

Operant Subjectivity

Journal of the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity

October 2004/January 2005 • Volume 28 • Numbers 1/2

•	•		
•	•		
		<i>Leonard J. Barchak</i>	1
		An End to Ideology	
		<i>William Stephenson</i>	13
		Theory and Methodology for Esthetics	
		<i>Daun R. Anderson</i>	33
		Female Executives in Biotechnology: A Contextual Approach to Understanding Their Work Environments	
		<i>Russell C. Hurd</i>	58
		<i>Steven R. Brown</i>	
		The Future of the Q Methodology Movement	
		<i>James C. Rhoads, Dennis F. Kinsey, Mark N. Popovich, Will Focht, Michael Stricklin, Philip Christman, and Kai-Hung Fang</i>	76
		Commentaries on "The Future of the Q Methodology Movement"	
		<i>Russell C. Hurd and Steven R. Brown</i>	93
		In Place of a Rejoinder: Embracing Factors A, B, C, and D	
		• •	
		•	
		•	
		•	
		•	
		•	

The Future of the Q Methodology Movement

Russell C. Hurd

Steven R. Brown

Kent State University

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

Authors' contact details: rhurd@stark.kent.edu; sbrown@kent.edu

Read at the 20th annual conference of the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity, University of Georgia, Athens, 23-25 September 2004.

Operant Subjectivity, 2004/5 (Oct/Jan), 28 (1/2): 58-75.

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

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.	+4	-2	-2	+1
6 Emphasize and encourage teaching Q courses at many universities to cultivate future Q practitioners.	+2	+2	+4	+2
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.	-2	-3	+2	+1
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).	-2	0	-3	-4
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.	+3	+3	+1	-3
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.	-3	-3	-3	+3
11 Be proactive in recruiting and training the best of upcoming scholars.	0	+2	+3	0
12 Another issue is the need to take Q forward into the upsurge of qualitative and social constructionist theory and research.	-4	-1	0	+1
13 Continue to improve and make available the tools of PQMethod, PCQ, the Q-method web site, and the Q discussion list.	+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

References

- Bion, W.R. (1961). *Experiences in groups*. London: Tavistock.
- Brown, S.R. (1994). Scientific conferences and the communication of enlightenment. *Operant Subjectivity*, 17(3/4), 55-69.
- Piaget, J. & Inhelder, B. (1969). *The psychology of the child*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schmolck, P., & Atkinson, J. (2002). PQMethod (2.11). Computer program, available at <http://www.qmethod.org>.
- Stephenson, W. (1935, August 24). Technique of factor analysis. *Nature*, 136, 297.
- Stephenson, W. (1953). *The study of behavior: Q-technique and its methodology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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"

James C. Rhoads
Westminster College

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.

I am strongly associated with Factor A in Hurd and Brown's study, labeled "Orthodoxy Upheld" by the authors. This may be the first time in my life I have been accused of being orthodox with regard to anything, but in this case it is true. Hurd and Brown were correct, at least as far as this Q sorter is concerned, when they identified the two major strains in Factor A as expressing a "desire to maintain Stephenson's original conception of Q methodology" and a concern "about intellectual leadership." For me, these constituted the most salient themes in the Q sample.

I believe strongly that Q must remain bound to Stephenson's ideas. What is of prime importance, for me, is that Stephenson provided more than a technique—he provided a science of subjectivity. There were some sentiments expressed in the statements in the Hurd-Brown Q sample of the kind that implied "moving beyond" Stephenson, or that Q should be subsumed by other intellectual movements, e.g., "feminism, behaviorism, psychoanalysis, or social constructionism." I think we need to maintain Q's separate identity, and while certainly Q has been applied to the study of these movements (as well as others), Q should not be seen as fundamentally a "feminist methodology," or a "social constructionist methodology," etc. We need to pay careful attention to all aspects of Stephenson's ideas in order to see the synthetic whole, e.g., concourse theory, the significance of the single-case, his preference for centroid factor analysis and judgmental rotation, etc. Staying connected to these ideas (and many others) is, after all, the main purpose of both the Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity and the journal that the Society sponsors, *Operant Subjectivity*.

Critics of this approach see a certain level of cultism involved here, that this respect for Stephenson blinds Factor A types to exciting new intellectual possibilities as well as expanding the number of people who might be exposed to the methodology. Our healthy respect for Stephenson's contributions is a starting point, a recognition of the tradition within which our work is carried out. As Steven Brown said in remarks to the 1997 gathering of ISSSS:

Every science needs its geniuses—its Galileos, Newtons, and Einsteins; its Freuds, Skinners, and Spearman. These unusual individuals are somehow able to see through surface impressions to deeper realities beyond, but they only come around once in a great while, and the insights with which they provide us are invariably troubling to the world. And these troubling ideas would remain abnormal and generally unacceptable were it not for those who are capable of understanding the insights and making them comprehensible to others. Stephenson was of course the genius of our science: How subjectivity could be rescued from the realm of speculation and placed on a scientific footing was his insight, and I daresay that none of us in this room could have innovated Q methodology in a way even remotely approaching the way in which Stephenson did. By the same token, his idea of a subjective science

would likely have remained largely stillborn had it not been for the precious few in this room who were fast learners, who grasped the insights even though they could not have come up with these insights on their own, and then were able to explain these central and oftentimes difficult ideas to others. It is this ability of ours to recognize something important in advance of everybody else that serves to constitute us as the kind of community which Kuhn said was indispensable for a normal science (Brown, 1998, p. 99).

A second issue, related to the first, will arise when the generation of scholars who were Stephenson's graduate students conclude their careers. Many are still active, yet at some point, they will no longer be there to mentor countless numbers of Q practitioners (both novice and advanced), be the most effective spokespersons on behalf of Q, be willing to defend Q on all grounds (theoretical, factor-analytic, etc.), and serve as a direct tie to Stephenson's ideas. In short, our community will suffer a huge loss. I am particularly concerned about the leadership vacuum that will exist with the retirement of Steven Brown, who has been the primary heir of the Stephenson legacy and whose tireless work on behalf of Q will be missed beyond measure. I would hazard to guess that almost everyone reading this essay has at one time (or more!) sought his counsel while working on a Q project.

This potential crisis in leadership is, of course, an inevitable consequence of time. However, it will be all the more severe because of the significant contributions to the Q cause made by these scholars who learned directly from Stephenson. Although I am confident that new leaders will emerge, I worry that as direct contact with Stephenson's ideas become more remote, so will our commitment to advancing a true science of subjectivity.

Despite these concerns, I remain optimistic about the future of Q methodology. Our ranks are growing, and Q is making inroads in virtually every area of academic inquiry. It has been 70 years since William Stephenson penned his famous letter to *Nature*, spelling out his innovation, and his work continues to live on in the pages of this journal, and many other venues. To guarantee the future success of Q, we need only remember what attracted us to this methodology in the first place: its remarkable utility in exploring subjectivity in all its forms.

James Rhoads <jrhoads@westminster.edu> is in the Department of Political Science and Sociology, Westminster College, New Wilmington, PA 16172-0001, USA.

References

- Brown, S.R. (1998). Subjective science: normal and abnormal (continued). *Operant Subjectivity*, 21, 92-111.

Factor A: “Orthodoxy Upheld”

Dennis F. Kinsey

Syracuse University

When I was informed that James Rhoads and I were loaded on the same factor, I was not surprised. When I found out that we were loaded on the “Orthodoxy Upheld” factor, again I was not surprised. Our conversations at Q conferences have led me to believe that we have always been on the same factor. I have admired Jim’s thinking and research on the scientific study of subjectivity. His studies are well designed, rigorous and “true to Q,” which for me means “Orthodoxy Upheld.”

I have been attentive to Q methodology and William Stephenson’s ideas for years. As I indicated in the “In Memoriam” issue of *Operant Subjectivity* (January 1990), I followed Stephenson from the Department of Political Science to the Department of Psychology to the Department of Philosophy to hear everything he had to say during his 1980 visit to Kent State University. We have yet to explore the depth of Stephenson’s thinking and Q methodology.

Stephenson was ahead of his time by generations. I struggle to understand the scientific study of subjectivity, and to understand what we can really do with his methodology. To give up on his focus, in order to expand the community to those simply interested in using the technique, would be a mistake. If we do not uphold orthodoxy, I fear the erosion of this great innovation.

I am buoyed at seeing Q loyalists represented on Factors A, B and C in this study by Russ Hurd and Steve Brown. There is a strong commitment to Stephenson’s original conceptualization among Q methodologists.

Since I have had the advantage of reading Jim’s Factor A ruminations, I do not feel the need to ramble. Jim has waxed eloquent about our factor and I agree with all he has penned. I too remain optimistic about the future of Q. In fact, I am more optimistic now than I was before reading the Hurd and Brown study. I would like to thank Russ and Steve for this look at the future of Q at this important time.

Dennis F. Kinsey <dfkinsey@syr.edu> is Chair of the Department of Public Relations in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, 215 University Place, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-2100, USA.

References

Kinsey, D. (1990). In memoriam: William Stephenson. *Operant Subjectivity*, 13, 63-65.

Factor B: “Orthodoxy Applied and Promoted”

Mark N. Popovich

Ball State University

In “The Future of the Q Methodology Movement,” Hurd and Brown found four factor types, and I was a member on one of them. My responses found kinship with those on Factor B and we were labeled by the authors as those who would apply and promote the Q orthodoxy. We are considered to be loyal to the Stephenson tradition, and we believe that Q methodology is “uniquely effective for elucidating problems of all kinds.” There is no better evidence of the potential of Q to elucidate problems than the recently published index (Popovich, 2003) to the ISSSS journal *Operant Subjectivity*. Perusal of that index instructs by showing all of the topics and problems to which Q has already been applied. From advertising to discourse analysis to human rights to policy studies to women’s studies, Q methodology has provided the most versatile and powerful way to measure the subjectivity which underlies any topic. And these are topics that appear only in the journal index. It was reported in 1985, for example, that more than 1400 papers using Q methodology had been published (50th anniversary of Q methodology, 1985), and more than 240 dissertations had used the technique. (What those numbers are today would be interesting to know.) Such versatility is the enduring strength of the methodology, and it is a strength that can and should be exploited to spread the knowledge of Q.

One of the distinguishing statements for Factor B adherents was the following:

- (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.

One way to ensure the future of Q is to continue to use it. If each of us will try to publish one Q study in the journal which our respective colleagues think is the best journal in our field, then how can we not bring attention to the methodology and illustrate its value in measuring subjectivity? If you are unsure of your ability to publish in your prominent academic or trade journals, then make use of the annual Q conference to test your abilities. Prepare a paper for presentation, and be prepared to receive some constructive feedback from conference attendees that you can use to polish and strengthen your effort before submitting to that journal in which you desire to see your name listed as an author.

One value of the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity is the annual conference which the organization sponsors. My compatriots on Factor B believe that the annual ISSSS meeting plays a pivotal role in providing an opportunity for new Q scholars to come forward and learn about the traditions and history of Q and its creator William Stephenson. As

long as this organization devotes itself to maintaining the legacy of Stephenson as one focus, provides learning opportunities concerning the use and techniques of Q as a second focus, and nurtures the recruitment and training of young and upcoming scholars as a third, then the future of Q will be ensured in the coming years.

In another context concerning the future of mankind, O'Shea (1985, p. 22) said, ". . . those who plan for our future must know what we value, for that is where 'the future' begins." The same can be said about the future of Q. As part of that future, current ISSSS board members are contemplating the creation of a Stephenson Prize that will be given for an outstanding paper each year at the ISSSS convention. Details are still in the planning stages.

Two other statements which Factor B rated significantly were:

- (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 a solving problems and resolving conflicts) to practices of scholarship, research, and policy-making, its future is assured.

As a communications researcher, I continually seek practical ways to interject the concept of subjectivity into a field that is dominated by "objectivists," or those to whom we refer as R methodologists. Saddled with their statistical blinders seeking random or stratified samples so they can produce generalizations for large populations, they fail to notice that their attempts to measure attitudes, opinions, or perceptions by means of various kinds of scales only produce composite measures that calculate averages as the representative measure of the groups they study. The concept of the individual is lost in aggregate mean scores, and so is the measure of the subjectivity expressed by that individual who is intimately involved in a psychological event to produce that subjectivity. Smith (2001, p. 65) suggests:

All systems can only study actual events, regardless of what they claim they are studying. They cannot study minds, selves, processing, brain powers, instincts, drives, or consciousness. In addition, Q taps into events of human subjective behavior that can actually be studied.

These conclusions came to fruition, for example, in a study conducted by my colleagues and me (Popovich, Massé, & Pitts, 2003) when we took a 56-statement instrument created to measure media writer apprehension and converted the statements for Q sorting. In its original form, student reaction to the apprehension measure would produce mean scores for eight dimensions which were considered to be factors underlying the construct—writer apprehension. Some factors would be more prominent than others, and interpretations of the data would center on which of the factors would be more dominant for a specific group.

The Q investigators employed the Q sort in a pre-test/post-test strategy and administered the instrument to 13 summer class writing students enrolled in a

five-week beginning media writing course. One of the more interesting findings of this study was the behavior of one student, who ended up on his own factor after the post-tests results had been analyzed. In the pre-test sort, he joined a group of students (Factor I) who began the course with optimism and enthusiasm for writing. However, by the end of the course he discovered that writing about his own ideas and reaching an audience was more important to him than the factual writing he had been engaged in during the class. He became dissatisfied with the discipline required to be a factual writer, although he never lost his desire to be a writer.

This student's transformation as a writer would have gone unnoticed if Q methodology had not been utilized. The Q sort produced richer and deeper student feelings toward the writing apprehension statements, and this manipulation of the writing apprehension instrument created a more powerful tool to help media writing teachers assess and interpret their students' feelings about media writing.

During the past few years, I have partnered with other colleagues to measure subjectivity in their respective media fields, because the literature in those fields is dominated by R methodologists. We have assessed the feelings of seniors (older adult perceptions) and how they are portrayed in print advertising (Robinson, Gustafson, Popovich, & Frazier, 2003), employed Q as a tool in creating a strategic plan for a health care organization (K. Popovich, & M.N. Popovich, 2000), and assessed in three studies the attitudes of photo editors and male and female photographers concerning the increasing numbers of women entering the photojournalism field (Heinen & Popovich, 2004). All of these studies illustrate the fact that subjectivity is alive and well in our society, that it can be measured in any context, that Q methodology is unquestionably an appropriate measure of subjectivity, and that this valuable tool can be put to use effectively in both scholarly and practical ways to help us learn about ourselves in both social and professional settings.

I feel strongly, too, that the Hurd and Brown piece has contributed some significant suggestions which can be employed to guarantee the future of the Q methodology movement. Most of them suggest a growing need for a virtual community of Q practitioners. In my mind's eye, I see us standing with one foot in the old technology and one foot in the new technology as we try to disseminate the Q story. Along with the authors and other study participants, I think those of us on Factor B are convinced about the value and importance of continuing to have an annual meeting to bring together colleagues and practitioners of Q methodology. The social aspects of such an event cannot be overestimated, while the event provides a formal and legitimate platform for our colleagues to present their own interpretations of their Q methodology interests.

It is, however, in the exploration of an expanded virtual Q community that the future of the movement will survive. Because of little interest expressed in renewing historical ties to the University of Missouri, our new "home" must be

easily and quickly accessible to a growing number and diverse range of practitioners who are and will continue to be located in many different locations throughout the world. The quicker we can communicate with each other, the better. The quicker our ISSSS officers can talk with each other and communicate to the membership, the better. The quicker our members can access Q tutorials, *Operant Subjectivity*, and other Q resource lists and materials, the better. This virtual community should incorporate, with appropriate permissions, the Korean Q society and journal, and provide a platform for the *Journal of Human Subjectivity*, so that our own practitioners will have ready access to those publications. *Operant Subjectivity*, which is coming under new editorship, should be converted into an electronic journal, as soon as possible.

All of this suggests that ISSSS should be looking for a host for our virtual community, and all of our online resources should be moved to one central location. One web address should put our colleagues in touch with each other and all of the resources that can be made available.

In order to facilitate the development of our virtual Q community, I would suggest that a “Council of Elders” be chosen to promote and organized the structure of the community, oversee it, and provide wisdom and advice for the maintenance and expansion of the community. This group would be separate from the officers of the ISSSS, who have enough responsibility and duties to fulfill as officers of that organization. The ISSSS board should be expanded to provide representation to those parts of the world where the largest numbers of Q practitioners reside. One member of the “elders” should be on the ISSSS board, and one ISSSS officer should be a member of the Council of Elders in order to facilitate communication.

Hurd and Brown have provided a valuable service by initiating discussion about the future of the Q methodology movement. We find ourselves at a crossroads in the life of this loosely-knit organization, and now it is time to plan a new path that will take us to a new level—one that will be worldwide in scope and inclusive of everyone who wishes to participate.

Mark N. Popovich <mnpopovich@bsu.edu> is in the Department of Journalism, Ball State University, Muncie IN 47306-0485, USA.

References

- 50th anniversary of Q methodology (1985). *Operant Subjectivity*, 9, program insert.
- Heinen, K. & Popovich, M.N. (2004). *Male newspaper photographers' perceptions of women photojournalists*. Paper read to the Visual Communication Division at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Toronto.
- O'Shea, L. (1985). Value congruences shaping mankind's future. *Operant Subjectivity* 9, 8-24.

- Popovich, K., & Popovich, M.N. (2000). Use of Q methodology for hospital strategic planning. *Journal of Healthcare Management*, 45, 405-414.
- Popovich, M.N (Guest Ed.) (2003). Author and Subject Index, Volumes 1-25. *Operant Subjectivity* 26, 4-52.
- Popovich, M.N., Massé, M.H., & Pitts, B.J. (2003). Revisiting student writer apprehension: A new interpretation of the Riffe and Stack's Writing Apprehension Measure. *Operant Subjectivity* 26, 88-111.
- Robinson, T., Gustafson, R.L., Popovich, M.N., & Frazier, C. (2003). Older adults' perceptions of offensive senior stereotypes in magazine advertisements: Results of a Q method analysis. *Educational Gerontology*, 29, 503-519.
- Smith, N.W. (2001). Centrisms, noncentrisms, and universal Q. *Operant Subjectivity*, 24, 52-67.

Factor B: “Orthodoxy Applied and Promoted”

Will Focht

Oklahoma State University

My perspective on the future of Q methodology most closely corresponds to that identified by Hurd and Brown as Factor B—“Orthodoxy Applied and Promoted.” As I read their explication of the four perspectives, I indeed feel close affinity with the Factor B description, which advocated the need to apply Q methodology to social problems and present the results of these applications to both Q and non-Q audiences. However, I also identify in some measure with the perspective revealed by Factor D—labeled “Beyond Orthodoxy.” This latter association is confirmed by a Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.34 between my sort and the common sort captured by Factor D. This brief essay will attempt to explain my view of the future of Q methodology in light of these two perspectives.

Importance of Stephenson's Q Orthodoxy

I believe that it is important to honor and discuss Stephenson's theory and understanding of Q methodology. In particular, I appreciate (sometimes in awe) Steven Brown's leadership in preserving Q “orthodoxy.” A shared understanding of Q sustains our community. Q researchers in particular appreciate the importance of language and meaning; when we use terms such as operantcy, subjectivity, concourse, abduction, and representativeness we must know what these terms mean in Stephenson's theory. The “slow reading” of Stephenson's *The Study of Behavior* that Brown led about 10 years ago was particularly helpful in developing a consensus understanding of Q. I recommend that this effort be repeated every few years to remind ourselves of—and properly introduce novices to—Stephenson's conception of Q.

Importance of Evolution (But Not Devolution) of Q

Contrary to the Factor A perspective labeled “Orthodoxy Upheld,” I do not believe that the future of Q is threatened by discussions about how Q should be conceived and practiced. I share the sentiment of a commenter in the Hurd and Brown study who noted, “If we all simply accepted what those who have gone before have thought and made a decision to remain ‘pure’ to their ideas, there would [have been] no Stephenson.”

In my view, we should not only understand Stephenson’s Q but also explore its evolution as the science and phenomenology of subjectivity advance. For example, I am intrigued by the constructivist notions of Q as advanced by some in Europe. I particularly enjoyed the presentations by Steven Brown on Newton’s Fifth Rule and the rejoinder by Wendy Stainton-Rogers at the 2002 Q conference in Durham, England (as well as the private discussions with colleagues from the Netherlands afterward), which still motivates a search for integration. I do not mean to suggest, however, that we should devolve Q with regressive R-like interpretations.¹ We should stand against such interpretations.² However, I do mean to suggest that we should embrace opportunities for advancing Q theory and extending its application. I support the continuation of our epistemological discussions of subjectivity. Q praxis is strengthened by coherent rigorously-conceived Q theory.

Importance of Expanded Application of Q

One effective defense of Q against R-based criticism is the demonstration of its power to analyze policy controversies and stimulate the formulation of consensus policy outputs. I have found that Q is ideally suited to getting beneath the superficiality of conflicting policy positions to reveal the complex character of political concerns and preferences. I have found that policy conflicts are rarely veridical (involving bipolar factors) but rather orthogonal with areas of common agreement which can form the bases for developing consensus. Both policy dialogue participants and policymakers have expressed their appreciation of the use of Q to reduce, if not eliminate, chronic controversy.

This use of Q is but one example of how its practical application is not only useful in solving addressing real-world problems but also a powerful device for recruiting others to Q. Expanding application of Q to other arenas will increase further its acceptance and appreciation. Shouting Q’s virtues from the sidelines, it seems to me, is much less effective.

¹ It seems to me that the arguments presented on behalf of the “California” school of Q represent a step back toward R while the constructivist arguments advanced by the so-called “British” or “European” school represent a progression further away from R.

² Like a former smoker who finds others’ smoking intolerable, a former biologist/engineer like me finds unacceptable others’ insistence that R methodology and quantitative methods are the only valid means to investigate social phenomena. Although I agree that R methodology is important to generalizing social science research findings to populations, I believe that such research must first be grounded using methodologies such as Q

Advantage of Q in Bridging Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies

I have found that Q’s incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative methods serves to bridge these two research traditions. I continue to marvel at its ability to convince both camps that Q deserves consideration. Qualitative researchers, of course, identify with the analysis of concourses while the quantitative community identifies with the use of factor analysis to reveal underlying patterns. The magical nexus between these two components is the Q sort. When skeptics reconceptualize the Q sort as a link between qualitative and quantitative methods, their appreciation of Q methodology grows dramatically.

A Reason for Optimism

I remain optimistic about the future of Q. I believe that Q leaders will emerge naturalistically; we do not need a “cult of Q” to ordain new ministers. As long as we understand Stephenson’s Q, remain vigilant against R tendencies, adopt a non-reactionary posture to new ideas, engage in civil and informed debates, and demonstrate the power of Q to analyze and solve real-world problems, I expect that Q will continue to grow in stature and application.

Perhaps in part because I am not among those who had the privilege of studying under Stephenson, I am not as concerned about threats to his legacy. His contributions will survive through the ISSSS and our continued discussions, presentations, and publications. Nevertheless, I believe that we can and should build on his legacy to advance Q theory and its application. After all, Einstein’s special and general theories of relativity did not render Newton’s theories of motion and gravity irrelevant; rather, they merely extended them to realms not contemplated by Newton. It seems to me that the evolution of Q can also extend the work of Stephenson into realms not contemplated by him, and thereby pay homage to his work.

Will Focht <wfocht@okstate.edu> is in the Department of Political Science, Oklahoma State University, 519 Math Sciences, Stillwater, OK 74078-1060.

Factor C: “Orthodoxy Reinforced”

Michael Stricklin

Federal University of Piauí, Brazil

The factor structure, as reported and discussed by Hurd and Brown, makes sense to me because, as is most often the case with a successful Q study, the communication scene has been untangled without harming any of the strands. Additionally, it makes sense to characterize the four resultant factors in terms of conventional standards, the appropriate usage of the word “orthodoxy” in this instance, because Q methodology has come to be, over a period of seven decades, a collection of theoretical principles and standards of practice. Finally, it makes sense to show how members of our

community of practitioners, now entering into a third generation, are active in pursuing our various objectives.

This matter of generations is central for me. I remember vividly the moment Steve Brown told me he would no longer teach a doctoral-level seminar on Q. I was shaken by the news; it came at about the same time as a realization that the eldest members of the second generation of the Q movement were at or near retirement age—Donald Brenner, Wilma Crumley, Joy Patterson, Keith Sanders, Won Ho Chang, Albert Talbott, and Martin Brouwer, among others. My first thoughts upon hearing Steve's news were: Who will teach Q? Where? How often? I remember realizing that the younger members of the second generation, i.e., those of us who learned Q from Stephenson first-hand, were not in positions that would lead any of us to take up these tasks. Why not? Most of us, namely those from the University of Iowa, had gone our separate ways, mostly in institutions which emphasize undergraduate instruction. While we were using Q in our own projects and teaching a little about it to our students, I think the doctoral seminar is the appropriate level for growing Q. I think this is a relevant point especially because our intellectual claims are not in good order. I commented on this publicly at the 2000 Q Conference in Tulsa in a paper titled "On the Reality of the Quantum-Communicability Question," in which I tried to draw attention to the community's fragility on at least three institutional dimensions: (1) little recognition and support of doctoral seminars; (2) no contemporary book-length treatments of the methodology; and (3) no systematic inquiries into the philosophic grounding of Q. As they say on Madison Avenue, I ran up these flags, but no one saluted. Now, I must take responsibility for the brevity of my presentation that day, and I plead guilty to the charge that since I did not write the paper up for publication my ideas remain only "nice to know." Nevertheless, our state of fragility continues without much of a community-wide strategy for setting it right. I hope we take to heart the lessons laid bare in the Hurd and Brown factors.

With the above in mind, I want now to comment on the factor structure as a whole. It is a truism in the literature of sociology that a crisis occurs in the third generation, the generation our community is entering. The factor structure reported by Hurd and Brown supports this notion, and they have named the factors wisely: Orthodoxy Applied and Promoted, Orthodoxy Upheld, Orthodoxy Reinforced, Beyond Orthodoxy. Since Q methodology is not a theory so much as a new way of knowing, it is not governed or controlled; it is neither strictly scientific nor artistic; it is a way of inquiry more along the lines of a school of thought. We lay claim to a new way of knowing, a way of seeking knowledge in a way more legitimate than we believe possible via any other approach. On this basis alone I am able to accept the various senses of orthodoxy laid out for us with much precision and detail in this Q study. The factor structure gives us a lot to think about and shows us in detail what we have to accomplish. Each point of view can be taken as a call for action, and I am able to accept the sense of Factor C—

Orthodoxy Reinforced—because the actions I believe are required now by our community are of greatest importance, especially those related to improving our intellectual and institutional infrastructure.

Yet, one must keep in mind that while the tasks indicated by Factor C are essential to keeping the community going, they are something like rebuilding a sewer system: the dirty work lies largely out of public view.

Michael Stricklin <mstrick44@yahoo.com> is Emeritus Professor, University of Nebraska, and Visiting Professor, Department of Social Communication, Federal University of Piauí, Brazil

Factor C: "Orthodoxy Reinforced"

Philip Christman

Malone College

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was the originator of the phrase "knowledge is power," which, in the advancement of Q in the scientific community, one might construe to mean to disperse sound research, combined with education, as the primary way to gain credibility within the walls of higher education, where Q has yet to earn its rightful place as a research methodology. Since its introduction to the science community in 1935 (Stephenson, 1935), Q has struggled to gain that acceptance as evidenced by the number of universities that offer, even require, traditional R-methodological courses compared to those few that offer a course on Q methodology. Further support on the lack of acceptance of Q in the scientific research community can be found when one examines interest in either topic via attendance at professional conferences. Thousands hold membership and will annually participate in traditional research methodological conferences (with, sadly, few presentations on Q methodology). In comparison, there are approximately 130 members of the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity (ISSSS), which is devoted to the support of Q research (Hurd & Brown, 2005), and less than that number typically attend the international conference sponsored by ISSSS.

Gaining recognition within the scientific community, and thereby assuring the stability and advancement of the movement, does not appear to be as simple as stating that Q is an important methodology in science's attempt to further knowledge of the world and individuals. The study of subjectivity is not that simple, nor has the study of human nature been so easy to analyze. Some in the scientific community of higher education have erroneously defaulted to the belief that subjectivity can only be studied within the qualitative paradigm, typically considered to be an arduous and oftentimes singular effort, in contrast to quantitative research where numbers of participants are significantly larger. Stephenson, and subsequently ISSSS, have discovered and advanced a valid third alternative.

So why has Q not caught hold within the scientific community? There are at least three plausible explanations. First, Q's research methodology is flawed and therefore invalid in the scientific community's systematic paradigms to collect, interpret, and understand data. Second, while Q may be a valid way to study subjectivity, the scientific community is already entrenched in its paradigm (qualitative research) as the best way to study subjectivity. This view, at best, might incorrectly place Q methodology into this camp. Finally, Q is, indeed, a valid research paradigm that simply has not yet found its place within the walls of the scientific community: it is just a matter of time. While much has been written on the first two points of consideration, I would nominate the final explanation is the most plausible, and would further assert that Q should be more widely taught within the scientific community as a valid research design. While positive strides have been noted, and Q is beginning to emerge in certain statistical books, thanks in part to the tireless efforts of Steven Brown and others, the methodology is still not widely known or accepted.

In an effort to further explore Q methodology's future, Hurd and Brown designed a 40-item Q sample that was made available to the current ISSSS membership, and 42 sorts were subsequently received and analyzed. That research produced four factors that the authors felt were best interpreted under the rubric of orthodoxy: Orthodoxy Upheld, Orthodoxy Applied and Promoted, Orthodoxy Reinforced, and Beyond Orthodoxy.

Orthodoxy Reinforced (Factor C), similar to Orthodoxy Applied and Promoted (Factor B), accurately presents the importance of strengthening Q's position within the academy by advancing its fundamental postulates. This is no easy task as changing the paradigm of the scientific community has always been a daunting task. However, it is the only way. To secure the future of Q will require a shift in the paradigm within higher education: it must become more widely accepted across all of higher education. According to Kuhn (1970), it is awareness of anomaly that plays a role in the emergence and acceptance of new theory and new ways to study behavior. Q methodology is a unique way of looking at behavior, and the more diligent ISSSS can be in its mission, via text books, training and enlisting new scholars, and the advancement of sound research, the greater will be the acceptance of Q in the academy. Knowledge is power. The best way to position Q is to develop a consistent, systematic approach to educate the scientific community.

Philip Christman <pchristman@malone.edu> is in the Office of Advising and Testing, Malone College, 515 25th Street NW, Canton, OH 44709, USA.

References

Hurd, R. C., & Brown, S. R. (2005). The future of the Q methodology movement. *Operant Subjectivity*, this issue.

Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stephenson, W. (1935). Technique of factor analysis. *Nature*, 136, 297.

Factor D: "Beyond Orthodoxy"

Kai-Hung Fang

University of Pittsburgh

If I remember correctly, it was an afternoon in early May. I had failed my in first attempt to defend my dissertation proposal about a month earlier, and sat in a meeting with my advisor. The major concern of my committee was that I did not have an adequate methodology for conducting my research and answering my research questions. There had been at least four meetings before this one, and I could not find any method that would work for me. I felt hopeless and frustrated, and was beginning to wonder whether I could ever complete my proposal. The discussion with my advisor went on, and at one point he asked whether I had ever considered using Q methodology. I remembered having read about Q methodology in Kerlinger's (1986) book, but beyond that I knew nothing more. However, I promised my advisor that I would look into it and see if it would work for me. This is how I came to use Q methodology and began to learn more about it.

My personal experience has influenced my view about how Q methodology should progress from this point. I had difficulty finding a methodology for my dissertation, which was aimed at understanding why a policy consensus could not be reached in Taiwan on the issue of fiscal decentralization. It seemed to me in retrospect that there was a perfect match between my research topic and Q methodology. Had I been better informed about Q methodology from my methodology classes, from articles applying it, or from my colleagues using it, I would have been more familiar with it and more readily drawn to it as my research methodology. Unfortunately, I knew little about Q methodology and it did not even occur to me as a possible solution to my problem until my advisor asked me if I had considered it.

As a student of public policy analysis, I quickly discovered that Q methodology is a powerful methodological tool for helping researchers explore and understand the views held by stakeholders. Moreover, by comparing, contrasting, and evaluating the different opinions at issue through the statement arrays identified by factor analysis, information revealed through Q methodology enables researchers to find the issues at stake, the differences in stakeholders' views, and issues that have the potential for providing a basis for reaching a policy consensus. Based on my limited experience of using Q methodology, I find that it also provides a unique opportunity for researchers to interact with participants while doing Q sorting. When conducting the Q sorting on a face-to-face and one-on-one basis, researchers not only learn

participants' opinions about an issue in the form of statement arrays, but also obtain in-depth information about the phenomenon studied through interpretation, evaluation, and comments made by participants about each Q statement. After I witnessed the results of the data analysis from my first Q study (and, unfortunately, my only one so far), I was extremely surprised to see how powerful the methodology is in the sense that the factors which had emerged made perfect sense to me.

After I realized the extent to which Q methodology can help an analyst to conduct policy inquiries, I was led back to my earlier question concerning why it was that I did not know about Q methodology earlier. In fact, this question needs to be reframed: Why have so many students like me not realized the power of Q methodology and applied it in the conduct of their own studies? I have studied in two separate public policy schools in the United States, and I am sure that I am not alone among my fellow graduate students at these two schools in terms of knowing about Q methodology. There may be several answers to this question. For example, almost no methodology books devote as much space to Q methodology (if they even mention it at all) as they do to other research methods. In fact, the new edition of Kerlinger's book has dropped the chapter on Q methodology (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). In addition, I have seen few published articles that have used Q methodology in research on policy problems. Of course, there are not in the first place that many scholars in the field of public policy or public administration to consider employing Q methodology as one of the possible methods in their investigations. Consequently, professors do not teach Q methodology in policy schools and their students therefore hardly have a chance to see what Q methodology can do for the policy analyst.

With these thoughts in mind, there is little doubt that this methodology has enormous potential to become widely used in the conduct of policy research. In order to enhance the potential of Q methodology in my field of study, there are three things that I would suggest being done: creating a Q textbook, improving Q's practical value, and increasing its recognition. A detailed, step-by-step textbook is the first thing needed. The information that I have gathered from the Q-Method website and Q-Method listserv has been useful and helpful. The "Q Methodology Tutorial" (Brown, 1991/1992) and Political Subjectivity (Brown, 1980) are detailed and easy to follow. As a result, I would not argue that it would be difficult for a determined novice to learn and use Q methodology without a textbook. What I would argue, however, is that there would be at least two advantages to learning and applying Q methodology were a textbook available. First, it would be more likely to have classes teaching Q methodology were a textbook handy. If more classes were available for students to take, the more likely it would be that they would apply Q methodology in their research. Second, it would be easier to convince committee members that Q methodology is appropriate for master's theses or doctoral dissertations were there a book or even a few of them to show to the committee. Moreover, when questions are raised about the procedures

associated with Q methodology, a textbook would definitely help students to make a strong case to their advisors and committee members.

Improving the practical value of Q methodology for policy researchers is the key to attracting more people to it. Wildavsky (1969), Lindblom (1959), Kingdon (1984), and others have taught us that policymaking is a political process by its nature. By understanding the policy process as a political process, Q methodology becomes attractive to policy analysts because it can help them to understand the views of different stakeholders, identify the differences in their opinions, and find a policy consensus that is agreeable to all. Then a policy proposal is more likely to be developed, accepted, and implemented, thereby leading to the solution of real policy problems. This also means that Q methodology has to go beyond the identification of factors and to emphasize how data can be used to find the policy issues at stake, differences and consensus among stakeholders, and eventually acceptable policy proposals for policy implementation. In addition, developing a better understanding concerning the limitations of Q methodology and the extent to which it can be used to conduct policy analysis are also important considerations in making sure that Q methodology is not being used improperly.

Finally, increasing the recognition of Q methodology means that Q methodology needs to be promoted to get more people to understand and realize its power in conducting research. Scholars applying Q methodology should be encouraged to present their works at conferences in their fields of study, and then to try to get their manuscripts published in peer reviewed journals. In addition, efforts should also be made by advocates of Q methodology to reach international audiences. At least based on my experience in my home country of Taiwan, students show some resistance to reading materials in English. Offering workshops in these foreign countries, or translating learning materials into foreign languages, will provide additional incentives for them to learn the methodology.

Q methodology should not be treated merely as a methodological tool, but as a procedure that can lead to the solution of social and policy problems. Although there are still some methodological issues that need to be resolved, the next step should not be to constrain methodological development. When more people know about and learn how to use the methodology, new ideas about developing it and new ways of applying it will evolve as well. Then we will be better equipped to deal with a vaster array of policy problems.

Kai-Hung Fang <khfang@seed.net.tw> is in the Department of Public Affairs, Ming Chuan University, No. 250, Sec. 5, Zhongshan N. Road., Shilin District, Taipei City 11103, Taiwan.

References

- Brown, S.R. (1980). *Political subjectivity: Applications of Q methodology in political science*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

- Brown, S.R. (1991/1992). A Q methodology tutorial. Retrieved June 20, 2006 from Q Methodology Archive: <http://facstaff.uww.edu/cottlec/QArchive/Primer1.html>. (Published with revisions as: A primer on Q methodology. *Operant Subjectivity*, 1993, 16, 91-138.)
- Kerlinger, F.N. (1986). *Foundations of behavioral research* (3rd ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Kerlinger, F.N., & Lee, H.B. (2000). *Foundations of behavioral research* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Kingdon, J.W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Lindblom, C.E. (1959). The science of muddling through. *Public Administration Review*, 19, 79-88.
- Wildavsky, A.B. (1969). Rescuing policy analysis from PPBS. *Public Administration Review*, 29, 189-202.

In Place of a Rejoinder: Embracing Factors A, B, C, and D

Russell C. Hurd and Steven R. Brown

Kent State University

The term *rejoinder* carries the connotation of coming back at an opponent with rebuttals and counter-arguments, but this seems out of place given that authors and commentators are all Q-methodological well-wishers who differ, if at all, in strategy preferences while no doubt recognizing value in alternative strategies. These differences are *complementarities*, and were referred to by Stephenson (1987) as *decision structures* pointing to alternative courses of action, all of which were viable. Rather than ripostes and repartees, therefore, let us conclude these exchanges by emphasizing the strengths of their convergence.

Factor A reminds us of important past achievements and of the need to preserve our understandings of William Stephenson's revolutionary ideas, and where possible to institutionalize them through curricular development and leadership so that they do not slip away. Whereas the danger in following this path is that we could end up merely defending an increasingly irrelevant scholasticism, the opposite side of the fine line would be gradually to forget Q's *raison d'être* and to witness the gradual deterioration of intellectual and procedural coherence.¹ Q conferences in the past have often hosted panels focused on one or another of Stephenson's writings as a reminder of the key principles that it contains, and the Q-Method discussion list often carries similar reminders. Now that *The Study of Behavior* has gone out of print and the University of Chicago Press has relinquished the copyright, it will be important to preserve it in electronic form and make it available to the widening Q community. Worthwhile initiatives such as these will find a sympathetic ear among those comprising Factor A, and we would expect representatives of this point of view to take the lead in such projects for the benefit of all.

If there is any tension among the four factors it is likely between the orthodoxy of Factor A and those comprising Factor D who wish to go beyond that orthodoxy. Anecdotal comments reported in the lead article indicated that Factor D would be disinterested in an association whose members dwelled on the past and reified foundational ideas while ignoring opportunities to explore

¹ A recent example of the latter is provided by Billard (1999), who has valiantly endeavored to help Q methodology out of what she regards as its undemocratic past by recommending that statements be obtained from participants, that participants be informed of the purposes of the study and be encouraged to ask questions about the Q sorting, and that their views be taken into consideration in factor interpretation. It does not take a defender of orthodoxy to recognize these recommendations as routine components of a typical Q study that only someone out of touch with conventional practices could fail to notice.

new perspectives and pursue innovative applications;² however, it is hard to believe that any of the other factors (Factor A included) would desire an association of this kind either. An obvious strategy from the Factor D vantage point would be to promote applications not only in public policy, as the Factor D spokesman explicitly suggested, but in any and all fields as energy and interest permit. In recent years, Q has been increasingly applied in environmental and health studies, areas in which it had not been applied previously, but has not yet been discovered in areas such as literature, economics, sociology, business, engineering, art, and the natural sciences. Education, too, has been slow to warm to Q methodology except in select academic centers. Factor D also expresses a wish for more practitioner-oriented and how-to-do-it books, manuals, and articles, which can obviously have great impact on legitimizing the methodology, especially in the eyes of doctoral committees.

“Consolidate, coordinate, and promote” might express the operational principle of Factor B, whose representatives have provided a list of suggestions for taking the movement to “a new level.” Some of these suggestions are new and some of them overlap with suggestions from other factors—e.g., bring Q-related publications and electronic activities under one roof, expand applications, facilitate intellectual evolution, recruit new scholars, create new learning opportunities at the annual meetings, etc.³ Factor B is interested in marshaling and streamlining resources so as to enhance offensive capabilities. In this spirit, due acknowledgement is given to the so-called orthodoxy—a “Council of Elders” is even recommended—but not at the expense of intellectual evolution and embracing new developments. In dialectical terms, exponents of Factor B are the synthesizers who are interested in taking stock of diverse strands and mobilizing them into a more effective and coordinated thrust.

Factor C, like B, emphasizes promotion, but more in the way of outreach and with emphasis on strengthening the academic and scientific infrastructure. C seems particularly concerned with Q’s lack of visibility and recognition at university and disciplinary levels; and, even more than Factor D, endorses new book-length treatments to jump-start the momentum that has flagged with the passing of *The Study of Behavior* and *Political Subjectivity*, now long out-of-print and generally unavailable. Factor C is especially sensitive to the fact that much long-term enthusiasm for Q is sponsored by freshly-minted Ph.D.s whereas many advocates are in institutions whose primary mission is teaching

² Factor D would find itself in agreement with Alfred North Whitehead’s famous aphorism: “A science which hesitates to forget its founders is lost.”

³ It is not difficult to conceive of a Q sample comprised of such recommendations, as well as others that might be systematically gathered, which could then be submitted to willing participants who could Q sort them in terms of their likely positive impact on the future of the Q methodology movement. Such a project is one for which we would expect the greatest degree of enthusiasm from Factor B.

(or are in the private sector where studies are proprietary). Factor C, in turn, shares A’s concern with philosophical grounding and shows a self-confident willingness to take on the scientific community and its prevailing paradigms insofar as these privilege R methodology and exclude the study of subjectivity. Factor C also demonstrates a willingness to take on the growing qualitative community and to offer Q as an alternative to the quantitative-qualitative orthodoxy. Like Factor B, Factor C offers specific recommendations for moving things along.

As noted initially, there’s hardly an assertion above—all paraphrased from the factor spokesmen—that individuals in the other factors would not find congenial. Factor A, for instance, for all of its presumed devotion to orthodoxy, would not be opposed to the kind of promotional and outreach schemes advocated by Factors B and C, nor to D’s recommendation that Q remain open to the newer developments—only that they be evaluated in relationship to the basic principles of Q methodology. Nor, presumably, is there any overt or latent hostility toward Stephenson’s ideas on the part of those comprising Factor D. There are, of course, bound to be some points of contention between and among all of the factors—this is an intrinsic feature of orthogonality—but there are no polarities. Pending evidence to the contrary, therefore, we hope that we are not concluding this fruitful dialogue in an overly optimistic way by suggesting that the outcome of this exercise has been to render (with a degree of clarity attributable to Q methodology itself) the different avenues available along with an obvious division of labor to which tasks can be assigned and from which leadership can be expected. Equally important, this exercise has resulted in a viable list of potential projects that, if realized, could not but help strengthen Q methodology to the benefit of those who utilize it. All that remains is implementation. So, as Stephenson was fond of saying, “Get on with it!”

References

- Billard, S. (1999). How Q methodology can be democratized. *Feminism & Psychology, 9*, 357-366.
- Stephenson, W. (1987). How to make a good cup of tea. *Operant Subjectivity, 10*, 37-57.