Judicial Role in a Nonjuducial Setting

Some Survey Evidence

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A question of interest to political and legal scholars is: Does experience in a judicial role produce political perceptions and attitudes which systematically differ from those produced by the lawyer-advocate (nonjudicial) role? To date, the efforts of the judicial behaviorists have centered on an elicitation of attitudes from either judges or advocates, but few studies have been structured to examine both roles in respect to a common stimuli set. A rare opportunity to make such a comparative survey presented itself to the investigators in conjunction with their participation in a more extensive study of state constitutional conventions. In conjunction with a study of the New York Constitutional Convention of 1966-67, interviews were conducted with 175 of the 186 delegates to that convention. Of these 175 delegates, 22 were judges and 101 were lawyers. This situation was unique, for it allowed a direct com-

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parison of judges with lawyers and with all interviews taking place under the same institutional conditions and with the same instrument. Such a fortuitous set of controls is a rare occurrence even under a growing number of efforts to sound the attitudes of persons in the legal professions.

POLITICAL VALUES OF JUDGES AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Attitudinal differentiation may be a consequence of the operation of a variety of exogenous factors; among them, age, partisanship, political participation, experience within the role, social background, or economic status. We grant that all of these factors may lead to the development of differential characteristics independent of the role that the respondent occupies. However, granting these influences, it is still reasonable to expect some attitudinal difference between judges and other lawyers. Our theoretical position is based in particular on factors of adult social learning and, to a lesser extent, on a consideration of earlier socialization. Long experience in an occupational role habituates the position incumbent to characteristic values. To the extent that these values are firmly learned, they condition subsequent behavior. In our context this can be interpreted as behavior in response to attitude question stimulus. On this view of the sources attitudinal responses, we are required to make some rather strong assumptions concerning the quality of experience in the roles of judge, attorney, and our category of other delegates.

The judge and the lawyer share an educational experience and an initial work experience which sets them apart from the remaining delegates. The occupations of these remaining delegates are heterogeneous and, since they constitute a residual category, no uniform properties of their work experience are available to form the basis for assumptions about the relationship of that experience to expressions of attitude.

Of the many distinctions which might be used to characterize the difference in occupational experience between lawyers and judges, one which strikes us as especially appropriate is the distinction between the advocacy of the cause of an interested client and the presiding over a dispute. If the lawyer's central duty is to the interests of his client, the judge's central duty is to the interests of neither; i.e., the judge is presumed to be impartial. The citizen seeks a partisan attorney but a fair judge, and it is reasonable to assume that these expectations are recognized and responded to by judges and attorneys. Over time, the judge presumably learns to value impartiality over partisanship—more so the longer his service on the bench. Conversely, the attorney should become a more effective partisan as his experience in representing interested clients accumulates.

What interpretation is to be put on partisanship and impartiality in our context? We assume that to be impartial is to represent a more encompassing set of interests than those of the parties to a dispute. The judge should value a broad set of interests such as society and the legal order more than he values particular outcomes. In terms of attitude responses, the judges should show a stronger favorable response to symbols of organized society than do lawyers (see Edelman, 1967). Similarly, the judges should show a less favorable response to partisanship such as a political party for our data. A fortiori, when party is pitted against a symbol of society in an attitude question, the judges should show an even more pronounced difference from the lawyers' pattern of response.

Three features of the foregoing argument should be noted. First, attitude responses are tied to the experience and value content of occupational roles, and differences between lawyers and judges are anticipated on that count. Second, the direction of difference has been specified. Third, for a special case, the comparative magnitude of differences has been specified.

We now turn to a consideration of attitude differences between lawyers and other delegates. The category of other delegates is a residual category, and hence distributions for this category are an average of different kinds of occupational experience. One particular difference between law and other occupations which may be used as the basis for anticipating some differences between the nonlawyers and both judges and lawyers is that lawyers are trained to deal with the legal aspects of a very broad range of human activity. The case approach in law schools, through the facts of reported cases, systematically exposes the student to a diversity of human experience not likely to be encountered in other curriculums. Furthermore, the law student is taught to reason about the law in these diverse situations regardless of his substantive understanding of the human activities involved.

The law student, then, and subsequently the practitioner, is habituated to dealing with one unique and complicated situation after another. New situations, in which his substantive understanding is minimal, may be the typical working experience for the lawyer. This leads us to anticipate that both judges and lawyers are likely to have a self-confidence when confronted by new situations which is greater than the self-confidence of nonlawyers. And indeed, on a standard, four-item political efficacy scale, there were significant differences between lawyers and other delegates, but no differences between lawyers and judges.²

The next section of the paper presents evidence bearing on our three principal predictions regarding attitudes among the occupational groups. Differences between lawyers and nonlawyers and differences in a specified direction between these two groups and judges are anticipated. The most profound differences are expected where the attitude item forces a choice between party and popular participation.

TABLE 1
ATTITUDE RESPONSES—THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF JUDGES

	Judges	Lawyers	Other Delegates	All Democrats	All Republicans	Old Lawyers
I. "It is wrong to compromise on constitutional issues."	,,,					
Idealistic (agree)	37%	17%	22%	19%	23%	35%
Realistic (disagree)	63%	83%	78%	81%	71%	65%
erespo	(19)	(63)	(51)	(84)	(42)	(17)
II. "Constitutional conventions are as political as anything else."b	ning else."b	1		3	}	
(ee)	89%	57%	26%	64%	57%	77%
Realistic (agree)	14%	43%	44%	36%	43%	24%
u	(21)	(63)	(48)	(85)	(77)	(17)
III. "A constitutional convention is something special and is, therefore, above politics."	and is, therefore	, above politi	os.,,c			
Idealistic (agree)	74%	47%		23%	46%	33%
Realistic (disagree)	79%	53%	51%	47%	51%	%19
п	(19)	(82)	(47)	(42)	(72)	(15)
IV. "If a proposal is important for his party's record, a delegate should vote	delegate should	l vote				
with his party even it it costs him some support in his consutuency.	onsurnency.					
Party (agree)	2%	29%	23%	. 59%	19%	%09
Constituency (disagree)	%56	71%	71%	71%	81%	40%
n	(20)	(82)	(44)	(75)	(70)	(15)
V. "Under our form of government, every individual should take an interest in government directly, not through a political party." A process direct participation	nould take cal party."e	18%	90%	<i>"</i>	288	-1 28
Approve participation through party	39%	82%	70%	74%	72%	87%
u	(18)	(88)	(47)	(82)	(71)	(15)
$a_x^2 = 3.71$, $df = 2, .10 c_x^2 b_x^2 = 6.43, df = 2, .05 d_x^2$	H H	4.52, df = 2, .10 5.20, df = 2, .05 < p < .10	_	$e_x^2 = 14.35$, c_x^2 based on firs	e x 2 = 14.35, df = 2, p < .001 (x 2 based on first three columns)	

most profound differences are expected where the attitude item forces a choice between party and popular participation.

Five items in the interview schedule were particularly informative in pointing up the attitudinal orientations of the groups involved. Three of the items³ focused upon the respondents' evaluations of political principles (in realistic and idealistic terms). The realistic responses would conform with the view that laws and constitutions are social compromises, the results of political struggles between opposing forces. An idealistic response, on the other hand, would conform with views in which constitutions are seen as compilations of norms reflecting more fundamental values and ideals of justice. Of the remaining two items, one focused on the respondents' concepts of representation (a representative being viewed as a delegate of party or constituency interests) and the other focused on concepts of citizen participation in government (indicating a preference for partisan or populist participation in government).

Item I, shown in Table 1, asked convention delegates to agree or disagree with the statement, "It is wrong to compromise on constitutional issues." This item reveals a distinct judicial preference (over other groups) for the response coded as idealistic. The semantic content of the statement provides the key, for the words "constitutional issue" are a symbol of the larger society and the polity's broader interests, values to which judges respond consistently with our interpretation of their role. The judges respond to this symbol of the larger society, while lawyers and other delegates do not.

The table shows an age effect which must qualify our original thesis. The distribution for the seventeen oldest lawyers, whether as a result of equally long practice, similar legal training, or "judicial" status in their firms as senior partners, closely approximates the distribution for judges. Old lawyers, like old judges, are more responsive to the invocation of the constitution. The evidence of Table 1, item I for the old lawyers is directly contrary to our thesis of learned partisanship in legal practice, and we will return to this problem after noting the response patterns for the seventeen oldest lawyers in the remaining data of Table 1.

If compromising on constitutional issues is somewhat more frequently disapproved of by judges, they even more sharply disapprove of terming constitutional conventions "as political as anything else." Table I, item II shows the response distributions for this second item which invokes the constitution. Furthermore, politics is explicitly mentioned in the item, and the judges' differences from others are more pronounced than in item I. Once again, the distribution for the seventeen oldest lawyers closely approximates the distribution for judges.

The third item of Table 1 gives the response patterns for the third idealistic-realistic item, which was phrased as follows: "A constitutional convention is something special and is therefore above politics." Once more this shows a distinctive response pattern for the judges when a broad symbol of politically organized society is invoked. Furthermore, judges are different from old lawyers as well as from all lawyers and other delegates.

The essential feature of the three idealistic-realistic items which separate judges from lawyers and others is the presence of a direct reference to the constitution or the constitutional convention. The particular wording—the presence of the verbal symbol of the constitution—touches values and orientations in the judges which apparently have not been acquired by the other respondents, regardless of whether or not they were trained in the law.

The fourth and fifth items of Table 1 give responses to items which can also be interpreted in the framework of societal versus partisan symbols. Table 1, item IV gives responses to the question, "If a proposal is important for his party's record, a delegate should vote with his party even if it costs him some support in his constituency." Here the respondent is asked to evaluate party loyalty in terms of constituency claims. On its face, this asks the delegate to choose between two equally narrow interests or perhaps to choose in a situation which casts party in the role of broad interest. We believe, however, that the more reasonable interpretation is that, for the judges, constituency is more appropriately viewed as representing broad societal values in the sense of representative government. That is to say, the judges respond to constituency as "the people" rather than as some narrow set of particularistic interests.

Why is this a plausible interpretation? Item V of Table 1 is our principal support for it gives the response to the question, "Under our form of government, every individual should take an interest in government directly, not through a political party." This item pits the citizen and his government against party, and judges alone respond to the citizen and his government rather than party. This fifth item pattern is the sharpest difference in our data and is consistent with the thesis that the greatest difference should be anticipated under the condition of a direct confrontation between partisanship and broader values.

The last two items in particular induce unique responses to values of the democratic tradition from these judges. These are consistent with the judges' responses to the three previous items involving constitutional symbols. The replies raise a question about the relevance of the content of early legal training for subsequent judicial decision-making on the part of at least these politically active judges. What these data suggest is that it is judicial experience rather than legal training which furnishes the distinctive values of the judicial role.

The seventeen oldest lawyers, when used as a control, partially discredit and partially support the case for an independent judicial role. On two of the five items, the old lawyers approximate the distribution for judges. On the remaining three items, the seventeen oldest lawyers exhibit a pattern which is not only different from the judges, but even more sharply different from that for all lawyers. We are not able to explain the attitudes of the oldest lawyers. Table 1, items III, IV, and V show they are exceptionally sharply attuned to party, while items I and II indicate the reverse. Perhaps they wish to be nonpartisan figures, but at the same time are sensitive to party because they realize it is the vehicle for advancement in New York politics, including, of course, advancement to judgeships.

PARTISANSHIP AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

The party affiliation of judges, lawyers, and other delegates must also be considered in a check of variables which may affect response patterns and which are exogenous to role. Party affiliation is commonly correlated with most behaviors and attitudes of political interest. It may be that differences attributed to judicial role are artifacts of party. Accordingly, we present the distributions for both parties and incorporate this variable into subsequent tables.

TABLE 2
SELF-REPORTED PARTY AFFILIATION

	Judges	Lawyers	Other Delegates
Democrats	75%	50%	52%
Republicans	25%	50%	48%
n	(20)	(101)	(52)

Table 2 shows that lawyer respondents are evenly divided between the parties, while Democrats significantly outnumbered Republicans in the judicial sample. This somewhat weakens the significance of the comparisons between judges and lawyers. On the other hand, in those cases where lawyers differ from judges, and where parties show no difference, somewhat stronger interpretations are defensible. A reinspection of Table 1 for the responses by party on the five attitude items shows that the maximum difference for parties is ten percentage points. The differences between judges and other lawyers or delegates is considerably greater than ten percentage points. We conclude that judicial role is a more powerful ordering category than partisanship.

The interview contained several questions which gave an indication of a respondent's involvement in politics. All respondents were asked, "How did

TABLE 3

SOME PRECONVENTION POLITICAL EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF DELEGATES

	Judges	Lawyers	Other Delegates All Democrats	All Democrats	All Republicans	Old Lawyers
I. Reason for Running						
Party request mentioned	71%	49%	28%	20%	41%	47%
Other	24%	51%	42%	20%	29%	53%
п	(21)	(96)	(52)	(88)	(80)	(17)
II. Level of Personal Campaign Activity						
High	23%	65 %	26%	44%	73%	65%
Medium	18%	16%	15%	14%	19%	12%
Low	27%	13%	15%	24%	%9	%9
None	27%	2%	12%	17%	2%	18%
u	(21)	(100)	(51)	(06)	(81)	(17)
III. Expected Role of Party						
Strong	45%	45%	%09	47%	53%	41%
Moderate	27%	36%	29%	32%	33%	53%
Weak	14%	10%	8%	12%	7%	%9
Other (include don't know)	14%	%6	4%	10%	%9	0
u	(22)	(100)	(52)	(92)	(81)	(17)
IV. Amount of Attention Delegate Expects to Pay to Party Position		When Voting				
Much	ı	11%	27%	19%	10%	12%
At least some	29 %	81%	%19	75%	77%	88%
None	19%	2%	%9	22%	10%	0
Don't know	2%	1%	ı	1	2%	0
u	(21)	(66)	(52)	(91)	(80)	(17)

you happen to run for the Convention?" Judges are more likely to give a request from a party as a reason for running for the convention, as Table 3, item I shows. A natural question is whether this is due to an elder statesman status for the judges in their parties. Perhaps older men with a long public career are more likely to be sought after by the regular organization, especially for a public role which presumably requires men of substance and dignity. The far right-hand column of Table 3 allows a check on the importance of age by displaying the distribution for the seventeen oldest lawyers. The data support the significance of judicial role rather than age—judges apparently are sought as candidates because they are judges. Indeed, judicial position may be exactly the quality which makes one a desirable partisan candidate for so august a gathering as a constitutional convention.

We should expect the style of campaign involvement to distinguish judges from others. Judges are presumably asked to run not because of their potential activity on the stump but because of the prestige they already possess—a circumstance which works against high campaign activity. A check on this argument is provided by the responses of the delegates to the question, "How actively did you campaign before the general election?" The pattern of response is displayed in Table 3, item II and shows that the judges' level of activity is markedly low. Although there is also a marked party effect, it is by no means as strong as the effect noted when the distribution for judges is compared with the distribution for other lawyers or delegates. Two further features of Table 3, item II are worth noting. First, lawyers and other delegates have similar distributions. Second, the seventeen oldest lawyers display a distribution markedly different from that of the judges.

The patterns of Table 3, item II provide strong support for the notion that the judges' style of political involvement (as measured by perceptions of political activity in the campaign) is distinctive. If the style is distinctive, it is reasonable to inquire into its consequences for the judges' relationship to their parties in the convention. Two questions were asked of all delegates which provide some insight into this relationship.

The questions provide, on the one hand, a judgment of the overall anticipated role of party, and on the other hand, an assessment of the individual delegate's relationship to political party as a source of cues in voting. Although within-item differences are small, the differences between items are sufficiently large to warrant displaying the original questions first:

- (28) In the New York Legislature, political parties are generally considered to be quite important. Do you think that the parties will play a (strong-moderate-weak) role in the Constitutional Convention?
- (29) How much attention do you think you will pay to your party's position in helping you to decide how to vote?

Clearly, the first question asks for an analytical judgment about the total milieu and the second for a statement about the delegate's personal relationship to party. The responses to the first question—expected party role—are displayed in Table 3, item III.

When asked for their analytical judgment, all delegates, of whatever background, are distributed in approximately the same way. The only difference among judges, lawyers, and other delegates in item III (not a dramatic one) is a slight tendency for other delegates to anticipate a stronger role for parties. Table 3, item IV, however, presents a sharp contrast. When asked the personalizing question, "Will you pay attention to party?" very few delegates attribute a strong role to party. There is a tendency for other delegates to attribute a greater role to party than either lawyers or judges, but even for this group the difference between the items is large.

If the judges are different from lawyers and other delegates, it is in the direction of being less responsive to party as a perceived source of voting cues. The difference, although small, fits well with our attitudinal data, and is also consistent with data showing that the party sought out the judges to be candidates. Since the judge is clearly obliging the party by standing for office, it may be that he feels he can afford to be less responsive to party. This situation would not negate another distinct possibility. The party may have sought out the judge not only because he was a prestigious candidate for a constitutional convention, but also because, on the basis of past rewards, he might be expected to behave with loyalty once in the body.

There is still one observation to emphasize in regard to Table 3, items III and IV. These items show how dramatically response patterns can change depending on the reference—self or others—invoked by the stimulus of a particular question.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Differences between judges, advocates, and other delegates in attitudinal responses might be accompanied by differentiation between roles in terms of background characteristics. The classic variables of age, education, religion, and formative environment were considered as the most likely confounders of our results.

The most universal predictor in social research is education, and it is appropriate to begin our discussion of background characteristics in terms of the possible disturbing effects of this variable. It is plausible to dismiss the importance of education only when two conditions hold: (1) judges exhibit the same distribution as lawyers; but (2) the distributions for both judges and lawyers are different from other delegates.

Table 4, item I, presents an educational breakdown of the delegates where we have collapsed all categories into postcollege graduate training and other.

Most obviously, lawyers do not differ from judges in terms of educational background. Hence, differences between these two groups cannot be attributed to that source. Of equal importance, both judges and lawyers differ equally sharply from the remaining delegates in terms of educational achievement. This methodological argument can be somewhat strengthened by examining the educational achievement of the delegates' fathers. Table 4, item II, gives the appropriate display. The display shows that fathers' educational background may not be adduced as a determinant of differences among any of the three groups, further strengthening the possibility of identifying differences attributable to the judicial role.

A second classic variable is that of age. First, we might expect that lawyers will be markedly younger than other delegates to the extent that a state constitutional convention approximates a state legislature in composition (Eulau and Sprague, 1964). Second, in New York, judgeships are awarded for good stewardship in party work, which means time invested in party and public activity. Hence, it is reasonable to expect judges to be older than other delegates. These facts are indeed descriptively true, as Table 4, item III, shows. Thus, it may be that any behavioral differences between judges and lawyers are a function of age. Furthermore, on the age variable, unlike education, the differences do not fall into a delegates versus lawyers plus judges pattern. Instead, some of the lawyers are similar to nonlawyer delegates. It was thus necessary to consider age in our analyses and hence distributions for the seventeen oldest lawyers were included (with comment) in Table 1.

New York politics is typically portrayed in religious and ethnic terms.⁴ Religion is used here, and Table 4, item IV gives the relevant breakdown. The category of "other delegates" contains a lower percentage of Jews and a higher percentage of Protestants. The judges and lawyers, however, exhibit virtually identical distributions. Once more, it would be implausible to attribute differences between judges and lawyers to differences in religious background.

Another common indicator of the nature of a person's formative environment is an urban-rural classification. A four-category breakdown for this variable is given in Table 4, item V. The array shows a much stronger difference between the parties than between any of the occupational groups. Lawyers and judges display virtually identical distributions, and the other delegates are not much different. The difference between parties is no surprise, given the city versus upstate party division in New York State politics. On the showing in item V, differences between lawyers and judges are not likely to be a function of the urban-rural character of the formative environment.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION **DELEGATES IN NEW YORK STATE** TABLE 4

	Judges	Lawyers (Other Delegates All Democrats All Republicans	All Democrats	All Republicans
I. Delegate's Education					
Postgrad. (incl. law)	100%	100%	25%	82%	73%
Other	ı	ı	75%	18%	27%
п	(22)	(101)	(52)	(63)	(81)
II. Father's Education					
At least college	76%	26%	24%	24%	28%
Less than college	75%	73%	29	292	72%
п	(19)	(68)	(49)	(63)	(81)
III. Delegate's Age					
Over 62	20%	2%	12%	16%	13%
43-62	20%	26%	74%	26%	71%
Under 43	,	32%	14%	28%	16%
u	(22)	(86)	(52)	(63)	(81)
IV. Delegate's Religion					
Catholic	25%	49%	43%	25%	43%
Protestant	18%	28%	41%	19%	47%
Jewish	27%	20%	10%	26%	10%
и	(22)	(86)	(51)	(88)	(75)
V. Formative Environment					
City	%89	65%	53%	82%	41%
Suburb	2%	%9	16%	2%	10%
Small Town	23%	27%	24%	11%	42%
Farm	2%	2%	%8	1%	7%
u	(22)	(101)	(51)	(63)	(81)

In summary, the judge, as compared with the lawyer, has the same educational achievement, the same parental educational background, similar religion, and similar formative environment, but is distinctly older. The judge, as compared with the residual category of other delegates, is more highly educated, has the same parental educational background, different religion, slightly different formative environment, and is older. The same differences hold between lawyers and residual delegates as between judges and delegates, except for age, where the lawyer is considerably younger. The data presented here suggest that any differences in attitudes and perceptions between judges and lawyers are not attributable to any background characteristic with the possible exception of age.

CONCLUSIONS

It remains true, whatever the effect of age, that lawyers and other delegates exhibit uniformly similar distributions and that these groups in turn are consistently different from judges in a systematic direction. The data, therefore, provide at least partial support for the concept of an independent judicial role or perspective. Judges may be expected to be less partisan in outlook and more sensitive to system interests and system symbols.

The pattern of attitudes exhibited by the judges suggests to us, in the framework of the general study of constitutional conventions, that they may be the ideal candidates for such bodies. The attitudes they possess are congruent with the mass political culture vis-à-vis conventions, namely that delegates should be "lawgivers" who are above politics. Perhaps party leaders seek judges as candidates because they are aware both of what the public wants and what the judges are like.

NOTES

- 1. Theodore L. Becker (1966a; 1966b) has supplied a review of attempts at judicial interviewing and some of the associated problems, as well as substantive results. It is worth adding that some foreign judiciaries have been hospitable to American scholars seeking direct access to the decision-makers.
- 2. The efficacy items and several other items reported in this article were taken from that seminal work by Wahlke et al. (1962).

- 3. These three items were from an eight-item set forming a political realism-idealism scale. Five of the items exhibit extreme distributions for all groups and hence have been excluded from the discussion.
 - 4. This also holds for New York's politically active lawyers (see Ruchelman, 1966).

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