

NEWS, NOTES & COMMENT

Recent and Forthcoming Scholarship

William Stephenson (2111 Rock Quarry Rd, Columbia MO 65201), "In the Shadow of Marshall McLuhan," *Nordicom Review of Nordic Mass Communication Research* [Sweden], 1986, No. 2, 20-27. A companion piece to the series "William James, Niels Bohr, and Complementarity," this article employs McLuhan's and Innis' views to distinguish transitive from substantive thought, the former being self referential in nature, the latter being open to proof. An example of the quantum-theoretical nature of Q methodology is illustrated in terms of a teenager's quandary between homework ("homework is a nuisance," "I learn more from cable TV than I ever do from books," etc.) and cable television ("cable TV is exciting stuff," "I know my parents object, but I can't help it," etc.), the resulting factors demonstrating discontinuity and complementarity. The paper concludes that "nuclear physics and what we might dare call nuclear subjectivity use the same quantum-mechanic thought and essential methodology for their sciences."

Steven R. Brown (Political Science, Kent State U), "Operant Procedures of Value Clarification," 1987 Policy Sciences Summer Institute, Yale University School of Law, August 5-7. *Abstract*: In his "Clarifying Value Judgment" (*Inquiry* 1958), Harold Lasswell emphasized the importance of procedure in the clarification of goals and values, and recommended the free association method of psychoanalysis as a means "to increase the supply of intelligence available to judgment." (He provides a snippet of what this might involve in his "Epilogue" to Rogow's *The Jew in a Gentile World*, Macmillan 1961.) The purpose of this essay will be to summarize the principles of value clarification for the policy sciences, and to demonstrate how Q methodology can be employed for further elucidation. Concretely, Q technique will be employed to illuminate junctures of "representative exposure," with factor analysis revealing the structures of the decision-maker's self "that are ordinarily

excluded from the focus of full waking attention." Among the conclusions reached is that free association and its subsequent submission to logic is an insufficient strategy for locating what Myres McDougal has referred to as "the deep underlying equivalences in...demands for the values of a free society" (in "The Comparative Study of Law for Policy Purposes," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 1952), and that any such probe is incomplete which does not include a Q methodological inquiry into the structuralization of the perspectives involved.

Rebecca Sharpless, "The Numbers Game: Oral History Compared With Quantitative Methodology," *International Journal of Oral History*, 1986, 7(2), 93-108. *Abstract*: Based on the work of William Stephenson, the "Q methodology," formulated in 1935, is compared to classic oral history in a case study of urban renewal. Results showed the methods to be complementary, both providing the same general description of citizen reaction to the project. (The original manuscript, by Rebecca S. Jimenez, appeared under the title "Studying Urban History Through Oral History and Q Methodology: A Comparative Analysis," and was presented at a meeting of the Southwestern Social Science Association, Fort Worth, March 1984, ERIC document no. ED 244 020.)

Q and Hallmark

According to the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Doran Levy and Q methodology are behind Hallmark Cards' successful marketing of Christmas ornaments filled with light and motion and selling for up to \$24.50 each. Levy, president of Minneapolis-based Market Structure Research, used Q to help identify market segments (factors)--e.g., Heritage Yuppies, Compulsive Collectors, Christmas Investors--for which the ornaments were targeted. What the factors showed Hallmark, according to Levy, is "how ornaments fit within the framework of people's attitudes and feelings." The Q sorts were obtained from approximately 100 consumers in four or five cities who were tested during the 1984 holiday season. Following the Q sorting, participants were invited to examine and choose from among large numbers of ornaments. An unfortunate consequence of Q's enormous success, according to Levy, is that clients do not have to

return for more of his help: "Motivational components don't change.... It's the bane of my existence."

A Challenge Through Psychnet

The following challenge appeared in the March 7 issue of the *Psychnet Newsletter*, an electronic newsletter transmitted through the Bitnet network from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Houston:

Experimental psychologists typically attempt to use experimental methods when asking research questions that are "objective." By objective I mean procedures that anyone could use and the results are not dependent on the experimenter all other things being held constant. The goal usually is that the results of these procedures are reliable, valid and the data should be equally interpretable by any who view them.

Are there scientifically acceptable procedures which violate any or all of the above conditions? If there are, what makes them acceptable?

The challenge was issued by Peter Kaiser of York University, under the title "Are There Scientific Procedures Which Do Not Depend on Reliability, Validity, or Equal Interpretability by Viewers: A Challenge to the Readers," and appeared in Psychnet's "Academic Forum" column. Steven R. Brown of Kent State University responded as follows in the March 21 issue:

With respect to Peter Kaiser's challenge, a singular exception is paradoxical insofar as it involves the objective study of subjectivity: It is Q methodology, invented more than 50 years ago (by physicist-psychologist William Stephenson) and the basis for a science of subjectivity. Instrumentally, the individual rank orders a set of statements (usually), from agree to disagree. The rank ordering is called a Q sort. The statements, 20 to 50 of them typically, are drawn from a universe of common discourse: They may refer to the self ("I am

a happy person"), for example, or any other object of regard (e.g., "Ronald Reagan is behind this Iran-Contra affair"). The only proviso is that the statements be of irrefutable opinion rather than provable fact; there is therefore no right or wrong way to rank them. Yet when the Q sorts are correlated and factor analyzed (Q method), the factors point to segments of operant subjectivity. Such factors are in the person's "mind," not the experimenter's: In fact, only the person can provide a measure of his own point of view. (Validity is therefore totally irrelevant: There is no external criterion for my own or anyone else's point of view.) The results are typically reliable, as demonstrated by administering the same Q sorts to the same persons under comparable conditions: The same operant factors reappear. The number of such factors is indeterminate (Heisenberg); at the individual level, they represent complementary states of mind (Bohr). Moreover, the factors are equally interpretable in the sense that anyone who cares to can offer an interpretation of what they mean. All is not intellectual chaos, however: The factor matrix and factor scores impose constraints on the interpretive behavior of the experimenter....

The exchange stimulated inquiries about Q methodology through Bitnet from Jed Schwartz (Department of Computer Science, Columbia University) and Karl Erik Rosengren (Department of Sociology, Lund University, Sweden).

Bitnet ties together university computer centers throughout Western Europe, North America, and Japan. Readers are again encouraged to forward communiques of relevance to *Operant Subjectivity* to the editor, whose Bitnet address is sbrown@kentvm.