

AGAINST INTERPRETATION*

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...experiment is planned action in which everything is governed by theory. We do not stumble upon our experiences, nor do we let them flow over us like a stream. Rather, we have to be active: we have to "make" our experiences. It is we who always formulate the questions we put to nature; it is we who try again and again to put these questions.... (Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 1959)

PART 3

THE SINGLE CASE

Sum Cuique

Which is Latin for "let everyone have his own!" Though most studies using Q methodology have employed different individuals in the same matrix, as in the above study with 41 persons, Q's reputation is that it permits of "single case" studies, i.e., where $n=1$.

*Continued from the previous issue.

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This is indeed Q's most characteristic mode of inquiry, and it has long been held against Q, for how, it is asked, can anyone generalize from a "single case"? How apply "single case" methodology to illicit affairs?

First, generalization was never proposed. Instead, experimenting with a single case was suggested *at the call of theory*. The opening pages of *The Study of Behavior: Q-Technique and Its Methodology* (1953) was devoted to this very matter. Experimental work has reference to singular situations--as when Newton watched an apple dropping from a tree outside his college window:

Conclusions are reached in relation to a theory ... experiments can be conducted with "single cases," about which valid conclusions can be reached in relation to a theory. We do not mean by this that it is unnecessary to study *other* cases. Nor are we to outline a new principle of inductive inference which permits us to infer from "one to all." When a physicist theorizes about a particular metal, any piece of it will serve his experimental purposes. (Stephenson, 1953: 3)

It was this matter, of singular propositions, that characterized the physicist Heisenberg's positivism in the 1920s, heralding modern physics, in which theoretical constructs are limited to observable, experimentally-determined matters, eliminating "non-essential" concepts (Stephenson, 1982a). The present author was trained as a physicist in those early decades, and by instinct, it seems, has always worked to the same positivism: Ultimately it must be possible to study *anyone*, for himself or herself alone, scientifically, in terms of fully established theory, and this I told my mentor, Charles Spearman, fifty years ago.

INTERBEHAVIORAL THEORY

In the present matter, of illicit affairs, is there a body of theory sufficiently established to warrant the

experimental study of *anyone* involved in illicit affairs?

Erik Erikson would have said that there is a theory--but how to experiment in its terms is another matter. His *Childhood and Society* (1963) posits a developmental sequence, of youth searching and insisting upon *identity*, but eager to share it with others, growing into intimacies, capacities to commit oneself by late adolescence and early adulthood to a career, marriage, and thereby to creativity--whether of children, or of ideas, products, or all else of a society. The modern age, instead, seems to be one increasingly of "non-binding commitments" (a strange contradiction), of divorces by the millions, with forces of feminism, easy contraception, and economic freedoms ravishing the steady morality of Erikson's conception. It is now living together, unmarried. A child of divorced parents may consider several affairs before marriage, and then perhaps a different spouse every few years. Moreover, it looks as though intimacy precedes identity--whatever identity one has, seems to be born in precocious intimacies, not the other way around. How many virgin marriages are there, of men and women, full-blooded and playful enough before marriage, but still virgin for their honeymoon?

The difficulty with all such questioning, and with categories such as identity, commitment, intimacy, is that they are "non-essentials," unrelated to experimentally-determined effects. We begin in Q, instead, with immediate, concrete situations--such as a person performing Q sorts. Our theory begins with the recognition that complex structures are at issue, in Burt's terms, "events,"

...connected with each other in a certain way...an individual "mind", not as a simple psychic substance with inherent causal attributes, but as itself a highly complex structure. It is the aim of factor analysis to reveal that structure. (Burt, 1981: 104)

The scientific approach requires concreteness--an

apple falling from a tree--and concepts limited to it, along with experimentally-determined effects. The only body of theory fitting the bill, applicable to a person's reflections about his/her illicit affairs is that covered under the rubric of Q methodology. Primary in this are interbehavioral psychological principles, such as J.R. Kantor proposed (1933, 1959), which are ours also in *The Study of Behavior* (1953): The beginnings are with "behavioral segments," in our example a "psychological event," that is, a person's reflections, here-and-now, on illicit affairs. In Kantor's system there is a *stimulus function* (sf), and a *response function* (rf), in each interbehavioral situation, *uniquely* regarded (K). An *historical* process (hi) is involved, in which sf and rf were generated. There is the *medium* of the interbehavior (md), and the *immediate setting* (st): The system for a *psychological event* (PE) was therefore represented by Kantor as follows:

$$PE = C(K, sf, rf, hi, st, md)$$

where C symbolizes that the psychological field consists of all of these functions in interaction (Kantor, 1959: 16).

The interactions, theoretically, take place in a "psychological field." Kantor, however, never defined this field, a matter that must have troubled A.F. Bentley (1935) who wanted such fields to be specified. In Q, the field is *concourse* (covered by concourse theory) upon which an individual projects *feelings*, and to which, by Q technique, factor theory applies. itself in a mathematical space (Stephenson, 1982b).

Paralleling Kantor's system, therefore, but with a defined "psychological field," the formulation for a "psychological event," in Q, becomes:

$$PE = C(K, Q\text{-sort } 1, 2, 3\dots)$$

where C symbolizes different Q sorts whose feelings are in interaction in a unique situation K. Each Q sort can embrace the "functions" of Kantor's formulation.

Subjected to factor analysis, the expression becomes:

$$PE = C(K, f_1, f_2, f_3 \dots)$$

where again C represents factors $f_1, f_2 \dots$ in interaction in a unique situation K, the factors being operant, i.e., natural phenomena.

This requires a "single case" to perform many Q sorts with the same Q sample, for different conditions of instruction which are designed to represent a person's own understanding of his/her illicit affairs. The first Q sort could be that performed already for the study with 41 individuals; the others would be directed at it, on theoretical grounds. This is not to suggest that a "single case" study is proposed for each of the 41 persons of the above study. For some purposes, any one person might serve: What is done depends upon what one wants to do "at the call of theory."

In the present case, as an example, individual No. 2 in factor I of Karen Hunt's study was chosen, a man, aged 51, married at the time of his affair, then divorced and remarried. We shall deal with him *theoretically*, to indicate how one goes about the "case," and for what purposes.

The *stimulus function* (sf) for him is his Q sort in the Hunt study. The *historical process* (hi) may require several Q sorts, but one could require the person to represent what was most *formative*, leading to the affair(s). Another could be, "looking back, before you had an affair, what was your viewpoint then?" By the *medium* (md) is meant the atmosphere, so to speak, surrounding the affair, as distinct from the *immediate setting*: Thus, a Q sort could ask "Describe how *others* around you, of your circle of social acquaintances, thought of you when they heard of the affair." For the *immediate setting* (st) the Q sort could ask, "What did your spouse think your position was when she learned of the affair?" Also, another, "What did your *lover* think your position was?" For the *response function* (rf) there is "What do you feel your viewpoint will be five years from now?"

Each of these Q sorts calls upon the "single case" to represent himself/herself with respect to the concrete situation of an affair. Q methodology, however, can also propose additional Q sorts, based on known laws. Laws, of course, point to regularities in nature. But they are also instructions, telling the scientist what to look for in nature. D'Arcy Thompson's *Growth and Form* (1942) is based on many laws, e.g., Borelli's (that the impulse of a muscle is proportional to its volume), Froude's (the bigger the fish, the faster it can swim, in the ratio of the square root of increasing length), and the rest, Stoke's law, Brooks', Bergmann's, Errera's, Weber's, etc. These were often hotly disputed in the earlier biological days; but all served to guide the scientist, to indicate what experiments to design, and what effects to look for (Stephenson, 1982c: 131-132). So it is for Q: Mention has already been made of *Taylor's law* of self-consistency, that Q sorts tend to be consistent over long periods of time. There is *Rogers' law* (Q sorts for *self* and *ideal self* tend to be congruent in adjusted situations); also *James' law*, that some conditions are about "me," others only "mine"; and *Freud's law*, that Q sorts and factors can be *identifications with* others (these were mentioned in Stephenson, 1953). But there is also *Parloff's law*, that one's behavior tends to be a reflection of one's opinion; *Perlin's law*, that changes in interactions are likely to be in relation to existing self-related operants; *Sullivan's law*, of "me-you" dynamics...and others (Stephenson, 1974). Conditions of instruction can be such as to elicit such laws: In this way earlier research findings are brought into Q methodology.

Thus, additional Q sorts can be added to any "single case" study. In the present case, vis-a-vis illicit affairs, we can ask, "If you could *undo the past*, what would your position be now?" Or, "What, *ideally*, does an illicit affair mean to you?" And, "Who have you greatly *admired* in the past, who influenced you? How would that person have described your position (i) if the affair was unknown, (ii) if known to that person?"

All Q sorts are hypothetical, and none is predictable--one can neither prove nor disprove any. Only after factoring them can it be known which hypothesis, which law, operated.

It may be objected that this is a "heads you win, tails you don't lose" tossing of the coin. Matters, however, are not so simple. The Q sorts are subject to our version of Newton's *Fifth Rule*, to the effect that when different hypotheses are put forward, none capable of proof or disproof, their factor analysis gives us operant factor structure, indicative of *basic* hypotheses at issue (which may or may not be those of the original Q sorts [Stephenson, 1979]). *Form* becomes the arbiter of truth-value in subjectivity.

Moreover, though the structures cannot be predicted, their meaning is usually readily understood by the individual who provided the Q sorts--often to his/her surprise.

We can now proceed to a prototypical "single case" study for an illicit affair.

A "SINGLE CASE"

The "conditions of instruction" for Q sorts are not the routine matters of frequency distribution, randomizing, and assessing, but hypotheses (as we have seen), targetted upon a psychological "event," a "behavioral segment" reflected upon by a person. There is experimental know-how, of course, in the formulation of these "conditions." One tries to offset stereotypes (except where these are wanted), and to reach deviously what might be given scant attention otherwise--thus, to represent *reaction function* (rf), the Q sort asks for a projection into "five years from now," otherwise the response might be a repeat of "What is your position now?" with which the Q sorting began. The 5-year condition is also suggested as an outlet for *Perlin's law*.

An order of application has to be decided upon, mainly so that one Q sort does not foreclose another. In the present case the following set of "conditions" was used:

1. Describe your *feelings* about your illicit affair.
2. How would your *spouse* have described you after learning of your affair?
3. *Looking back*, before you had this affair, what was your viewpoint?
4. What do you feel was your *lover's* view about you?
5. What did *others* in your circle of social acquaintances feel about you, re the affair?
6. If you could *begin afresh*, and undo the past, what would your feelings be?
7. Who was highly *formative* in your life? How would that person have described you?
8. What, *ideally*, would an illicit affair be to you?
9. Who have you greatly *admired* in the past? How would that person have described you, if the affair was unknown to the person?
10. What do you feel your viewpoint may be *5 years* from now?

Just as there is a theoretical physics, so there is a theoretical Q methodology. The experimenter can perform Q sorts for the above conditions by simulation --one tries to put oneself in the position of the 51-year-old businessman who performed Q sort 1, and knowing that he regretted the harm done his wife and children, and himself, nevertheless was divorced, and married the lover. One assumed that the *formative* person (Q sort 7) was his strict father (one doesn't ordinarily divorce a mother-formation!), and that, five years ahead (Q sort 10), he was beginning to have second thoughts about his new marriage. Given this scenario, it was a straightforward matter to provide the nine Q sorts (2 to 10), using the same Q sample of $n = 48$ statements provided by Karen Hunt. Duly correlated and factor analyzed, and rotated to simple structure, the results were as given in Table 2.

It is important to realize that though this is purely theoretical, a simulation, the result cannot be produced by deliberate intent. The possible combinations of co-relation between the variables and factors are enormous, making any attempt at conscious-

Table 2
 OPERANT FACTOR STRUCTURE FOR A "SINGLE CASE"

Conditions	Factor Structure		
	I	II	III
1. Feelings now	-x		
2. Spouse	x		
3. Looking back	x		
4. Lover		-x	
5. Other		x	
6. Begin afresh			x
7. Formative		x	
8. Ideal			x
9. Admired		-x	
10. 5 years ahead	-x	x	-x

x = significant loading; all other values are insignificant.

ly providing any given structure an impossible task. The outcome is invariably a surprise, yet meaningful.

Nor is it implied that the businessman would have given the above structure: All that is certain is that he would have provided some such structure, whether of three, four, or more factors.

If, however, this had been his structure, how would we go about interpreting it? We can assume that he is cooperative, and would help in the interpretation. For our part we would proceed as follows:

There is "simple structure" for variables 1-9, each with only one significant loading on a factor. No. 10 is different, with a loading on each factor.

First, there is an experimental situation to consider, every step of which is governed by theory (as Karl Popper's logic requires [1956]). We have "made" some experiences; we have formulated questions put to subjectivity--the aspect of nature we wish to study. And we try again and again to put these questions--the laws are with us in every study.

There is available to us, therefore, something altogether missing in the study of the 41 persons, or in any multi-person study, namely, relations between

the variables and their factors. Without knowing what the factors themselves are, it can be seen that factor I is in relation to the marriage, and in such a way that what the husband feels now (and will feel 5 years ahead) is the opposite of what his spouse felt, or as he himself felt before his marriage (variables 1, 2, 3, 10). Factor II as clearly has reference to the affair, and again what his lover felt about him (4), and what he admired greatly (9) is the opposite of what societal *other* and *formative* father felt about him (5, 7)--all, of course, as felt and projected by the husband. Factor III is quite different, his ideal affair (8), and what he would feel if he could begin all over (6)--but the very opposite of what he feels he'll be like 5 years from now. Because of *Rogers' law*, it can be argued that the situation is far from adjusted: His ideals (6, 8) are not in relation to what he feels *now*, whether as factor I, or factor II. By way of *Parloff's law*, variable 10 is likely to represent him, from his own standpoint, into the future. And from *Perlin's law* the conclusion would be that, yes he develops in relation to the existing factors I, II, III, but that these suggest ambivalency, because what he would hold 5 years ahead would be contradictory feelings--against his first spouse at factor I; for her and morality at factor II; and for an ideal at factor III which has had no expression before, in either factor I or II.

All such is made possible in terms of theory: The experiment "made" them possible. Nothing of the kind is available for the methodology of multiperson Q sorts.

We can then turn to the factors as such, precisely as was done for the factors of Karen Hunt's study with 41 persons.

Here it is sufficient to provide only a summary account of these factors. As we might guess from the above experimental results, factor I has reference to an affair as running away from the commitments of marriage. It is what the husband supposes his first wife feels (2), and as he looks back to early marriage (3): But it is rejected as his view after the affair (1), and as he projects into the future (10).

The effect of the affair, apparently, is to bring about a turn-about in feeling about the marriage commitment.

Factor II has reference to the affair. It has to be remembered that it is what the *husband* feels that is at issue, which he has projected upon the other situations. Thus, the factor expresses the feeling that affairs are dead-end matters, in which you set yourself up for hurt--the most destructive thing you can do. The husband apparently feels that this is how *others* of his acquaintance would view the affair (5) and how his *formative* father (7) would view it. It is otherwise, of course, for the *lover* (4), and by someone greatly *admired* (9), probably an earlier lover: The feeling is that if they did "awful things," they came out merrily. Note that the significance 5 *years ahead* is on the side of social conformity (5, 7), thus contradicting the significance on factor I. It suggests ambivalency.

Factor III idealizes affairs: You are in love, and the affair naturally follows; you feel free and relaxed; exhilarated, a freer feeling that marriage doesn't give. The variables are *begin afresh* (6) and *ideal* (8); but at 5 *years ahead* the projection is reversed--affairs shouldn't happen, they destroy marriage commitment. Again the suggestion is of ambivalence compared with the acceptance of affairs in factor I.

WHAT THE STRUCTURE ACHIEVES

It would seem fairly straightforward, and even obvious--a lot of technicality about a simple position--that a man is tempted outside his marriage, has an affair, is divorced, and marries the lover.

There is more to it, however. The concern, theoretically, is with a person's *self*. The *theory of self* proposed in a recent paper (Stephenson, 1982a) attaches self-reference to *episodes* in a person's life, i.e., to actual behaviors. This applies to factors I and II, the one for the broken family life, the other for an apparently happy re-marriage after divorce. Both factors would be strongly "me" for the

husband--he would identify them instantly when confronted with them. Factor III, however, is not episodic, it has no real behavior attached to it and is therefore a matter of fantasy. It is not a "me," only a "mine" (*James' law*).

Moreover, if subjective science were more credible, it would be apparent that *Perlin's law* has been operative, that what the husband feels he is going to be (Q sort 10) has a loading on each existing factor. What he feels about himself, therefore, is now a composite of accepting the divorce in spite of the damage it did (I), but still feeling it was wrong (II), and with a likelihood of even more understanding in that direction in the future (III). In short, the individual has been left in a disturbed, dis severed state!

These are scarcely matters only of common sense: And the more developed subjective science becomes, the more such conclusions in terms of *laws* will be rewarding. One would be *looking* for operations of *Parloff's law*, and *Perlin's* as above, and accept them with excitement when they appear.

However, the question of what purposes to serve by "single case" studies requires additional mention.

CONCLUSION

It should be apparent that a study with 41 persons can achieve something a "single case" study cannot: **It can tell us what types of individuals there are in a community--not how many of each type, but that such-and-such types do exist.** In Karen Hunt's study the incidence of adults who profess breaking with the marriage commitment as inviolable is apparent, and though this is obvious in view of the divorce rate, what the study indicates is an unease, even so, and a variety of experiences of so-called sexual freedom. What it hasn't touched upon is *commitment* itself. The doctrine of "growing up" together, of two people committed to a life-long growth into creativity, such as Eric Erikson espoused (*ut supra*), deserves the same treatment as that given to illicit affairs. For both, the methodology of types would require careful

consideration of Max Weber's typology, made operational by Q (Stephenson, 1962), and pursuit in that direction could be rewarding, if highly time-consuming.

"Single case" studies can probe, of course, into any type, as indicated above. But it would be highly unlikely that the same conclusions would be reached for individuals of the same type: All is interbehavioral, and all conditions are unique. What would be common, in all cases, would be the way *self-reference* is attributed--to "me," or only "mine." The concern is always with a person's *self*. To that extent, any "single case" study can contribute to growth of our knowledge of what this means in terms of lawfulness, as indicated above.

But there is an overriding purpose, to foster subjective science as an antidote to objective science. Western culture is dominated completely by a science in which self-reference is missing, including communication, where the leading professors still ignore subjectivity, the obvious characteristic of mass communication. Left behind is a vast domain of *understanding and misunderstanding*, unstudied, buried in the dogmas of religion, economic and political ideologies, and military madneses. Some thoughts are indeed unthinkable, it seems, and acceptance of an organic basis for subjectivity is largely unthinkable now. Our own tilt at this epochal blindness is clearly quixotic. How, then, can we ever hope to make an impression?

Illicit affairs have been with mankind all down history. However, when an affair touched Abelard and Heloise it would have been worth our detailed inquiry. Abelard was castrated for the affair by his church, and Heloise was packed off into a nunnery. But the affair had *symbolic* importance for the Church, philosophy, and society--and this would have given us an opportunity to dramatize a matter of historical significance. There are undoubtedly many comparable cases, even today, a collection of which would perhaps soften some of the sensualism of affairs. One, in my own knowledge, is of a schoolgirl friend, who became Headmistress of a school in England, and just over 30

years of age went to Alaska for a holiday, had an affair there, was pregnant, and continued her Headship up to the child's birth, in full view of the scandalized community. She brought the child up, continuing her teaching position. She apparently visited Alaska from time to time, and the offspring is now there, no doubt near its father, who has visited his mistress in England. When I saw her some years ago she was still being creative, fashioning an old house for her retirement, coloring her thinning hair a vibrant orange, the front of the house (as one might guess) facing north toward Alaska. Such is Erikson's plea for identity and creativity, in an illicit affair!

From our theoretical position, the concern is with *self*, or *not*. With "me," or "mine." There need be little doubt about the self-references of the "vain, disputatious, and contemptuous" Abelard (see Russell, 1945: 437), but much about his accusers! But so it is likely to be for all great decisions and disputations: Until we can be allowed to probe them for their self-reference, they are the real "great unknowns," the commonplace of subjectivity.

Subjectivity is all about us in every branch of human knowledge--in religion, politics, economics, literature, science, education, philosophy. Authorities speak with its tongue, and deny any theoretical and methodological advances that can put subjectivity in line with the universality of science. Objectivity, everyone believes, belongs to the "world outside." The denial of a place for science in the "world inside," our subjectivity, is a matter for the ultimate shame of modern science (Stephenson, 1978b). It is not merely that one wants to study *self* for its own sake, or because of the drama of this-or-that situation such as suggested for Abelard and Heloise, but for the more disturbing the profound reason, that complete ignorance of the ramifications of subjectivity, on an epochal level, across total cultures such as ours, is itself a terrifying phantasm. One has made the comparison before (Stephenson, 1978b) that at the birth of modern science, with Newton and Descartes, the authorities--legal, theological, philosophical, humanistic--supported the vast

ignorances and cruelties of demonical belief, the burnings for witchcraft, the debauchery of nunneries (Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun*, 1952)--in countless volumes of legal, humanistic and theological scholarship. During the present century, in one's own lifetime, millions of young men have been butchered in senseless wars, supported by the same blind subjective scholarship and its popular fiefdoms. Vast cruelties, terrible ignorances in our ideologies, and demonical beliefs are still everywhere about us. Only the softening sobbing of self-reference can ever hope to mitigate these horrors. Which is why we have to value Q studies, ultimately for the sake of human-kindness.

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Circumstances and experimental needs determine how far one proceeds in the random selection of statements. More usually the interest is in putting together a Q-sample in which the opinions within a category are as distinct and different from one another as possible. Thus...one would normally look through all available statements of the same category and would select three with the widest difference in context or meaning. The assumption is that a Q-sample so composed is a representative sample of the large number of opinions which are held about the complex under study. (Joye Patterson)

NEWS, NOTES & COMMENT

Out of Print!

The University of Chicago Press has declared William Stephenson's *The Study of Behavior* (Midway paperback edition, 1975) officially out of print. The Marketing Department at Chicago is currently appraising the possibility either of reissuing the book or relinquishing the copyright.

Recent and Forthcoming Scholarly Activities

William Stephenson, "Quantum Theory and Q-Methodology: Fictionalistic and Probabilistic Theories Conjoined," *Psychological Record*, spring 1983. For a summary, see the January 1983 issue of *OS*, pp. 59-60.

Robert L. Savage (U Arkansas) and Diane D. Blair, "Ideological Orientations and State Issue Responses: Are They Related?" Southern Political Science Association, Atlanta, October 1982; *idem.*, "Political Influ-