

Obituary

Edwin E. Ghiselli (1907-1980)

Edwin E. Ghiselli, a major contributor to the development of research and theory in industrial and personnel psychology, was born and grew up in San Francisco and received his undergraduate and graduate education at the University of California, Berkeley. After earning his BA with a major in Italian in 1930, he entered the world of business, aiming for a career in banking. A course in the psychology of individual differences, and particularly its instructor, Robert Tryon, made such an impression on Ghiselli, however, that he returned to the university and completed requirements for an MA in 1933.

By this time he was committed to psychology as his profession and continued to participate in small seminars (those conducted by Edward Tolman he found especially exciting), as well as to expand his experimental studies. He began research with Clarence W. Brown as his supervisor, which developed into a thesis project dealing with the effects of subcortical lesions on discrimination learning in rats. This endeavor was innovative and fruitful enough to earn Ghiselli a National Research Council fellowship, which he used to study in the laboratory of Karl Lashley at Harvard during 1936-1937. That year was highly stimulating and enjoyable, but at its close Ghiselli's professional future was problematic because positions in any area of psychology were scarce, and physiological psychologists in particular were, to understate the case, in limited demand.

Fortunately Ghiselli had other talents. Tryon had inspired him with an enduring interest in individual differences and their measurement, and accordingly a transition to applied psychology was not difficult. He accepted an appointment to work in this area as a teaching fellow at Cornell and there came under the influence of John G. Jenkins, whom Ghiselli was later to describe as his "teacher, friend and father figure." Applied psychology was not widely popular or well developed at that time, but Jenkins believed in its future and communicated his conviction to Ghiselli so effectively that he would thenceforth concentrate all of his scientific efforts in this field and never return to research in physiological psychology.

In 1938, Jenkins left Cornell to head the psychology department at the University of Maryland, and Ghiselli went with him as instructor, which at least was a step up from teaching associate. Jenkins, Ghiselli, and Roger Bellows made up the entire staff, which was totally dedicated to development of a comprehensive program in applied psychology. Although their relations were harmonious and the task challenging, Ghiselli was nonethe-

less definitely receptive when he received an inquiry regarding his availability for appointment to his alma mater in Berkeley.

The invitation came from Warner Brown, who then was chair, and included a definite statement that Ghiselli's primary responsibility would be long-range planning for a program of teaching and research in applied psychology, which currently was underemphasized at Berkeley. In a five-page, single-spaced reply to Brown, Ghiselli set forth his philosophy and goals, which encompassed not only an integrated series of courses and seminars but also a design for providing practical experience in research. The latter was envisaged as involving the cooperation of local business and industry, and Ghiselli included a strategy whereby leaders in the business community could be convinced that their cooperation would be mutually beneficial and practically rewarding.

Ghiselli's devotion to the field he had chosen was reflected in another letter directed to Edward Tolman in which he asked for reassurance that his assignment would be concentrated on the teaching of "applied psychology in its various phases." In this communication there was reassertion that contact with business and industrial firms would be essential to "field work," without which any program in applied psychology would be "a dead thing."

Moving to Berkeley in 1939, Ghiselli put his plans into action with so much energy and acumen that the eventual emergence of the University of California, Berkeley, as an internationally recognized center for applied psychology was virtually assured. The subsequent achievement of this recognition was due in part to Ghiselli's personal talents as a scientist and an educator and in equal measure to his success in recruiting younger psychologists to form a research team that conducted an impressive series of studies dealing with various aspects of personnel selection, managerial skills, and industrial psychology in general. Among other colleagues, Mason Haire and Lyman Porter were particularly influential in collaborating with Ghiselli as well as in working independently to promote both teaching and research in applied psychology.

As a teacher Ghiselli was extremely effective and popular. Students admired and respected him, for although his standards were high and demanding, he was a warm and understanding counselor, ever ready with personal

Preliminary drafts of this obituary were read by Mason Haire and Reed Tuddenham, to whom the author is indebted for much helpful criticism.

guidance and patient tutoring when these seemed necessary. His undergraduate course in psychological measurement was consistently overenrolled, but he resisted attempts to enlarge it because he felt it could not be taught effectively without additional equipment (e.g., an electric calculator for each student) and more teaching assistants, which the department budget could not provide. He was uncompromising in his insistence that quality in education had to take precedence over competing considerations such as the size of classes and number of undergraduate majors.

Ghiselli's deeply felt convictions regarding the department's obligations to the university and reciprocal responsibilities of the university to the department impelled him to serve two terms as departmental chair. In this role he divided his energies between solution of problems internal to the department and those involving relations between his faculty and the administration. Always a vigilant champion of the rights of individual faculty members, Ghiselli defended them stoutly, even contentiously, whenever they appeared threatened by impersonal rules and regulations formulated at higher administrative levels.

Notwithstanding his considerable gifts as a teacher and administrator, Ghiselli was first and foremost a research scientist, and it was in this capacity that his most important and enduring contributions were made. Singly or in collaboration with various associates, he published more than 100 research reports that appeared in a wide range of professional journals. His first book was written with C. W. Brown; published in 1948 with the title *Personnel and Industrial Psychology*, it became the most widely used work in the field. A second collaborative effort with Brown led to publication of *The Scientific Method in Psychology* in 1955. Writing alone, Ghiselli completed his volume *Theory of Psychological Measurement* in 1964 and *Validity of Occupational Tests* in 1966. The latter year also saw publication of *Managerial Thinking: An International Study*, of which Mason Haire and Lyman Porter were coauthors. In 1971, Ghiselli brought out yet another influential book, *Explorations in Managerial Talent*.

Ghiselli's scientific contributions brought recognition and rewards at national and international levels. At various times he was Walter Van Dyke Bingham Memorial Lecturer at the University of Michigan, Donald G. Patterson Memorial Lecturer at the University of Minnesota, and Robert Choate Tryon Lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley. He was elected or appointed to numerous honorific offices, including president of the Industrial and Business Division of the American Psychological Association, president of the Western Psychological Association, and member of the national President's Council on Industrial Safety. He served for one

year as visiting professor of psychology at the University of Bologna, Italy, where he acted as advisor in connection with expansion of an instructional program in applied psychology.

In 1972, he received the Distinguished Scientific Contributions Award from the American Psychological Association. His accomplishments were well summarized in the citation for that award, which included the following:

Ghiselli and industrial psychology are virtually synonymous. Few issues concerning the behavior of people at work, from the conceptualization of performance to the measurement of values, have not been touched by his influence. Psychometric theory has also felt his impact. No one can approach a problem in psychological prediction without taking into account his work on prediction models.

Edwin Ghiselli was a warm, outgoing person who made friends easily and kept them permanently. One of his outstanding characteristics was a rare capacity for empathic and sympathetic listening that led intimates and strangers alike to speak freely to him about their experiences and problems. His sincere interest in people was so evident that it encouraged reciprocity in exchange of ideas and feelings about almost any topic imaginable. This was equally manifest in his discussions with professional colleagues about scientific matters or in conversations with strangers met on a journey or at some social gathering. Ghiselli's lively sense of humor and his appreciation of the same quality in others were among his many endearing qualities.

In 1938, Edwin married Louisa Hickox, whom he had known at Berkeley when he was a graduate and she an undergraduate student. They lived first in College Park, Maryland, and later for three years in Texas while he served as captain and later as lieutenant colonel in the Aviation Psychology Research Program. They had three sons, William, John, and David, all of whom grew up and were educated in Berkeley. It was a closely knit family, and gracious hospitality made the Ghiselli home a center for many happy gatherings of friends and colleagues. After retirement in 1973, the couple moved to Mountain View, California, partly in order to be closer to two of their sons and their families. Louisa died in 1976, but Edwin maintained their residence and continued to spend much time with his children and grandchildren. The third son, William, a psychologist at the University of Missouri, published jointly with his father in 1972 a research article in which both took special pride.

Ghiselli's death on June 26, 1980, occurred while he was on a tour of Italy with his eldest granddaughter.

FRANK A. BEACH
University of California, Berkeley