

News, Notes & Comment

Recent and Forthcoming Scholarship

William Stephenson, "Quantum Theory of Subjectivity," *Integrative Psychiatry*, December 1988. *Abstract*: The concern in quantized psychology is with a new probabilistic like that upon which quantum mechanics was founded by Max Born. It is Q-technique. This dispenses altogether with the old probabilistic of objective methodology in social, psychologic, and psychiatric disciplines. The subjective science that this is making possible recognizes the sovereignty of measurement (and its invariance): In Q it is one and the same scale for everyone, for every Q-sort, every problem. This, if anything, is the marvel of quantum theory as it applies to psychologic events, from the most trivial to the most awe-inspiring and complex. Quantum theory indicates that an explanation of reality can be given in quantum-mechanical terms and that complementarity is a cardinal principle in the process. We take a stand with Niels Bohr. [This essay is followed by extensive commentaries by Larry Dossey, M.D., Department of Internal Medicine, Dallas Diagnostic Association; Fred Alan Wolf, physicist, La Jolla, CA; Steven R. Brown, political scientist, Kent State University; and Michael Schwartz, M.D., St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center of New York. This is one of the last of Stephenson's publications, which, along with his "The Quantization of Psychological Events" (*Operant Subjectivity*, October 1988/January 1989, 1-23), is a concise summary of all his thinking on this topic. While available, reprints can be obtained from Donald J. Brenner, Director, Stephenson Research Center, School of Journalism, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65205.]

N. Patrick Peritore (Political Science, U Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211), "Liberation Theology in the Brazilian Catholic Church: A Q-Methodology Study of the Diocese of Rio de Janeiro in 1985," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 1989, 26, 59-92. Based on a report presented at the 3rd Q Conference, this study employs a 36-item Q sample administered to 15 opinion leaders and executives in the Catholic Church in Rio de Janeiro. The statements are taken from the Liberation Theology controversy as

found in the writings of liberation theologian Leonardo Boff and conservative Bishop Eugenio Sales, and were administered following the 1985 trial in which Boff was condemned to a year's silence and removed from responsible positions. Two factors emerge, indicating that the Church is committed to the major tenets of Liberation Theology but is divided over implementation. The *populists* wish to convert the Church to a model of democratic mass action for social transformation, whereas the *institutionalists* wish to implement a liberating theological option while preserving theological traditions and hierarchy.

Gregory Casey (Political Science, U Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211), "Public Perceptions of Judicial Scandal: The Missouri Supreme Court 1982-88," *Justice System Journal*. A report on this study was presented at the 3rd Q Conference, and concerns the controversy which arose in 1982 when a judge on the Missouri Supreme Court was widely believed to have engineered the appointment of friends to openings on the Court. The 48-item Q sample drawn from the public discussion was administered to 42 persons, and this gave rise to two factors: The *cynical stand-patters* were willing to believe that the Court was involved in politics and that this had compromised the quality of the law, but they also regarded this as unsurprising and were opposed to any institutional changes; the *dismayed* were morally outraged and felt that reform was necessary, but also felt hopeless that anything meaningful would actually be done. The data were collected in December 1985/January 1986, at the height of the scandal, and the results were referred back to Missouri's political culture and the history of its famous "nonpartisan" court plan. (For background information, consult R.A. Watson and R.G. Downing's *The Politics of the Bench and the Bar: Judicial Selection Under the Missouri Nonpartisan Court Plan*, Wiley, 1969.) Incidentally, an anonymous reviewer of Casey's manuscript commented that Q technique, "by presenting already-structured thought, makes expression easier. That is, the ability to articulate may not always match an ability to appreciate, at some level to think; and responding in terms of a pre-prepared structure (set of quotes) may allow respondents (who are not professional writers or communicators) extra ability to express meaning." Casey speculates that this appreciation of what Q can do may have originated from a practitioner rather than an academic, since

practitioners "consider the plausibility of the findings while the academic reviewer fixates on methods, thinking that he/she understands them and can evaluate them, proceeding to nitpick away."

Carolyn J. Offutt (Speech Communication, Kent State U, Kent OH 44242), Tracy A. Wellmon & Robyn P. Clair, "Perceptions of Organizational Communication Competence," Speech Communication Association, San Francisco, November 1989. *Abstract:* The present investigation looked at perceptions of organizational communication competence. Q methodology was used to determine convergence of perceptions about organizational communication competence. This study built on past literature concerned with perceptions. Q sorts were performed to arrive at conclusions of perceptions. Data showed that three independent viewpoints existed. This study found an instrumental view, a human relations view, and a communication view of organizational communication competence.

In their "Clinical Versus Actuarial Judgment" (*Science*, 1989, 243, 1668-1674), Robyn M. Dawes, David Faust, and Paul E. Meehl continue a line of thought introduced 35 years ago in Meehl's *Clinical Versus Statistical Prediction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954). Focusing on those situations in which professionals are called upon to diagnose and predict, a long list of studies demonstrates the superiority of actuarial procedures which, like life insurance estimates, rely on large numbers of cases to establish the direct tie between data and criterion. Explicit actuarial procedures thereby bypass the fallible judgmental processes of the clinical method, which is often dependent upon skewed samples and nonmathematical reasoning. Unbeknownst to Meehl, apparently, is William Stephenson's "A Note on the Methodology of Clinical Explanation" (*Psychological Record*, 1962, 12, 101-103), in which he criticizes Meehl's position and makes it clear that "the methodologies of the two..., clinical and actuarial, are not commensurate." As a theoretical example, a woman might be invited to provide a Q sort daily for a month, the statements being specific to the case. The 30x30 correlation matrix produces, say, factors A, B, C, D, each specific to the case and all "as objective as the color of this young woman's eyes and the tilt of her nose." The factor scores are all in standard terms, free from those "bewildering units of measurement that plague

the actuarialist," yet nowhere is prediction of importance. Even if the method were extended comparatively to additional cases, the Q samples and self references would not be comparable: "Yet all is as objective as the lever-pressing of rats in a Skinner box." Stephenson ends with the challenge that "no amount of actuarial psychometry can predict what the factors WXYZ will be in *any* clinical case." The methods are incommensurate--the one dealing with prediction, the other with explanation; the controversy between them is therefore pseudo-problematic. He also takes the opportunity to criticize dynamic and existential psychology for failing to produce the facts necessary for their science, and which are available via Q methodology.

p.c.q. Reviewed

p.c.q., the computer software package developed by Michael Stricklin for the analysis of Q-technique data, is reviewed in the July 1989 issue of *The Psychologist* (p. 301), the journal of the British Psychological Society. Following a summary of *p.c.q.*, the review concludes that,

Stricklin's program faithfully adheres to the principles and concepts of Stephenson's Q methodology, particularly as regards the interbehavioural principle of permitting the investigator's judgement to be intimately involved in all phases of analysis, e.g., as in the judgemental rotation of factors. *p.c.q.* is therefore a computer package with a definite philosophy of science which distinguishes it from factor-analytic routines in better known packages such as SAS and SPSS.... *p.c.q.* has emerged as an important technical tool for those involved in the systematic study of human subjectivity.

Further details concerning *p.c.q.* are contained in the April 1987 issue of *OS*, pp. 104-105. A revised version of the package is currently being tested. For additional information, contact Michael Stricklin, 3234 South 17th Street, Lincoln, NE 68502.

More on Nursing

Three recent studies in the nursing field reinforce the conclusion reached by Deborah Gibson and Janice Ingle (see pp. 3ff above) that some of the central concepts and procedures associated with Q methodology have as yet not penetrated contemporary thinking in nursing research.

Of the three, which are listed in *Q Bibliographic Update*, the paper by Harrison, Pistolessi, and Stephen, "Assessing Nurses' Communication," is technically the most sophisticated, but the concern with respondent characteristics, reliability and validity of the Q sample, and expert judgment comes at the expense of attention to the subjectivity at issue. First, a *template* was constructed by experts, whose Q-sort views of communication effectiveness were averaged together to provide a standard. (Any factors within the set of judges were naturally washed out in the averaging.) Respondents' individual Q sorts were then correlated with the template, the correlation coefficient being regarded as a communication effectiveness score. This assumes that effectiveness is a norm external to the communicating individual, and that there is only one standard of it--that which is understood by experts. (Theoretically, it is worth noting that two persons could both correlate, say, 0.40 with the template, and still not be correlated with one another.) It is also worth noting that some respondents correlated with the template at quite low levels, but the nature of this subjectivity, which was apparently different from the experts' template, was not explored. Instead, the communication effectiveness score (r) was then treated as a dependent variable in an analysis of variance based on respondent demographics: nursing experience (minimal vs. high nursing background) and class year.

In her "Use of Q-Sort Methodology in Cross-Cultural Nutrition and Health Research," which focuses on food habits among Costa Ricans, Simpson acknowledges that Stephenson developed Q; however, she then goes on to assert that Q was elaborated by Wittenborn (among others), whose critical 1961 article missed Stephenson's main ideas altogether. Simpson then goes on to suggest a minimum of 50 to 60 Q-sort items for purposes of establishing reliable results (citing Polit and Hungler's nursing text); she herself employs a Q sample of 100 picture cards representing commonly eaten foods. All of the old arguments concerning the shape of the Q-sort distribution are also raised.

Tetting's "Q-Sort Update," among other things, includes a section entitled "Literature Review of Q or Card Sorts," which contains references of an older vintage--not only Stephenson (1953), but also Rogers and Dymond (1954), Wittenborn (1961), and Kerlinger (1964)--obviously oblivious of developments dur-

ing the past quarter century. There are the usual concerns about reliability and validity, about the number of sorting piles, and about the number of statements--all technical in nature. When it comes to the subjectivity intrinsic to the Q sorting, however, Tetting calculates the *frequencies* associated with each statement when summed across all respondents, thereby guaranteeing the obscurity of whatever subjective operants undoubtedly exist in his domain of inquiry. "Due to small sample size (N = 37)," he later states, "results of a factor analysis could not be considered valid." He nevertheless ends on a positive note, and recommends a "modified Q or card sort" since, as he says, the data can be analyzed with standard packages such as SPSS, because the data can be subjected to analysis other than correlation (such as factor analysis, if sample size is large enough), and because card sorts can establish their own test-retest reliability.

As has been noted previously, Karen Dennis's "Q Methodology: Relevance and Application to Nursing Research" (*Advances in Nursing Science*, 1986) is the new standard in the nursing field, and one which students and scholars are obliged to examine prior to engaging in their own studies.

Copies of The Study of Behavior

Persons without copies of William Stephenson's *The Study of Behavior: Q-Technique and Its Methodology* (University of Chicago Press, 1953) may wish to contact either or both of the following rare and antiquarian booksellers specializing in psychology: John Gach Books Inc., 5620 Waterloo Road, Columbia, MD 21045-2699 (phone 301/465-9023), or The Epistemologist, P.O. Box 63, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010 (215/527-1065). (John Gach recently had a copy of *The Play Theory of Mass Communication* in very good condition; The Epistemologist had two good copies of *The Study of Behavior*.) Good copies, frequently with dust jackets, are typically available for \$25-30.00. Rare copies of classics to which Stephenson frequently referred are also often available through these two sources.