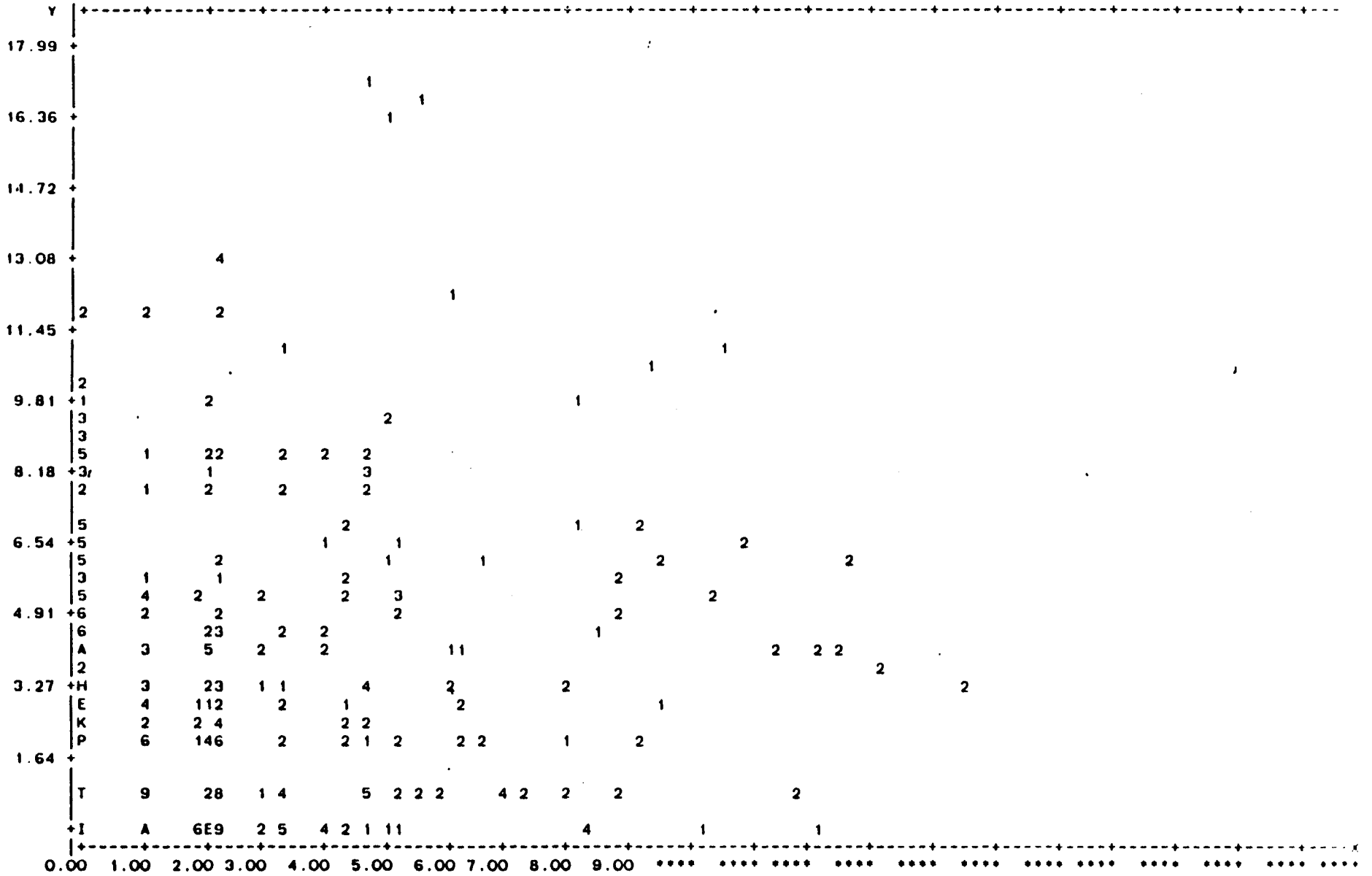


Figure Two

Scatter Plot Comparing Objective Measures of Group Affiliation

X = Political

Y = Non-Political

