

A Biography of **Floyd L. Ruch**

Kim Johnson

University of South Florida

May 2016

Floyd Leon Ruch was born in 1903 in Iowa. He earned his B.S. in 1925 from the University of Oregon, after which he taught for a year at Washington University. Ross Stagner (who served as SIOP president from 1965-1966) recalled working under Ruch during his undergraduate tenure at Washington University; Stagner remembered Ruch as not being “particularly inclined toward industrial work at that time” (Stagner); Ruch had Stagner running rats through mazes in a basement of an old wooden building (Stagner).

Although Ruch’s work regarding the behavior of rats seems unrelated to industrial psychology, the motivation for this was an interest in behavior and learning. He continued to work with rats, studying how they learned and what motivated them to learn, as he completed his PhD in psychology at Stanford University in 1930, working under Walter Miles. He then spent a year doing postdoctoral work at the Sorbonne.

Ruch went on to apply his work on learning and motivation to humans. He studied adult learning and intelligence and the use of standardized ability tests in employment and education during a short tenure as professor of psychology at the University of Illinois. He also studied personality and morale.

He left the University of Illinois for a research position The Psychological Corporation, followed by another research job at the Opinion Research Corporation.

Ruch returned to academia in 1942, accepting a position on the faculty at the University of Southern California, where he served as chair of Business and Industrial Psychology. He remained at USC until 1968. During this time, he also started a consulting firm which specialized in industrial testing, called Psychological Services, Inc. (PSI), of which he served as president until his death. After his death, his son, William W. Ruch (an active member of SIOP) took over the business. PSI has since grown to become one of the largest I-O psychology consulting firms.

During the 1960s, discrimination in the use of employment testing became a widely argued concept. This became an area of great interest and study for Ruch

and he served as an expert witness for Crown Zellerbach in the landmark case Hicks v. Crown Zellerbach. Much of what we know today about discrimination in employment and aptitude tests stems from Ruch's work.

Ruch published a well-known and widely successful introductory psychology textbook in 1937, titled *Psychology and Life*, of which subsequent editions have been published by Philip Zombardo and Richard Gerrig and which is still in print today.

He served as both the last secretary for Section D and the first secretary for Division 14. Ruch was elected as the fourth president of what was to be known as the Society for Industrial Psychology for the 1948-1949 year. Floyd L. Ruch died in 1982.

References

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