



Editorial Comment

The Evidence of Innovation

For more than 150 authors, this issue of *Operant Subjectivity* represents something of a landmark, a journey of considerable accomplishment, a ribbon of milestones achieved, a mirror of the past, and, perhaps, a map for a glimpse into the future of the science of subjectivity. Anyone who has cared for *Operant Subjectivity* since its humble beginning as a newsletter in 1977, especially those who have contributed to its pages, or studied its contents in depth as students, will appreciate the permanent value of a cumulative author and subject index for all 25 volumes. The index stands as evidence of innovation and as a quarter century longitudinal accounting of an important part of continued achievement in the scientific study of human subjectivity.

Operant Subjectivity volume 26, number 1 represents the rich harvest of an ambitious project launched by Professor Mark N. Popovich of Ball State University journalism faculty in Muncie, Indiana (USA), who has served ISSSS as President and Treasurer. We shall all derive benefit from his effort. Like the earlier CD-ROM collection (with periodic updates) with its cover-to-cover full text assemblage of the contents of *Operant Subjectivity*, the cumulative subject and author indexes are tangible evidence of a significant part of the international peer-reviewed scholarship in the scientific study of subjectivity enabled by the innovations of William Stephenson.

Innovation can sometimes come in a flash, as it apparently did for Stephenson shortly before he composed his lean letter to the editor of *Nature* in June of 1935 about the value of factor-analyzing the intercorrelation of events (Q sorts), treating people as variates rather than items from tests.[†] Students of the history of Q methodology acknowledge the letter as the evidence of innovation: the seminal event announcing the birth of Q technique from which its methodology would emerge.

Adoption of an innovation usually requires a simultaneous commitment to abandon at least some old, familiar, and closely held "truths," many of which have not yet been recognized by their adherents as the barriers to progress that traditions often become. It requires time, patience, and at least a small band of intrepid workers who struggle repeatedly to establish an innovative concept by applying its principles to specific demonstration research problems declared to be all but irresolvable by traditional means.

[†] On June 28, 1935, William Stephenson penned the letter to the Editor of the British science journal *Nature*, thus initiating the development that has come to be known as Q methodology. The letter appeared in the 24 August 1935 issue of *Nature* (p. 297).

Building new cathedrals to knowledge may require dismantling old schools of dogma prior to leveling the cleared foundation ground. Nurturing a notion of enabling the possibility for the study of human subjectivity and a method for doing so has been the epic struggle of William Stephenson and all the 200+ workers, reviewers, editors, and Editorial Advisory Board members, whose collected efforts and honed scholarship have become the building stones for the journal and for the indexes prepared by Professor Popovich. The case for Q methodology could be a textbook lesson in how difficult it is to build the adorning tracery for an archive that supports and celebrates the value of an innovation. Steven Brown's 1977 inaugural comments for the fledgling newsletter hint at the rocky road ahead.

Technique and method merely show the way to proceed, however, and in this respect we wish to avoid the plight of those seekers-after-truth who, upon having it pointed out to them, become more interested in examining the pointing finger than in pursuing the directions indicated. The phenomenon of human subjectivity has frequently been pointed to in the same way ... but it was only with the advent of Q methodology that it became possible to engage in systematic examinations from an operant standpoint.... [*Operant Subjectivity* 1977, 1(1):1-2.]

Perhaps it is only painful irony (or is it?), that Maimie Stephenson's familiar smiling face and dancing eyes close this issue along with the loving, humorous, respectful, and touching words Steven Brown chose for her obituary (pages 53-7). Maimie was never just a bit player relegated to the back row with her beloved watercolors or to smiling conversation in the quiet galleries of tea receptions that followed Will's public lectures. She, certainly more than most, understood exactly what were her husband's strengths and what his work ought to mean to the endeavor of science. She spoke clearly yet lovingly as she charged each of us to carry on, in Volume 13(2):43, the 1990 issue that celebrates *in memoriam* some of the accomplishments, achievements and impacts of Will's lifetime of work and still unattained goals.

...For me Will's secret was his courage, the courage to stand alone! The courage of the explorer of mind, of ideas, of new concepts, the courage to see the new horizons and mark the way.

At the close of her "Remembrances," Maimie showed us the path and gave clear instructions for the journey:

His gifts to you, his treasured friends, are his writings. Do not let them be lost, but guard them for posterity.

Maimie Stephenson

Fair enough; as researchers who design Q methodological studies to explore Will's vision of new horizons, we continue to dedicate for posterity our scholarly work, research ideas, and new scientific understanding about human subjectivity. As reviewers, guest editors, and editors we coax to life each issue of *Operant Subjectivity* with courage and all the care Maimie desired for her husband's writings. And to remind us all of just how influential tiny, acorn-like newsletters might become when they sprout and then rise up to saplings that slowly grow strong and mature, in each issue of *Operant Subjectivity* we greet readers with a restatement of the now familiar original purpose that has guided *Operant Subjectivity* well through its first 25 years.

The journal is committed to the ideas and concepts of Q methodology as enunciated by William Stephenson (1902-1989), and while not precluding alternative viewpoints, encourages contributions compatible with this commitment.

for *Operant Subjectivity*:

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