

The Future of the Q Methodology Movement

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Abstract: *Concern about the future of Q methodology is examined by drawing a concourse from contributions to the Q-Method electronic discussion list, N=40 of which comprise a Q sample that is administered to n=42 participants, resulting in four factors. Those on Factor A (Orthodoxy Upheld) express a desire to maintain Stephenson's original conception of Q methodology and are concerned about intellectual leadership. Members of Factor B (Orthodoxy Applied and Promoted) are likewise supporters of the Stephenson tradition, but wish to vouchsafe Q's future through practical application to significant social issues and presenting the results in professional (non-Q) settings. Those on Factor C (Orthodoxy Reinforced) distinguish themselves from the previous two groups by virtue of their demand for greater material and non-material resources in support of the Q movement. The group on Factor D (Beyond Orthodoxy) expresses a desire to break with the past and encourage Q's accommodation with contemporary technical and conceptual developments, such as web-based Q sorting and qualitative research. Discussion focuses on the implications of these perspectives for the future of Q methodology.*

Background

Q methodology was announced as a research methodology in a 1935 letter from William Stephenson to the British journal *Nature* (1935). In 1953, Stephenson published *The Study of Behavior*, his *magnum opus* delineating the theory and application of Q methodology to the study of human subjective perceptions and behaviors. From 1949 to 1955, he was a visiting professor at the University of Chicago and from 1958 to 1972 at the University of Missouri, where he taught substantial cohorts of graduate students in the theory and use of Q in psychology, journalism, and related fields. Even after his retirement in 1972, Stephenson continued to write extensively on the use of Q and to guide his students in their ever-expanding applications and promulgation of the method through their own publications and preparation of their graduate students. The Stephenson-generation Q practitioners, many of whom had studied directly with him, established the Stephenson Research

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Center at the University of Missouri in 1985 and organized the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity (ISSSS) in 1989. The first annual Q Conference was held in 1985. Stephenson died in 1989 at the age of 87.

ISSSS sponsored the 20th annual Q conference in September 2004. The Society includes about 130 professional and student members, supports an internet-based discussion list of 400 members, publishes this quarterly scholarly journal, and offers a web site (www.qmethod.org) to support the research of Q scholars worldwide.¹ Participants in the various elements of ISSSS described above typically include scholars from North America, Asia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and South America. In recent years, the Q movement has been increasing in numbers, as reflected in scholarly publications as well as in activity in ISSSS and attendance at its Q conferences.

It has been almost 70 years since Stephenson's letter to *Nature* and more than 50 years since the publication of *The Study of Behavior*. Those scholars trained as graduate students by Stephenson himself and currently or recently serving as leaders in Q scholarship have retired or are near retirement. The Q movement has grown worldwide to include a substantial number of scholars, especially in Korea and Europe. In fact, the Korean Q community has grown to the point it has formed its own association (the Korean Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity) while still actively participating in ISSSS.

The first author of this study (Hurd) served as an officer in ISSSS from 2002-2004. As he considered the history and current status of the Q movement (i.e., Q theory as developed by Stephenson and continued by his graduate students coupled with the work of ISSSS in offering its various fora to support the work of Q scholars), it occurred to him that the impending retirement of the Stephenson generation of Q scholars raised the possibility of a leadership vacuum that could negatively impact the support ISSSS could offer to its scholars in the coming years. Wondering if other Q scholars shared his concern, Hurd enlisted the advice and collaboration of the second author (Brown, himself a former student of Stephenson) to construct a study in which Q practitioners from around the world would be invited to offer their insights into the future direction of the Q methodology movement, a study thought to be best accomplished by using the tools of Q itself.

Perspectives on the Future of Q Methodology

In January and April 2004, Hurd published a request on the Q discussion list that explained his concerns and invited list members to establish a concourse of communication by writing about their ideas on the future of the Q methodology movement via the list. Approximately 20 responses were

¹ There are also two additional Q journals: The Korean-language *Q-Methodology and Theory*, published by the Korean Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity (KSSSS), and the *Journal of Human Subjectivity*.

received from Asia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and the United States. Those comments formed the concourse from which the Q sample of 40 items for the study was extracted.

The 40-item Q sample was naturalistic but was roughly structured for balance as a 2×2 factorial design including main effects of theory-related and organization-related comments shaped by traditional and innovative approaches, placing 10 items in each category. As examples of this design: Statement 24 is a traditional theory-related item: "The role that subjectivity plays in society will always be with us and Q methodology or something like it will have to be maintained, resuscitated, or reinvented." Statement 12 is an innovative theory-related item: "Another issue is the need to take Q forward into the upsurge of qualitative and social constructionist theory and research." Statement 18 is a traditional organization-related item: "Continue offering high-quality annual conferences that are socially rewarding." Statement 33 is an innovative organization-related item: "ISSSS should invest in post-doctoral fellowships or other theory development opportunities in order to cultivate future leaders in Q theory." The Q sample appears in Appendix B.

The Q sample and instructions for sorting and submitting it (including approved human subjects elements and a promise of confidentiality) were made available as links through the web site of ISSSS (www.qmethod.org) and announced on the Q discussion list. Participants printed the materials, cut out the Q sample cards and scoring continuum (+4 to -4), sorted the items according to the extent they agreed or disagreed with each, and submitted the results of their Q sorts via fax, e-mail message, e-mail attachment, or surface mail. In order to understand the unique perspectives of those who would participate in the study, Q sorters had the option of writing comments describing why they sorted the statements as they did. Forty-two Q sorts were submitted by veteran and novice Q scholars from Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Europe, and North America. Assignments of the designations "veteran" and "novice" acknowledged a natural gap in Q research activity that emerged from the self-reported information about participants: "veteran" status was assigned to those whose number of years using Q and number of Q publications totaled eight or more.

Utilizing the PQMethod (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2002) freeware for Q analysis, the researchers chose a four-factor principal components solution with varimax rotation.² The four factors were analyzed and interpreted in light of the written comments as well as the placement of items in the composite Q sorts for each factor. The factor matrix appears in Appendix A; the factor scores are in Appendix B.

² Two separate judgmental rotation solutions—the three- and five-factor principal components solutions—were also examined before settling on the solution reported here.

Factor A: Orthodoxy Upheld

This factor included four veteran Q researchers, all from the United States, and all former students of Steven Brown. These participants tended to focus on upholding and preserving pure Q theory as it was introduced by Stephenson. Factor A's most agreed upon statements (scored +4) were also among its distinguishing:

- (5) Q should maintain its separate existence and not become absorbed by other theories or movements (e.g., feminism, behaviorism, psychoanalysis, or social constructionism) that may become permanent fixtures to knowledge or may, within a generation or two, be looked upon as passing fads.
- (40) When Brown retires, there will be a leadership vacuum. The Q movement needs a rallying figure, someone who makes it his/her life's work. A Chair of Q Studies is something that should be raised with various universities.
- (30) Stephenson was right when he said there would always have to be a small group at the core that was interested in the methodology as such, and in elucidating its central tenets. Those who elect to work at this task will have to steel themselves against criticisms of hero-worship and cultism.

Factor A participants reinforced their convictions about preserving the tradition of Stephenson's theory in their -4 statements, one of which (no. 12) was also distinguishing:

- (31) Q will not be effective if Q practitioners/researchers attempt to "hold the fort" by defending its pure truth.
- (12) Another issue is the need to take Q forward into the upsurge of qualitative and social constructionist theory and research.
- (25) If it is fair to say that researchers are insight-seekers, then they should be agnostic and eclectic, not acolytes or Johnny-one-note proselytizers.

Written comments from Factor A participants illuminate their respect for Stephenson and their confidence in the future of Q. One wrote,

I am not worried about Q disappearing in the future. It is too powerful of a technique to disappear. However, I am worried about the dilution of Q methodology. That is, many become enamored with the "technique" but fail to appreciate (or explore) the "science of subjectivity." As Stephenson said, not all, but some of us must pursue the development of a science of subjectivity.

Another expressed reserve about the use of the word "movement" to describe Q, indicating that:

Few (if any other than Steve Brown) understand what Stephenson was up to in a deeper scientific way—too few to constitute a movement.... Steve Brown's role in preserving contact with Stephenson's core ideas has been crucial. . . . The technology of Q is less important than the phenomena (and phenomenology) it elucidates. So the "future of Q," as unpredictable as that might be, might be made a little more secure with more focus on serious subjective problems—producing 'exemplary work.'

One further distinguishing statement merits attention. Statement 19 was scored +3 by Factor A participants: “Q is perceived to be from ‘left field’ and is marginalized and trivialized by that reputation,” a sentiment echoed in the written comments of one Factor A participant who wrote that:

I am discouraged at times by the relative unwillingness by non-Q to appreciate and accept Q in the “arsenal” of research methods and theory. I also worry that as we get farther removed from the source (WS) and its current main advocate (SRB), Q will lose its grounding and become all things to all people, a mere variation in R method. . . . Indeed, I think when S. Brown is no longer a voice, Q will become something it is not.

In summary, Factor A participants uphold and defend Q orthodoxy; that is, they want to preserve and continue traditional Q theory that focuses on perfecting a science of subjectivity as initiated by Stephenson and maintained by Brown. They do not want to see the purity of Q theory diluted by syncretistic alliances with other approaches to theory and research. They are confident that Q’s future is secure if its purity is maintained, but are undeniably concerned about who will provide sound advocacy for pure Q theory in the Stephenson tradition for subsequent generations of Q practitioners.

Factor B: Orthodoxy Applied and Promoted

Factor B includes five participants, all veteran Q practitioners from the United States. Like Factor A participants, they are adherents of the Stephenson tradition of Q theory and believe it is uniquely effective for elucidating problems of all kinds, but the priority of Factor B is on increasing awareness of Q by actively demonstrating its effectiveness through applications to significant social problems and presenting and publishing the results in non-Q settings. Factor B participants are Q loyalists who want to find ways to expand its practical usefulness and its reputation outside the Q community as an effective research strategy and who encourage open dialogue between traditional Q and other approaches to research.

Three of this factor’s +4 and +3 statements were also among its distinguishing statements:

- (34) The significance of Q methodology will be strengthened through its sophisticated application to significant social issues (which can occur in small-scale contexts) and through the publication of successful applications in high visibility books and journals.
- (24) The role that subjectivity plays in society will always be with us and Q methodology or something like it will have to be maintained, resuscitated, or reinvented.
- (23) As long as it is perceived to add practical value (such as solving problems and resolving conflicts) to the practices of scholarship, research, and policy-making, its future is assured.

In addition to the above distinguishing statements, Factor B also emphasized the importance of supporting members of the Q community via these organization-related statements, which were scored +4 and +3:

- (15) Continue to include learning opportunities in annual conferences in order to develop broader and deeper knowledge of Q.
- (13) Continue to improve and make available the tools of PQMethod, PCQ, the Q-method web site, and the Q discussion list.

And they recommended actively enlisting future Q scholars through the following statements (score +2):

- (11) Be proactive in recruiting and training the best of upcoming scholars.
- (6) Emphasize and encourage teaching Q courses at many universities to cultivate future Q practitioners.

Statements scored -4 (including no. 3, which was distinguishing) confirm that Factor B participants are satisfied with and loyal to traditional Q methodology and the Q movement as it is and do not see that increasing its popularity will weaken it:

- (4) If Q becomes more popular, it will be more difficult to identify leadership because of the many bases of authority that will exist, and also because it will become more and more difficult to recall what Stephenson actually said.
- (21) Choose another name. The term "Q methodology" gets in the way of advancing the method.
- (3) One of the issues, I believe, is the need for a really good "how to do Q textbook."

Echoing no. 3, statement 32 (score -2) is also distinguishing: "A Q textbook is needed that uses Q an approach to researching knowledge."

Written comments from Factor B participants illuminate their priorities. One wrote that:

As I look back on my choices. . . most of them appear to be more practical suggestions than theoretical ones. I think those mentors who oversee the organization from year to year need to keep Stephenson's ideas fresh in the minds of those who take up the mantle of Q. His philosophy guides us in our understanding of the origins and values of Q, which we have to extend and promote to our colleagues by showing how it is a practical approach to solving current social and policy issues. So anytime we can cross-pollinate the methodology with other disciplines, and continue to get our work published in as many journals as we can, then Q will most certainly live in the hearts and minds of researchers. . . . We need to be able to defend ourselves intellectually [in the tradition of] Stephenson and Brown . . . and, at the same time, we need a base from which to create our sense of unity, . . . encourage our loyalty, . . . and attract young minds to our organization.

Another wrote:

I am a firm believer in and an enthusiastic advocate of the utility and power of Q in the research of subjectivity—especially in policy arenas. I support Q theory development, publication of Q research, strong Q conferences, effective Q training, and improved Q sorting and analytic tools. . . . I am much less concerned about the purity of Q vis-a-vis other methodologies and believe that Q will continue to evolve. However, I do believe that all Q researchers must understand and appreciate Stephenson's approach to Q and how that differs from other approaches.

In summary, the emphasis of participants defining Factor B is on applying traditional Q resources to solve practical problems that will promote Q's reputation in the world of knowledge. The Q community needs to be assertive in enlisting future scholars. The resources (both theoretical and organizational) are in place; they simply need to be applied in creative and practical ways.

Factor C: Orthodoxy Reinforced

Factor C includes three participants—one veteran and two novices, all from the United States. Factor C is somewhat correlated with Factor B ($r = .47$). Like B, Factor C participants are advocates of traditional Q theory, but they emphasize providing, strengthening, and increasing the resources available to Q researchers to do their work well. For instance, they scored the following statements +4 (no. 6 is distinguishing):

- (13) Continue to improve and make available the tools of PQMethod, PCQ, the Q-method web site, and the Q discussion list.
- (3) One of the issues, I believe, is the need for a really good "how to do Q" textbook.
- (6) Emphasize and encourage teaching Q courses at many universities to cultivate future Q practitioners.

Supporting this outlook are those statements scored +3, one of which (no. 1) is distinguishing:

- (15) Continue to include learning opportunities in annual conferences in order to develop broader and deeper knowledge of Q.
- (32) A Q textbook is needed that uses Q as an approach to researching knowledge.
- (11) Be proactive in recruiting and training the best of upcoming scholars.
- (1) Within the "Q culture" we need to involve all stakeholders in a broader debate about the nature of our dialogue, vision, and mission and how to create "safe" and "good enough" relational and learning spaces for each other.

At the opposite end of Factor C, these participants strongly disagreed with as the following (score -4):

- (21) Choose another name. The term "Q methodology" gets in the way of advancing the method.

- (25) If it is fair to say that researchers are insight-seekers, then they should be agnostic and eclectic, not acolytes or Johnny-One-Note proselytizers.
- (17) Actively renew Q's historical connection to the University of Missouri and the Stephenson Research Center there.

In this same vein, one additional distinguishing statement (-3) shows the concern of Factor C about the future of Q unless adequate support and resources are provided for its current practitioners:

- (23) As long as it is perceived to add practical value (such as solving problems and resolving conflicts) to the practices of scholarship, research, and policy-making, its future is assured.

Factor C seems to be saying that practical applications are not sufficient without a strongly reinforced and knowledgeable community of Q scholars.

A limited number of written comments from Factor C participants indicated their priorities. In scoring no. 13 (providing web-based tools in support of Q research) at +4, one person wrote that "I believe it to be the most important." In response to no. 18, the same person wrote, "I applaud the continuation of a high-quality conference. . . . However, while I enjoy the 'socially rewarding' aspect, it would not be my compelling recommendation." With this comment, the writer seemed to be indicating a preference for experiencing exemplary Q studies and gaining support for research as the major motivating factor in attending Q conferences, a position consistent with the factor's emphasis on resourcing the work of Q researchers.

In summary, Factor C participants are Q loyalists whose priorities are bolstering the continuation of traditional Q methodology and the work of Q researchers through effective web-based resources, new textbooks, meaningful conferences, and the active enlistment and training of new generations of Q scholars.

Factor D: Beyond Orthodoxy

Factor D includes two veterans and four novices. One of the veterans is from the United States, the other from Europe. Two of the novices are from the United States, one is from Europe and one is from Asia. The preferences and interests of Factor D participants (statements scored +4 and +3) echo the applied orthodoxy of Factor B in that these participants wish to emphasize the practical value of Q as it is applied to solving social and policy problems. Factor D echoes C's reinforcement of orthodoxy via their interest in promoting applications of Q and in developing new Q textbooks and web-based materials that support Q research, but defining D's position most clearly are the statements scored -4 and -3, especially those that are also distinguishing statements, which highlight the difference between this view compared in particular to the Stephenson orthodoxy of Factor A.

Factor D participants ranked the following at -4 and -3 (statements 22, 40, and 9 are distinguishing). First, those statements at -4:

- (22) Will a broad-based thinker emerge as Steve Brown did after William Stephenson's passing? We need to cultivate present and near-future leaders from our current membership rather than merely hope for someone to arise.
- (8) Avoid Q-sorting on the web—Q sorts are not easy to implement on the web: They are essentially physical exercises and that is their strength and weakness (not easy to do without real people doing real things with their hands and minds).
- (40) When Steven Brown retires, there will be a leadership vacuum. The Q movement needs a rallying figure, someone who makes it his or her life's work. A Chair of Q Studies is something that should be raised with various universities.

Complementary to this are those statements placed under -3:

- (4) If Q becomes more popular, it will be more difficult to identify leadership because of the many bases of authority that will exist, and also because it will become more and more difficult to recall what Stephenson actually said.
- (9) Those who wish to contribute to the ideas that Stephenson endeavored to advance will find it necessary to return to his original writings. Forming panels around his more significant writings during annual meetings is a practice worth continuing.
- (17) Actively renew Q's historical connection to the University of Missouri and the Stephenson Research Center there.
- (21) Choose another name. The term "Q methodology" gets in the way of advancing the method.

Most of these statements indicate the strong preference of Factor D participants to move beyond the orthodoxy of Stephenson's thought and writings as maintained by Brown. Taken with their +4 and +3 emphases on practical applications and developing multidisciplinary and integrative approaches, and reinforced by their positive scoring of statement 37—"Establish ties with disciplines and groups that contribute to the diversity of the Q community" (+2)—it becomes clear that Factor D participants are open to moving Q methodological thinking toward dialogue and possible accommodation with other areas of theory and research that do not place a high premium on preserving the orthodoxy of Stephenson's thought or cultivating leadership that maintains it.

Comments from Factor D participants indicate their somewhat iconoclastic preferences. One wrote that the -4 and -3 rankings have "to do with the slight 'guru' taste to which I am allergic. . . . I don't like the inward 'movement', 'culture' tints, and the deification of Stephenson." This person's +4 and +3 rankings indicated that:

. . . my attitude that I see Q as a method particularly fit to help me explore the issues I care about in the world at large and my academic field in particular On the positive side—pragmatic, mature, mainstream, open and inclusive. . . . On the negative side—closed,

inwards, conservative, inclined to cultism.

Another wrote that “The efforts might want to focus on making people aware of its value in policymaking. . . . The development of this methodology will not be limited only because of its name and leaders.” A third added that “What is needed is to attract wider audience outside ISSSS and to be more accessible for the novices (textbooks).” And yet another asserted, “The Q sample for this study lacked content most appropriate to the future of the use of Q-technique in quantitative psychological research.” Another expressed apprehension about the future:

I am afraid that, as has happened in other disciplines, the terms, formats, and phrases understood by seasoned practitioners but not intuitively obvious to others will make the non-practitioner less likely to use this method when other methods have packages and routines that are easy to use and familiar. We should use the results of this study to identify different ways to reach different kinds of researchers, that is, practice what we advocate in the substantive areas.

Finally, another participant identified what Factor D would regard as a window of opportunity:

It is my opinion that the future of Q methodology lies in its practical application. Any “movement” that is resistant to progression and holds only to the thoughts of the “original thinker” is not one that I am interested in. If we all simply accepted what those who have gone before us have thought and made a decision to remain “pure” to their ideas, there would [have been] no Stephenson. . . . We should strive to see that Q is applied to its full potential for the greater good (or the good of the publics we seek to serve).

In summary, Factor D participants see great value in the ideas and strategies of Q methodology but want to move beyond what they consider to be the orthodoxy of Stephenson’s views and the traditional uses of Q and in the direction of innovative applications and resources that reach out to and embrace the wider world of ideas and viewpoints.

Discussion and Implications

What light do the results of this study shed on the future of the Q methodology movement? All four factors affirm the value of Q, although there is clear disagreement between Factors A and D in particular about how to move into the next generation of Q theory and research (Factor A upholds orthodoxy and D wants to move beyond it). The sharpest difference seems to be in whether Q should be further explored as a full scientific theory of subjectivity in the tradition of Stephenson or whether its impact should be in its practical applications to research problems and its engagement of alternative epistemologies that may force Q to evolve. This difference may be elucidated by Piaget’s insights into the tension between processes of assimilation and accommodation when an organism is thrown into disequilibrium by a

changing environment and must consider adaptation in order to regain equilibrium: Generally, one's first impulse is to assimilate new data into existing schema, but accommodation may be necessary (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). There are also echoes in this process of the dynamics of scientific theory-building in which the interaction of deductive theory and inductive evidence may require reconsideration of existing theory in order to accommodate new circumstances.

There is some obvious common ground about the future of Q among the four factors, notably in consensual statement 36 (scores for factors A to D, respectively):

- (36) Q practitioners need to routinely present their research at non-Q conferences—preferably large and mainstream. (+2 +3 +2 +4).

Consensus on this statement does not resolve the differences cited above, but it suggests that the Q movement has arrived at a new stage in its maturation where its increasing numbers of practitioners are more confident of Q theory and their varied applications of it. It seems likely that the past 20 years of annual Q conferences and 15 years of ISSSS support via *Operant Subjectivity* and web-based resources of various kinds have contributed to the current level of strength and confidence. Yet it also seems important to consider the future role of ISSSS and its work, including the sponsorship of annual conferences. What role should the organizational elements of Q play in the furtherance of Q theory and practice?

Statement 15 (advocating the offering of learning opportunities at annual conferences to develop broader and deeper knowledge of Q) was scored 0 +4 +3 +1 by Factors A to D, respectively. Besides continuing its traditional opportunities to present Q-related projects to peers via formal papers, perhaps the role of the annual Q conference should commit a greater proportion of time and effort in the areas of continuing education and inquiry into Q theory and practice for both novice and veteran practitioners. Currently, designated educational offerings are limited to pre-conference sessions, a keynote speaker, and occasional planned discussions centered on topics such as teaching Q or publishing Q studies. Questions raised on the Q discussion list may be a source for educational topics for Q conferences and should include concerns important to those who want to move beyond traditional Q (as found on Factor D).

Additionally, there seems to be agreement among Q practitioners in this study that web-based resources are valuable for furthering the work of Q. Statement 13 (about continuing to provide and improve web-based resources) was scored +1 +3 +4 +3 (by A to D), and statement 8 (advocating the avoidance of Q sorting on the web) was scored -2 0 -3 -4. Because factor scores indicate little interest in actively renewing historical ties to the University of Missouri (no. 17: 0 -3 -4 -3), perhaps it is time to invest in existing and new developments in a virtual or digital Q community. Besides strengthening current offerings, it may be time for ISSSS to organize and/or

offer formal online educational offerings for credit that would allow inquirers, novices, and veterans to explore topics in Q ranging from theory to methods of practice. These offerings would likely have to be offered asynchronously because of Q's global constituency, an important value given the growing numbers of international practitioners of Q and their relative isolation on Factor D in this study.³ Continuing dialogue with all areas of Q's constituency (theoretically and globally) is crucial.

In addition to the low priority on actively renewing ties with the University of Missouri, other trends for the future of Q implied in this study include a preference not to change its name (statement 21) and a low priority on revising the by-laws of ISSSS to reflect Q's global membership (no. 27).

A major issue still unresolved by this study is the question of leadership in Q theory once the current generation of Stephenson students is no longer active. Factor D reflects antipathy toward cultivating leadership while Factors A and B advocate it. Continuing dialogue among the factor constituencies is important to determine whether Q practitioners think the issue is that a single leader is or is not necessary or whether the issue is that leaders in theory should arise naturally instead of by selection or succession (or perhaps another perspective). While the question of leadership in theory is being debated, it is important for the leaders of ISSSS to maintain openness and support for all participants in the debate, regardless of their differing perspectives on how best to understand, practice, and further the aims of Q methodology.⁴

Some of the proposals above (e.g., increasing designated educational opportunities at conferences and via expanded web-based offerings) imply the need for more active ISSSS leadership in the organizational realm. Currently, the structure and by-laws of ISSSS call for a group of five officers, most of whom change roles annually, to fulfill the functions of ISSSS. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, consideration of a larger, longer-serving board of trustees or directors may be necessary, especially for the sake of

³ As shown in Appendix A, non-US participants are disproportionately represented in Factor D, although not all non-US participants are to be found there and some US participants are significantly associated with D as well. Whatever the root cause of this division, and whether it is regarded as a breach to be overcome or as diversity to be embraced, one possible strategy for beginning to explore its character would be to organize a continuing panel that included representatives of the different segments who would be commissioned on behalf of the community to explore one another's perspectives and then to report back to the community as a whole (for an illustration, consult Brown, 1994).

⁴ Expressed in extreme terms, the alternative to open cooperation is that those supporting the leadership will form an establishment that will become so exacting in its membership demands that it will cease recruiting itself and will deteriorate into an arid aristocracy, whereas the opposition will exaggerate the value of alternatives and will either angrily struggle against the aristocracy or abandon the field in despair. This scenario bears striking resemblance to the dynamics of groups described by Bion (1961, pp. 150-153) and highlights the dilemma between preserving things of value and acquiring new things of value, which in turn depends on the ability to recognize value.

organizational planning and for continuity in periods when no individual leaders who specialize in theory are evident or forthcoming.

Misgivings were originally expressed about the limited range of concerns embodied in the Q sample used in this study, and there is little doubt that it could be improved upon. Correction of this defect we leave to future scholars interested in this topic, as well as the belief that this study has raised enough issues to keep us all busy for years to come.

Appendix A: Operant Factors

Demographics ^a				Factor Loadings			
				A	B	C	D
1	v	US	ac	66	24	03	07
2	v	US	ac	11	71	15	09
3	v	US	ac	14	67	15	34
4	v	US	ap	11	04	61	44
5	v	US	ac	78	12	03	22
6	v	Eur	ac	-14	10	-07	83
7	?	ANZ	ac	51	21	-06	46
8	n	US	ap	09	65	27	50
9	n	Eur	ac	38	47	54	17
10	v	US	ac	80	-16	29	-03
11	v	US	ac	05	-03	49	43
12	n	CA	ap	-12	34	27	79
13	n	US	ap	16	24	34	55
14	v	US	ac	21	08	56	46
15	n	US	ap	62	59	11	-10
16	n	US	ac	69	19	55	-06
17	v	US	ac	05	61	33	48
18	n	US	ac	11	46	17	69
*19	v	US	ac	28	72	08	28
20	?	US	ap	29	20	42	56
21	n	As	ac	-06	18	29	72
22	v	Eur	ap	11	36	17	41
23	v	US	ac	11	36	63	19
24	v	US	ap	32	67	15	19
25	n	US	ac	79	41	01	-08
26	n	US	ap	49	47	-01	-22
27	n	Eur	ac	00	22	14	65
28	v	US	ac	18	58	18	13
29	n	US	ap	20	40	36	10
30	n	US	ac	33	19	56	35

31	n	US	ac	-13	10	54	05
32	v	ME	ac	44	44	30	05
33	v	Eur	ac	-08	56	73	-05
34	n	US	ap	27	32	06	44
35	v	US	ac	58	33	-31	06
36	v	US	ac	-09	06	29	42
37	n	US	ap	36	01	30	56
38	v	US	ap	22	-30	05	57
*39	v	US	ac	42	55	-31	39
40	n	US	ac	42	18	32	53
41	n	US	ac	-02	06	-09	73
42	v	US	ap	39	30	42	41

^a *Experience with Q*: v=veteran, n=novice. *Location*: US=USA, Eur= Europe, ANZ=Australia, New Zealand, CA=Canada, ME=Middle East, As=Asia. *Occupation*: ac=academic, ap=applied (non-academic).

* The authors are no. 19 (Hurd) and no. 39 (Brown).

Appendix B: Factor Scores

<i>Q Sample</i>	<i>Factor Arrays</i>			
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
1 Within the "Q culture" we need to involve all stakeholders in a broader debate about the nature of our dialogue, vision and mission and how to create "safe" and "good enough" relational and learning spaces for each other.	-2	+1	+3	-2
2 The QMethod website is vital as the initial contact point for individuals outside the Q community who are seeking information.	0	+2	+1	+1
3 One of the issues, I believe, is the need for a really good "how to do Q" textbook.	0	-4	+4	+4
4 If Q becomes more popular, it will be more difficult to identify leadership because of the many bases of authority that will exist, and also because it will become more and more difficult to recall what Stephenson actually said.	+2	-4	-2	-3

<p>5 Q should maintain its separate existence and not become absorbed by other theories or movements (e.g., feminism, behaviorism, psychoanalysis, or social constructionism) that may become permanent fixtures to knowledge or may, within a generation or two, be looked upon as passing fads.</p>	+4	-2	-2	+1
<p>6 Emphasize and encourage teaching Q courses at many universities to cultivate future Q practitioners.</p>	+2	+2	+4	+2
<p>7 Develop a spin-off network and Q discussion list for novices where untutored questions can be raised that is monitored but not dominated by Q veterans.</p>	-2	-3	+2	+1
<p>8 Avoid Q sorting on the web—Q-sorts are not easy to implement on the web: they are essentially physical exercises and that is their strength and weakness (not easy to do without real people doing real things with their hands and minds).</p>	-2	0	-3	-4
<p>9 Those who wish to contribute to the ideas that Stephenson endeavored to advance will find it necessary to return to his original writings. Forming panels around his more significant writings during annual meetings is a practice worth continuing.</p>	+3	+3	+1	-3
<p>10 Q seems to be pretty much self-contained as a theory that is consistent in approach and viewpoint. I'd be more interested in promoting the applications of Q than in extending the theoretical foundations.</p>	-3	-3	-3	+3
<p>11 Be proactive in recruiting and training the best of upcoming scholars.</p>	0	+2	+3	0
<p>12 Another issue is the need to take Q forward into the upsurge of qualitative and social constructionist theory and research.</p>	-4	-1	0	+1
<p>13 Continue to improve and make available the tools of PQMethod, PCQ, the Q-method web site, and the Q discussion list.</p>	+1	+3	+4	+3

14	The challenge for Q methodology rests in developing its potential as a multi-disciplinary, and at the same time integrative, research approach which is set to create the structure for a scientific revolution.	+3	0	+2	+3
15	Continue to include learning opportunities in annual conferences in order to develop broader and deeper knowledge of Q.	0	+4	+3	+1
16	Q researchers need to develop clearer understandings of subjective perceptions in order to work for more effective public policy decisions.	-1	0	-2	0
17	Actively renew Q's historical connection to the University of Missouri and the Stephenson Research Center there.	0	-3	-4	-3
18	Continue offering high-quality annual conferences that are socially rewarding.	+1	+1	+2	0
19	Q is perceived to be from "left field" and is marginalized and trivialized by that reputation.	+3	-2	-2	-1
20	The conditions of Q methodology research will probably improve in the foreseeable future as we become aware that social ills, such as environmental degradation, are largely matters of people management; hence the need to understand perspectives.	-1	0	-1	+2
21	Choose another name. The term "Q methodology" gets in the way of advancing the method.	-3	-4	-4	-3
22	Will a broad-based Q thinker emerge as Steve Brown did after William Stephenson's passing? We need to cultivate present and near-future leaders from our current membership rather than merely hope for someone to arise.	+1	+2	0	-4
23	As long as it is perceived to add practical value (such as solving problems and resolving conflicts) to the practices of scholarship, research, and policy-making, its future is assured.	+1	+3	-3	+4
24	The role that subjectivity plays in society will always be with us and Q methodology or something like it will have to be maintained, resuscitated, or reinvented.	+2	+4	0	+2

25	If it is fair to say that researchers are insight-seekers, then they should be agnostic and eclectic, not acolytes or Johnny-One-Note proselytizers.	-4	-1	-4	-2
26	I applaud the idea of doing Q studies on Q. The next step is to do a study of the Q premises amongst a population of research users.	-1	-1	-1	-1
27	The structure and by-laws of ISSSS ought to be revised to more accurately reflect its global membership.	-3	-1	-3	-1
28	Engage in debates with experts via the listserv or in other settings such as conferences as a way to develop post-modern skills.	-3	-2	0	0
29	We need to develop an on-going means to collect the Q-related questions and needs of ISSSS members and other Q practitioners in order to provide targeted training and programming at annual conferences.	-2	0	-1	-2
30	Stephenson was right when he said that there would always have to be a small group at the core that was interested in the methodology as such, and in elucidating its central tenets. Those who elect to work at this task will have to steel themselves against criticisms of hero-worship and cultism	+4	-1	-1	-1
31	Q will not be effective if Q practitioners/researchers attempt to "hold the fort" by defending its pure truth.	-4	-3	-3	0
32	A Q textbook is needed that uses Q as an approach to researching knowledge.	+1	-2	+3	+2
33	ISSSS should invest in post-doctoral fellowships or other theory development opportunities in order to cultivate future leaders in Q theory.	-1	+1	+1	-1
34	The significance of Q methodology will be strengthened through its sophisticated application to significant social issues (which can occur in small-scale contexts) and through the publication of successful applications in high-visibility books and journals.	+3	+4	+1	+3
35	Develop and expand <i>Operant Subjectivity</i> and the annual conferences as outlets for exploring pure Q theory. If not there, where?	+2	+1	+2	-2

36 Q practitioners need to routinely present their research at non-Q conferences—preferably large and mainstream.	+2	+3	+2	+4
37 Establish ties with disciplines and groups that contribute to the diversity of the Q community.	-2	+2	0	+2
38 I need to better my understanding of Stephenson's Q methodology so that I can strengthen the base for policy decisions by which social values are upheld or modified. This means showing how Q can blend with other methodologies, open new avenues, inspire new ideas.	0	+1	+1	0
39 If Q is to survive as other than a historical curiosity, then more "Q on Q" studies are needed in order to assess the understanding of Q as Stephenson conceived it.	-1	-2	0	-2
40 When Steven Brown retires, there will be a leadership vacuum. The Q movement needs a rallying figure, someone who makes it his/her life's work. A Chair of Q Studies is something that should be raised with various universities.	+4	0	-1	-4

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Commentaries on “The Future of the Q Methodology Movement”

In response to the preceding article on “The Future of the Q Methodology Movement,” the following seven participants waived confidentiality and agreed to comment on the article from the vantage point of their own factors. As the loadings in Table 1 indicate, the factors are well represented by their strongest factor-analytic exponents, who were invited to comment based on the magnitude of their factor loadings. Due to the fact that Factor D was more critical of traditional Q practices than were the other factors, three Factor D representatives were invited to comment; however, only one of them ultimately took advantage of the opportunity.

Table 1: Factor Representatives

No.	Responder	A	B	C	D
10	James C. Rhoads	80	-16	29	-03
5	Dennis F. Kinsey	78	12	03	22
2	Mark N. Popovich	11	71	15	09
3	Will Focht	14	67	15	34
33	Michael Stricklin	-08	56	73	-05
23	Philip Christman	11	36	63	19
21	Kai-Hung Fang	-06	18	29	72
19	Russell C. Hurd	28	72	08	28
39	Steven R. Brown	42	55	-31	39

From “The Future of the Q Methodology Movement” (Appendix A).

Factor A: “Orthodoxy Upheld”

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I would like to begin by thanking Russ Hurd and Steven Brown for focusing our attention on the very important issue of the future of Q methodology. I believe that this is a most appropriate moment to consider these matters for we find ourselves at a time of great strength in the Q community (as demonstrated by the growing acceptance of the methodology, the expanding literature, the involvement of more scholars from an ever-widening global pool, etc.). At the same time, I fear we are inching toward some important crossroads that could pose serious challenges for Q.