

Autobiographical Sketch

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Chance has been the primary determinant of entry into the field of industrial and organizational psychology, at least among "older" I-O psychologists. This was a conclusion reached by Ross Stagner in a 1981 article in the *American Psychologist*, in which he summarized the autobiographies of 13 former presidents of APA's Division 14. Chance certainly accounted for my entry into this profession. I had never heard the field until I served as a flight Instructor in the U.S. Navy during World War II. At several of the naval bases where I was stationed, psychologists were conducting research on the selection and training of aviators. I became interested in their work because I had felt that the accepted approach to teaching cadets to fly could certainly not be the most effective approach. Almost all instructors used only aversive reinforcement. They seemed determined to instill in the mind of each trainee that he was probably the stupidest and most uncoordinated person who ever entered flight training.

Several of the psychologists at these bases extolled the field of I-O psychology as the profession of the future. They predicted that organizations of all kinds, public and private, would be employing I-O psychologists to help them manage human resources more effectively. Some of the psychologists whose names I remember who influenced me were Eleroy Stromberg, an I-O psychologist on the faculty at Western Reserve University, who unfortunately was killed in an airplane crash shortly after World War II (I believe he was on a consulting assignment), Walter Wilke, a social psychologist on the Columbia University faculty for many years, and Rene Gaiennie, who was trained as a physiological psychologist but entered the field of I-O psychology after World War II and became a Senior Vice President of Human Resources for the Singer Company in New York City where he retired in 1976. Incidentally, since then, he has been teaching in the business school at the University of South Florida as a Distinguished Instructor.

After World War II, I was faced with the decision as to how I would spend the rest of my life. I had earned a BS degree in Education at Western Michigan College (now Western Michigan University) in 1941 with a major in Physical Education. At that time, Western Michigan was primarily a teachers college. In June of 1941, young men, as I was at that time, were being drafted into military service. Since the United States had not yet declared war, few of us wanted to go into the service. I knew that I would probably be drafted fairly soon if I took a teaching job. Since being a college student was a convenient category for exemption from the draft, I entered a master's degree program in physical education at the University of Michigan in the summer and fall of 1941. Although I was obliged to serve on active duty as a flight instructor after Pearl Harbor (I had earned an "Instructor" rating in the government-sponsored Civil Pilot Training program offered to college students before WW II), I was able to complete my work for

the M.S. degree by correspondence. (Most universities were very accommodating with regard to servicemen during World War II).

When I was discharged from the service in 1946, I explored teaching and coaching opportunities. I learned that pay for such jobs was not much more than I could earn as a college student supported on the G.I. Bill. I therefore decided that I might go back to the University of Michigan and work for a Ph.D. degree in Physical Education. I was accepted in that program. However, out of curiosity, I went to the Department of Psychology to find out if they had a program in I-O psychology. I was sure that any chances of getting into such a program, even if they had one, were next to nothing, since the only psychology course I had in my previous training was a two-hour course in educational psychology.

I had an interview with Don Marquis, who had just come to the University of Michigan from Yale as the Department Chair. The University of Michigan Graduate Program in Psychology had deteriorated badly during World War II, and Dr. Marquis was eager to build it into a premier program. Needless to say, he succeeded in that mission in the subsequent years. At the time, however, things seemed to be in a state of disarray. Many faculty were new, students were returning from the services, and orderly procedures for selecting students had not been developed. Nevertheless, everyone was eager and optimistic about the future. In my interview, Dr. Marquis assured me that I-O psychology was one of the programs they were going to establish.

When asked about my background in this interview, I said that I had a master's degree. Before I could explain that it was not in the field of psychology, Dr. Marquis, evidently assuming it was, said something like, "That's wonderful! We're desperate for people with master's degrees to teach Introductory Psychology as Teaching Fellows. If you'll see Dr. Guetzkow and tell him I sent you, he'll sign you up as a Teaching Fellow and assign you classes to teach." Somewhat stunned by this turn of events, I followed his orders and became both a Teaching Fellow and a student in the Psychology Department Ph.D. Program. To the best of knowledge, no one examined my transcript, and I know that I took no qualifying exam of any kind.

One year later, I would never have been admitted. At that time, the program and selection procedures were well organized and defined. Entering graduate students had to have taken a minimum of 30 hours of undergraduate psychology and performed at a fairly high level on the Miller Analogies Test. Transcripts and other background materials from candidates were examined carefully. Therefore, I would attribute my entry into the field of psychology as dependent not only on chance, but also on a great deal of luck.

Needless to say, I learned a lot of psychology in a hurry. I probably spent many more hours in the library than did most other graduate students. Teaching also helped greatly. At that time each Teaching Fellow was assigned full responsibility for teaching several sections of Introductory Psychology. I probably learned more psychology by teaching it

than I did in most of my graduate courses. I was also very fortunate to have the strong support of my wife in my pursuit of the Ph.D.

In the 1940s, it was possible to finish the work for a Ph.D. degree in 3 years. I was fortunate to have started in the program in the fall of 1946 and defended my dissertation in January of 1949. In my second year of the program, I also lucked out by lining up a half-time job in the Industrial Psychology Division at the Detroit Edison Company. Dr. Greydon Worbois headed up that program and he proved to be an excellent mentor. We developed and validated selection testing programs for a variety of jobs. One of these projects yielded a dissertation for me. I developed and validated a battery of tests to measure human relations ability in supervisory job candidates. This was about the time when the human relations emphasis in supervision was at its heights. Tests to measure aptitude to carry out this aspect of a supervisory job were mostly of the supervisory judgment variety, and our experience was that scores on such tests correlated highly with, and predicted success no better than, tests of verbal abilities or general mental abilities.

The most valid test that I developed in the battery was of the supervisory judgment type but framed in projective form. Instead of asking the candidate how he or she would handle a sensitive human relations problem, I described a hypothetical supervisor in very general terms.g., a brief description of the background of a "Jim Smith," then asked the test-takers to estimate how they thought Jim would handle each problem situation. The theory was, of course, that the subject would project his or her own inclinations into the predictions made regarding Jim's behavior.

The test worked very well. It proved in a concurrent validity study not to be correlated with scores on an intelligence test, and to correlate significantly with criteria of supervisory performance in the human relations aspect of the job. The test was subsequently validated on other supervisory groups in the Detroit Edison Company and a few other companies, such as General Motors and Owens-Illinois Glass Company, where I had industrial psychologist friends. I decided against publishing the test because I was concerned about the ethics of deception. That is, the instructions indicated that this was a test of the ability to predict the behavior of others, but I was scoring it on the basis of the test-taker revealing his own proclivities.

After defending my dissertation, I accepted a full-time position as assistant to Greydon Worbois in the Industrial Psychology Division with the Detroit Edison Company. In this role I obtained excellent experience in how to operate effectively in an industrial organization. After about a year in this job, I was eager to expand the scope of my work as an I-O psychologist. Therefore when George Bennett, then President of the Psychological Corporation, offered me a job in their Industrial Division, I jumped at the chance to spread my wings and moved to New York. Incidentally, after joining the Psychological Corporation Staff, I found that the activity for which the Industrial Division was best known was their executive appraisals. They employed a very thorough screening program of tests and intensive interview to evaluate candidates for key jobs in industry and business organizations. Yet, in selecting a member of their own staff, the offer was made in a phone call from the president without any testing, interviewing, or

even personal contact. I found out later that Don Marquis, the University of Michigan Department chair, served on the Psychological Corporations Board of Directors. Dr. Bennett had accepted Dr. Marquis recommendation that I would make a good addition to their staff. I guess this illustrates the old shoemakers children saying i.e., the shoemakers children are the last to get shoes.

I also found after joining the staff at the Psychological Corporation that I was hired because the Industrial Division had just landed a big contract with the General Electric Company. One of the conditions of that contract was that the Psychological Corporation would assign a member of their staff to work fulltime with G.E. The contract was not large enough that a senior member of the staff could afford to assume that fulltime role with an outside company. John Foley and Dick Fear were the only senior members of the staff at that time. The only junior member of the staff (Walt Mahler) was tied up fulltime on other important contracts. Therefore they had no one to assign to the G.E. contract. I was employed as the fourth member of the Industrial Division staff and assigned to work fulltime on the G.E. contract.

This assignment proved to be an outstanding learning experience for me. At the time (1950), G.E. was in the process of moving its headquarters operation from Schenectady, N.Y. to New York City. They also decided to expand their corporate staff to provide policy and advisory services in all major functional areas, such as Engineering, Manufacturing, Marketing, Finance, and Employee Relations. Up until that time, such staff services had been provided within major operating Divisions. In the Employee Relations area, company-wide policies and advisory services were available only in Union Relations. This had been necessary because most union contracts were administered on a company-wide basis. The executive office decided that company-wide staff services would be established in all Employee Relations areas, such as selection, training, communications, compensation, etc.

My first assignment was to perform a needs analysis to help the newly appointed key managers on the corporate staff to decide the type and amount of policy and advisory services that were needed in the various Employee Relations sub-functional areas. I spent two to three days in each of about 25 plants to review and evaluate the functions being performed in the Employee Relations area. These company plants surveyed were selected to represent a cross-section of size, type of operation, type of community in which they were located, and the like. As a relatively new Ph.D., this needs analysis provided an outstanding opportunity to find out what kinds of services could be provided in an Employee Relations organization, and what factors seemed to be associated with effective and ineffective performance of the various Employee Relations subfunctions.

The one-year contract with G.E. was extended to 2 years, and then again to a third year. During the third year, I participated on a task force along with company executives, a senior member of one of the largest management consulting firms in New York, and a senior member of the Harvard Business School of Advanced Management Course staff to design a management development program for senior-level operating managers in G.E. This program was implemented in subsequent years at a G.E. Management Development

facility established in Crotonville, New York. That program is still extant. Needless to say, this assignment also provided an Outstanding development opportunity for a relatively young industrial psychologist.

In the course of my work as a consultant with G.E., I was approached from time-to-time by the G.E. executive to whom I was accountable in the project, as to my interest in assuming one of the various corporate staff positions they were establishing in the Employee Relations subfunctions. These were managerial or consultant roles in highly specialized areas, such as selection or training. I was not interested in any of the roles suggested because I felt they were too specialized. I did not want to spend my career focusing on just selection problems, or training activities, or performance appraisal programs, and the like. Finally, after declining several such proffered opportunities, I was asked "What would you be interested in?" I replied that I thought they should have a personnel research function in their corporate staff Employee Relations operation. The executive's response was "What's that?" I explained what I had in mind. I also emphasized the fact that many other large, progressive companies like IBM, General Motors, Dupont, Sears, the large insurance companies, etc., had personnel research components on their corporate staffs. This seemed to impress him, so he asked me to prepare a job description to explicate what I had in mind. I, therefore, was fortunate to be able to describe what I thought was an ideal job for an industrial psychologist. The G.E. executive bought the idea and I was offered the job. As a result, I left the Psychological Corporation after about 3 years and spent the next 20 years directing a personnel research activity for the General Electric Company.

My role at G.E. proved to be just as interesting and challenging as I had hoped it would be. I had almost complete autonomy to undertake whatever projects I thought would be interesting and of value to the company. I was able to assemble a small staff of about six psychologists who carried out a wide variety of projects that related not only to employee relations subfunctions, like selection, training, performance appraisal, compensation, and the like, but also to general organizational issues like how certain functional activities should be structured. Most of of projects were program oriented. That is, we did not tackle problems that were specific to a single department, plant, or type of business. We tried to concentrate our efforts on problems or activities that had company-wide significance.

For example, one of our early research programs, focused on the selection, training, and career progress of new college graduates. G.E. was then, and probably still is, hiring thousands of new college graduates each year. The major emphasis in our research was on engineers, but we also included in our studies college graduates hired into other functions, such as Finance, Marketing, Manufacturing, and Employee Relations. We studied the recruiting process, the effects of indoctrination and training programs, and factors influencing career progress of college-trained people.

In one of these programs introduced in the first years of my G.E. employment, for example, we were able to obtain a considerable amount of evaluative information with tests, inventories, and intensive structured interviews on about 1,500 newly hired college

graduate engineers. We then conducted a series of follow-up studies of these engineers to determine what personal characteristics proved to be related to success in different types of assignments, such as design engineering, or development engineering. We also examined factors associated with turnover, the effects of various training programs on the performance and career progress of engineers, the kinds of persons who gravitated into managerial positions, and factors that proved to either stimulate or stifle career progress of high-potential engineers. This research program was undertaken with the support and cooperation of the corporate engineering staff. For this reason, the research results had a very significant impact on the way engineers were recruited, selected, placed in various engineering subfunctions, indoctrinated, trained, and monitored in their career progress.

Another example of a research program with company-wide significance dealt with the job of foreman. In the 1950s, G.E. was predominantly a manufacturing company. The job of foreman was ubiquitous. It was also recognized as a very difficult role to perform effectively, fraught with problems, yet critical to the success or failure of most manufacturing operations. In the employee relations area, the foreman was recognized as having very significant influence in establishing either favorable or unfavorable relationships between employees and management.

Our first study in this program focused on the way various foreman jobs were structured. We found several correlates between structural differences and criteria of effectiveness. Another series of studies concentrated on the activities of foremen in the manner in which they carried out the job. In the most intensive study of this program of research, we had observers follow foremen in the course of their work and report exactly what they did in carrying out the job throughout the day. This study was carried out in a large shop that employed over 200 foremen. We observed the 20 foremen who were rated as most effective, and the 20 rated least effective by both supervisors and subordinates. Again, we found very significant differences in the way these two groups performed the job. Other studies in the series focused on the way incumbents perceived their jobs and the leadership styles of foremen on an autocratic-democratic continuum associated with satisfaction with supervision among subordinates.

This research program was carried out with the full support and cooperation of the corporate office Manufacturing Services staff. For this reason, the research results had a very significant impact on practices. Not only did it affect foreman selection and training programs, but also it resulted in a completely new philosophy of shop organization in which the job of foreman was eliminated. Over half of the manufacturing plants in the company reorganized their shop operations along the lines recommended by the corporate Manufacturing staff as a result of our research.

Our experience with the two research programs described above brings to mind a lesson I learned very early in my career at General Electric. We learned the hard way that if you expect research results to have an impact on practices, the research program must be carried out with the full support and cooperation of the staff people who have the primary responsibility for recommending and monitoring practices in the respective functional area. Two of research studies demonstrated this axiom. One study focused on

communications practices and the other on compensation. In both cases we capitalized on fortuitous situations in large plants or offices to test the relative effectiveness of alternative approaches. In both cases we attempted to generate some enthusiasm for the proposed research among the corporate staff people responsible for those functions. In both instances they were lukewarm about the value of the contemplated research. Nevertheless, we proceeded with the research studies since the conditions presented seemed so ideal.

In both studies, the research demonstrated quite clearly that practices that ran counter to those being touted by the respective corporate staff people were significantly more effective in generating positive results. In fact, in the case of the communications study, the conventional approach recommended by the corporate staff for changing employee attitudes and behavior proved actually to have a negative impact. Despite the clarity of the implications of the studies, the research results in both cases had little effect on company practices in the respective functional areas. In fact, in the case of the communications study, we learned that the corporate staff members responsible for providing counseling to operating people in this function were denigrating the validity of our research study.

Other research programs covered almost all areas of human resources management. We either conducted or assisted psychologists or personnel specialists employed in G.E. plants in conducting a large number of selection research studies for jobs of all types at various levels, including managerial and professional categories (e.g., Ph.D. scientists were subjects in one of our studies). A number of studies focused on factors contributing to employee motivation, satisfaction, and turnover. Some of these motivation studies measured the effects of variables in organizational climate. Other studies dealt with factors contributing to creativity, the effects of various training programs, the effects of variations in salary practices, the effects of shift work on individuals, etc.

The research program that I probably became best known for was a series of studies of the performance appraisal program. At the time I started at G.E., the corporate employee relations staff was insisting that all departments and plants in the company should implement formal performance appraisal programs, at least for all salaried employees. We capitalized on opportunities to study the effectiveness of some of these programs and were puzzled to find that they often seemed to have more negative than positive effects on employee motivation, satisfaction, and turnover. It seemed that the more conscientious supervisors were in trying to carry out the programs as prescribed, the more negative the reactions of subordinates. That is, the supervisor who tried to make distinctions in ratings assigned to different employees, to avoid the leniency error, and to point out development needs of subordinates, was much more likely to evoke negative reactions than was the supervisor who administered the program in a cursory manner, perhaps rating everyone very high.

Several intensive observational studies of what actually occurred in appraisal interviews revealed causes of many of the negative reactions of subordinates. This research program also demonstrated quite conclusively that a goal-setting program was far more effective

in stimulating improved performance than was the more traditional form of a performance appraisal program. In this connection, we discovered that setting relatively short-term goals and subgoals, with frequent follow-up progress reviews, was far more effective than the MBO-type programs that some departments were using, which called for a once-a-year goal setting with an end-of-year review.

Some of our work was more "development" oriented, although such development projects usually incorporated follow-up research. For example, in the early 1960s, when Doug Bray and his associates at AT&T were experiencing a great deal of success with the use of the assessment center approach for screening candidates for supervisory and managerial positions, we developed several assessment center programs for both selection and personnel development. For jobs that were found throughout the company, such as first-line ship supervisors, we trained plant Employee Relations people to administer these programs at local department or plant level.

Another development-type of activity was the behavior modeling program to train supervisors and managers to be more effective in handling human relations problems. Which Mel Sorcher of our staff developed in the late 1960s. This program was implemented in a number of G.E. plants and validated in several. Since that time, this approach to training has been widely used in a variety of organizations. Similarly, Mel spearheaded with support from other members of the staff a number of development-type projects to introduce "quality of work-life" types of programs in G.E. manufacturing plants. For example, we experimented in a number of situations with the use of self-governed work teams. In almost every case, these proved to be remarkably effective. My one regret, as I look back on my years at G.E., is that we didn't publish more of our work. The majority of our studies would have been very publishable. But, as is true in almost all jobs in industry, there was little incentive to publish. No one within the company who could influence the career progress of a member of our staff would ever read the technical journals in our field. In fact, if they could, publication of our work might have disturbed more than pleased them. In a few cases, a publication by one of our staff members that appeared in a personnel management oriented journal read by some G.E. managers caused expressions of concern that we might be reflecting negatively on company practices, or perhaps giving a competitive advantage to a business rival. Those of us like myself, and perhaps Mel Sorcher, who harbored thoughts that we might someday like to move to academia, tried to publish enough to maintain reasonably respectable scholarly credentials.

After about age 50, I began to seriously consider the possibility of moving to an academic role. I had not grown tired of my job, it still seemed ideal, although we were beginning to experience more pressure from top management that our work should be more should be more applications than research oriented. Our programs of a more "developmental" nature, such as the assessment center, behavior modeling, and motivation of factory employees, had probably attracted more favorable attention than had much of our research. From a personal, quality of life perspective, I also had to admit that I was getting a little tired of the commuting in and out of New York City, which required a

minimum of one and one-half hours each way, and the recurrent travel involved in the job.

One of the desirable aspects of my job was that it enabled me to develop a wide network of contacts in academia. We always had budget monies to enable us to use experts in the field as technical consultants on projects, or even to engage such persons on a collaborative basis in the actual conduct of projects. I took advantage of these contacts to explore possible teaching opportunities.

My motivation was never so strong that I was driven to make a really vigorous effort to acquire all academic position with any kind of time-frame deadline. I interviewed at a number of universities but always seemed to waver and decide against making career change at each moment of truth. I had almost given up the idea of making a move, when I was approached by the Chair of the University of South Florida Psychology Department. Incidentally, the network I had established in academia helped me to make this contact. I had never heard of the University of South Florida (USF) and they had probably never heard of me. I found out that the contact had been made through Dave McClelland of Harvard with whom we had worked on a research program applying achievement motivation theory to some applied problems in G.E. Dave evidently was visiting USF to present a colloquium or workshop. When he heard that the Psychology Department was recruiting for a senior person in I-O psychology, he suggested that they contact me, since he knew that I was interested in making a move at that time.

USF had just been authorized by the State of Florida Board of Regents to start a Ph.D. program in I-O psychology. This sounded like the ideal type of challenge I was looking for. In my contacts with Psychology Departments throughout the years, I had developed some notion of what I thought a Ph.D. program in I-O Psychology should offer. This would provide an opportunity to implement some of my ideas. Actually, the USF Psychology Department had hired their first I-O psychologist a year before I came in the fall of 1973. This was Steve Cohen, then a new graduate of the University of Tennessee program. Steve and several other members of the faculty who had been trained in social psychology had developed a suggested curriculum for an I-O Ph.D. program which I found to be very compatible with my own views.

I have never regretted my move. I have enjoyed the academic environment, and especially working with interested and dedicated graduate students. I have found the experience not only to be interesting and challenging, but also rejuvenating. I have chaired the dissertation committees of 17 students, who have completed their work and are now employed as Industrial Psychologists in companies, consulting firms, and universities. At the time I stepped down as director of the I-O program in the fall of 1983, the program had become well established in terms of curriculum, quality of graduate students, and scholarly contributions. I am pleased that it has continued to improve under Ed Levine's leadership in the ensuing years.

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work both as a practitioner in the field, and as a mentor to many young people who will continue to contribute to the field

in future years. I think the order in which I acquired the two types of experience, that is, practitioner first and then teacher, has at least two advantages. First, it has enabled me to be a more effective mentor to young people who plan a career in I-O psychology, since I could impart some practical wisdom that I picked up in my organizational practice. Secondly, it has enabled me to extend my career well beyond the years of expected, if not mandatory, retirement that characterizes work life in industry. In the fall of 1988, I was appointed Professor Emeritus by the University, which permits me to continue my association with the Psychology Department and the I-O Program, even though I am technically "retired" and off the payroll.