

# This Week's Citation Classic

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**Battig W F & Montague W E.** Category norms for verbal items in 56 categories: a replication and extension of the Connecticut category norms. *J. Exp. Psychol. Monograph Suppl.* 80: No. 3, Part 2, 1969. 46 p.

The article presents responses to 56 conceptual category labels (e.g., fruit, weapon) in order of frequency of occurrence for 442 students from the Universities of Maryland and Illinois. Also included are additional data such as which responses are given first, and numbers of different responses for each category. The *Science Citation Index*<sup>®</sup> (*SCI*<sup>®</sup>) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*<sup>™</sup> (*SSCI*<sup>™</sup>) indicate that this paper was cited 267 times in the period 1969 - 1977.]

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"This paper is actually no more than an extended replication of the unpublished University of Connecticut category norms of Cohen, Bousfield, and Whitmarsh. This kind of normative information clearly does not fit the usual image of a major scientific contribution, but may well exceed more original theoretical publications in its usefulness to scientists for actual research purposes. Moreover, our project did require over three years of hard work by many people, especially Janis Gregory and Diane Ray.

"I suspect the widespread citation of this monograph can best be understood as analogous to generally useful new instruments or research materials in other sciences. Other possible reasons include: (1) An encouraging editor (David A. Grant) willing to publish these norms in full in a high-quality journal, thereby giving them wide circulation and visibility at minimal

cost; and (2) Their publication at an ideal time when research on semantic aspects of information-processing and memory was becoming a major topic of research interest. These norms have had other unexpected uses, such as a children's game of 'personality analysis' where e.g., Judy (ranking 5th among girls names) is characterized by corresponding 5th-ranking members of other categories (e.g., garter snake, spider).

"Other than the above, these category norms may differ from numerous other similar normative projects because of our primary concern with making them as useful as possible for other researchers. Thus when co-author William Montague offered to collect parallel data at Illinois, we realized that geographical comparisons with our Maryland data would greatly increase the general usefulness of these norms. Ironically, we both subsequently moved West, Montague now being in San Diego.

"Even more ironically, we probably could not get research funding for this kind or normative project, nor could it be published today in those top-quality journals which once included such norms. I base this judgment upon our recent experience with an even larger 5-year normative scaling project which had to be published as a book.

"Both projects were possible only as secondary aspects of large and long-term research grants with other primary goals. Research funding agencies rarely if ever will consider direct research support for such normative projects, despite their demonstrable value, if not necessity, for any kind of research requiring verbal materials. Thus the honor of our monograph being designated as a citation classic is especially appreciated. If it helps in any way to remedy the still tremendous need throughout the behavioral sciences for more normative projects of this kind, our research and its frequent citations will have made an especially significant scientific contribution."