

PRESENT AT THE BIRTH

PAUL HORST
JOHN STALNAKER

Editors Note: On Monday evening, June 2, 1985 following the annual banquet of the Psychometric Society in Nashville, TN, Lyle Jones moderated a discussion with two of the three living founders of the Society, Paul Horst and John Stalnaker. Albert Kurtz planned to attend, but a recent automobile accident prevented him from traveling. They commented upon the events in 1935 and 1936 leading to the establishment of the Psychometric Society, the Psychometric Corporation and *Psychometrika*. The following summary of their remarks was prepared by me and edited by Horst, Stalnaker, and Jones. I have included some of Horst's recollections that were printed earlier in *SCORE*, the newsletter of Division 5, Evaluation and Measurement, of the American Psychological Association.

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In introducing the founders, Jones noted that the first organizational meeting of the Society occurred in February of 1935 and the first professional meeting occurred in September 1935, in connection with the convention of the American Psychological Association. In the Psychometric Society's first year, the president was L. L. Thurstone, the secretary was Paul Horst, the treasurer was Jack Dunlap, and the chairman of the membership committee was John Stalnaker. The editorial council consisted of Thurstone, chairman, Horst and Albert Kurtz, editors, and Marion Richardson, managing editor. The editorial board was noteworthy for its great breadth of interest, and its international and multidisciplinary character. For the first volume of *Psychometrika*, the board included Elmer Culler, E. E. Cureton, Jack Dunlap, Max Englehart, J. P. Guilford, Harold Guliksen, K. J. Holzinger, Paul Horst, Clark Hull, Truman Kelley, Albert Kurtz, Quinn McNemar, Nicholas Rashevsky, Marion Richardson, Philip Rulon, Charles Spearman, William Stephenson, Samuel Stouffer, Godfrey Thomson, L. L. Thurstone, and S. S. Wilks. (See *Psychometrika*, 1, December, 1936.)

Horst and Stalnaker then addressed the events surrounding the "birth" of *Psychometrika*. They noted that more systematic accounts had been given by Dunlap (1942, 1961), and decided that a feeling for the intellectual atmosphere of those heady times could best be evoked by general reminiscence and a few anecdotes.

Horst noted that the surface facts belied the chaotic activity and divergence of views that attended the founding. He recalled psychologist Edwin Guthrie's answer to a colleague's query about how he liked his administrative job as executive vice president of the University of Washington. Guthrie compared himself to an old man at the end of the Edmunds pier jutting out into Puget Sound. When a friend asked him what he was doing out there, the old man spread his hands toward the hundreds of seagulls swooping in the sky and said, "I am administering the seagulls." Horst and Kurtz often felt that they were administering seagulls as they steered their idea through the flights of academic and professional colleagues.

In the early 1930's, Horst and Kurtz were at the U.S. Civil Service Commission working on measurement problems in industry. Stalnaker and Marion Richardson were in Chicago with L. L. Thurstone. Jack Dunlap, who was in New York at Fordham, was included because as editor of the *Journal of Educational Psychology* (JEDP), he knew a lot

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about publishing a technical journal. At that time, the JEdP was the only outlet for technical publications in psychological measurement. In fact, Horst briefly entertained the notion of purchasing that journal. In *SCORE*, Horst wrote, "I was making the lavish salary of thirty-two hundred dollars a year and, knowing nothing about the cost of publishing or the ownership of publications, it did not seem unreasonable that I could make a deal with the owner of *Ed Psych*. It was published by a Mr. Bucholz in Baltimore, only several hours drive from Washington. In those days we worked Saturday mornings, but on a Saturday afternoon I drove up to Baltimore to find Mr. Bucholz. I located him in a sort of shed in the back of his home where, in an inkstained apron, he was apparently working on getting out an issue of the journal. I told him of my interest and asked whether he might consider selling the journal. He answered with an unequivocal "no" and turned back to his work, just as though I were no longer there—immediately after which I was not."

Horst recalls that he and Kurtz then set out to start a new journal that would publish work in quantitative methods. Kurtz proposed establishing a professional society mainly in order to have a group of captive subscribers to the journal. Kurtz also devised the plan for charging libraries double the subscription rate and offering to provide the library with a second copy of the journal on request.

Horst and Kurtz did not trust the objectivity of the well-established professors in the reviewing process. Kurtz suggested maintaining anonymity of authors of manuscripts during the reviewing process, now called "blind reviewing." The idea was to put the well-established professors on a par with the new, young contributors. Kurtz devised an elaborate rating sheet on which reviewers evaluated each manuscript. These policies are still in force, in some form.

One further scheme was to have a department of the journal devoted to "half-baked" ideas, where authors could establish priority on an idea before working it out in detail. They could also get some credit for proposing a problem that they could not solve. The idea lay dormant until Bert Green started the Notes and Comments section of the journal in 1972.

In *SCORE*, Horst wrote "During the early stages of the development of the journal and the society, I happened to know a member of the Proctor & Gamble advertising department whose younger sister was studying art at the University of Cincinnati at the time. I drew up a brief prospectus of my own ideas for the journal and offered a prize of \$30 to the budding young artists for the best cover design for the proposed journal. I got back a number of varied and imaginative responses which I found very useful in stimulating support for the project. I don't recall who won the prize or just how the winner was chosen. But it isn't particularly relevant, since none of these designs was ultimately adopted.

"By this time, several of us had elicited Thurstone's enthusiastic support of the project. Knowing that his clout in getting the journal under way was greater than that of all the rest of us put together, we were more than willing to give him a free hand in anything he was willing to do. One thing he offered to do was to design the cover for the journal, which he did ...

"We were fortunate in the beginning to find a good and inexpensive printer, who had been just recently discovered by the newly-founded journal *Econometrica*. His company was the Dentan Printing Company, in Colorado Springs, which contracted to print our journal for \$3.25 per page, including tables, equations, and figures. Those days are, of course, long gone."

Horst recalls, "Getting papers together for the first issue of *Psychometrika* took some doing. Thurstone was, of course, the first president of the Society and he had prepared and given his presidential address. It would seem logical that this address should be published in the first issue of *Psychometrika*, and he was more than willing that it should be. Some of us felt rather strongly, however, that it would be lost in the first issue of an obscure new journal and that it would be best for the prestige and promotion of the

fledgling enterprise if it were published in a widely read and respected journal like *Science*, the official publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Thurstone did accede to our wishes but I think quite reluctantly. I have often wished since that we had published his address in the first issue of *Psychometrika*. It would have pleased him and been a great tribute to the first, if not all subsequent, issues of the journal."

"At Proctor & Gamble we had been working with the applications of the new factor analytic methods to personnel data. I had learned of a new iterative procedure that Hotelling at Columbia had developed for finding the principal axis factors of a correlation matrix, and we were using it at Proctor & Gamble. I saw Hotelling personally at Columbia during this time, to persuade him to contribute his manuscript for the maiden issue of *Psychometrika*. I asked him whether he could give us a manuscript on his new method. He at first was markedly cool to the idea and I suspected that he was not eager to conceal his production under the cover of a dubious new journal. I then told him that I very much wanted this method published in this first issue and that, if he did not feel he could do it, I would reluctantly publish the method myself and of course give him full credit. With this, he decided to provide the manuscript himself (Hotelling, 1936), and we remained good friends as long as he lived."

Stalnakar was reminded of the duet from *Gigi* ("I remember it well") in which Maurice Chevalier and Hermione Gingold reminisce about their date long ago. He recalls the April moon, she recalls that it was June and there was no moon, and the remaining details are equally disputed; still they agree that they had a wonderful time. Likewise, Stalnakar recalls that founding the Psychometric Society was an interesting, exciting time, but makes no claim to remembering well the details of events that occurred over fifty years ago.

Stalnakar said, "The University of Chicago was an exciting place fifty years ago, a place in intellectual ferment. Hutchins had decided that there should be a Board of Examiners with Thurstone the chief examiner. This opening gave Thurstone an opportunity to employ some of his graduate students. As one of the examiners I was busy with the humanities faculty, who were scholars and delightful individuals, providing an enjoyable learning experience for me".

Stalnakar continued, "Thurstone was working on his applications of mathematics to psychological matters, including the primary mental abilities, factor analysis, and attitude measurement. Thurstone and we followers met periodically at the Quadrangle Club to discuss our problems. At one of these meetings the matter of a journal for the sort of mathematical writing that Thurstone and few others were doing came up. Paul Horst, then at Proctor & Gamble, had been working on this idea for some time and had passed the notion along to Thurstone who was eager to move the idea forward. Our discussions over a long period centered on the many problems associated with launching and financing a journal. Much went on, many ideas were discarded, there were moments of discouragement and of disagreement. Luck and chance play a role we do not acknowledge. Harold Gulliksen tells me initially he opposed the idea of a new journal. He felt then as he does today that the need is not for more journals but for more good ideas worth publishing. That may account for him not being one of the founders; I do not remember. He came along with a few others of us soon enough to lend some money to start the project.

"Thurstone recognized that a journal would require support. The suggestion of a society to support it was made. Thurstone did not want the Society to exclude nonmembers of the APA who might be interested in quantitative work. If the society grew it might want to bend the purpose of the journal to fit the interests of the society rather than those of the founding fathers, a possibility repugnant to him. He did not trust the mass of psychologists.

"After much folderol, in some of which I was involved, we set up a Psychometric

Corporation to publish and control (and protect) the editorial policy of the journal. In addition to the founders of the society two additional members, Gulliksen and Guilford, signed the incorporation papers for the Psychometric Corporation. A few carefully selected members were added later. Initially we were the guardians to assure that *Psychometrika* would publish material reflecting the interests of the dominant members of the founders. Eventually the Corporation was dissolved, again with much paper work."

Stalnaker observed, "From my point of view, the particular six of us who were founders of the Psychometric Society got together primarily because of Thurstone. Horst had the idea and did most of the ground work, Thurstone had the prestige, the contacts and the staff to get things done. Richardson, Horst and Kurtz, able psychometricians, knew each other through their work at Proctor & Gamble. Dunlap was brought in because of his abilities and experience with running a journal. I just happened to be there at the right time."

In closing, Horst and Stalnaker praised the health of the society and the journal. Horst emphasized the deep gulf that exists between people who have problems to solve, and people who have solutions to problems, whether anyone wants those problems solved or not. *Psychometrika* was initially intended to serve people with real problems, and has generally sustained that focus. Stalnaker felt that "anything that has gone on for fifty years must be filling some need." But he also felt that, at best, *Psychometrika* may be nudging psychology in the direction of a quantitative rational science. The general tendency of academic journals to become too narrow in appeal must be resisted. With careful guidance, the next fifty years should bring continued success and increased influence.

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