

I-O Psychology in New York City: Looking Back and Ahead

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Since Peter Minuit "bought" the island of Manhattan on May 24, 1626, Manhattan has emerged as a unique world center, both for commerce and for psychological science. Yet we find little published information today on the remarkable history of industrial-organizational psychology in Manhattan (Woroschinski & Takooshian, 2017).

Since 1939, the Metropolitan New York Association of Applied Psychologists (METRO) has thrived in New York City (Shapiro, Erickson, & Farmer, 2016). In 2017, METRO hosted a forum on "I-O Psychology in NYC: Its Fascinating History and Future." This segued into an expanded forum hosted by the Manhattan Psychological Association in 2018, where five experts with a combined 180 years of experience shared their impressions and unpublished information. This multiauthored essay shares our insights on developments in I-O psychology in New York City over past decades.

One important point that emerged from this forum was the unpublished but valuable information that becomes lost with time. For example, Virginia Schein (below) described her experiences in the 1970s, when executives were surprisingly resistant to her team's proposals for now-common practices like flex time and employee attitude surveys. To the extent that there are local I-O groups like METRO in over 30 cities around the USA, it may be eye opening for each group to invite a few elders to recall their now-forgotten experiences with younger colleagues and students, orally if not in writing, and perhaps share these with readers of *TIP*.

Melissa W. Search: The city of New York holds a rich history of experts and research in the field of I-O psychology, spawning renowned work that has influenced generations of students, psychologists, educators, and major corporations. However, these contributions were only discovered after years of challenging archival research, as information is scarce on these early influences in New York City. When I began doing my Honors research in 2016 on the history of I-O psychology in New York City, I found that there are at least six excellent histories of I-O psychology (three of them by New Yorkers). Yet there was no published article on this topic—not even a simple list of noted New York I-O practitioners or institutions, which I took it upon myself to develop. Moreover, I created a 20-item quiz as an exercise before my presentations at universities and professional groups in New York to stimulate discussion and see what students and colleagues already knew about I-O history (Woroschinski & Takooshian, 2017). Along with my archival research, I have had the honor of gaining first-hand knowledge by speaking with local I-O psychologists, who shared valuable but unpublished information—including the three esteemed I-O experts below.

Walter Reichman: Inside the AT+T Longitudinal Study. I have always been in awe of those psychologists who committed themselves to longitudinal research to study human behavior over time. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of two such landmark pieces of research, The Career Pattern Study conducted by **Donald Super** at Teachers College of Columbia University, and the Management Progress Study conducted by **Douglas Bray** and **Ann Howard** at AT & T. Both studies followed subjects for 20 years and I was lucky enough

to be involved in the final year. If I were not a born, bred, and educated New Yorker who chose to continue living and working here, I would have missed this opportunity.

I was a research assistant on the Career Pattern Study at Teachers College. I was the same age as the 140 boys from Middletown, New York who were being followed, and I wrote my dissertation based on this data. Because the research was conducted at Teachers College, the results were almost always implemented in the educational processes of the country. One of the results of the study was the recognition that boys at age 15 are not ready to make career decisions, and this led to the abandonment of high schools dedicated to training boys for specific jobs and promoted general academic education in the high schools.

Dr. Super had been supported by government grants for 19 of the 20 years. In the 20th year, his funding was not renewed. All the many graduate students reached out to collect data on the last year of the study. I had the opportunity to meet four of the “boys,” now age 35, and review their vocational history since they were 15. It was a fascinating learning experience on the process of vocational development. Two of them stand out to this day. Barely articulate at 15, one was a pilot on Air Force One and the other was a high-ranking FBI agent. The other two had good jobs and successful lives but not ones I can recall.

The Management Progress Study was conducted at AT&T on 240 young men who were entering management training programs. Two-thirds were college graduates and one-third had been designated as high potentials from within AT&T. They were given 3 and a half days of psychological testing, including personality, interests, cognitive, projective tests, and interviews. For this study, Doug Bray developed the Assessment Center, which was a major contribution to selection and promotion of managers. After the data were collected, the research team made predictions on the managerial level the men would achieve. The first predictions were found to be about 60% accurate. There were follow-up studies at 8, 15, and 20 years. I was involved in the 20th year follow-up, which was conducted at the luxurious Essex House Hotel on Central Park South in NYC. As part of the last follow-up, we showed the men their scores and assessments across the years and asked them to describe what was going on in their work and personal lives that influenced the change in their test scores. I heard interesting and meaningful life stories of the reciprocal influences of life, family, and career. At the risk of an oversimplification of the data, it seems that the greatest predictor of managerial success was the continuity of a high need for achievement. One interesting analysis were the scores on the Achievement and Affiliation scales of the Edwards Personal Preference Inventory. For those who were at the lower management levels, as the need for affiliation increased over the years, the need for achievement declined. For those at the higher ranks the needs for achievement and affiliation remained high and at (?) the expense of other needs.

Virginia E. Schein: Personnel Research Tales from the 1970s in New York City. I want to share with you a few tales about I-O personnel research in the 1970s in New York City. In those days, most I-O practitioners were in-house psychologists; that is we worked for large business organizations. There were I-O psychologists at J.C. Penney, Merrill Lynch, Equitable Life, Prudential, MetLife, IBM, and AT&T among others. After graduate school at NYU, I worked first at the American Management Association, then at the Life Office Management Association, and finally as director of personnel research at Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

1. *Attitude surveys.* Compared to now, most managers were very resistant to attitude surveys. It was an uphill climb to implement an attitude survey program. The Mayflower Group was founded in 1971 so that we could share data and have normative data to present to management. The first Mayflower Group companies were like Noah's Ark, two from each industry. There were I-O representatives from MetLife and State Farm, Xerox and IBM, Ford and General Motors, and so on. One of the most significant tasks for the 12 or so of us who were founding members was to develop and agree on 20

core items that we would all use in our surveys. It was a lengthy and frustrating experience, but we did it, and those items are still being used today.

2. *Flex time.* MetLife was the first company in New York City to implement flexible working hours. That too was an uphill battle. Although it was popular in Europe, managers in the US were resistant to something like flexible working hours. At MetLife, employees worked from 9 to 5. If you were late, even 10 minutes, your pay could be docked. Supervisors would say, "If I don't watch my employees, they won't work." I convinced senior management to test flexible working hours for 4 months in five different work units. My staff and I used a quasi experimental research design to measure the effects of flex time on productivity. Based upon the finding that flex time had no adverse effects on productivity, we were given the go ahead to implement flex time in the entire company.
3. *The law.* In the 1970s, implementation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was an important focus of personnel research activities. For example, the 1971 *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* Supreme Court case shined a bright light on minority populations and test validation, an I-O area of expertise. The 1973, the AT&T consent decree was also very significant. The EEOC charged AT&T with discrimination against minorities and women. In particular, this was one of the first cases that focused on women in management or the lack thereof. A settlement was reached in January of 1973. I do believe that almost every CEO in New York City was waiting by the phone to find out what that outcome would be. AT&T agreed to pay \$15 million in back pay, mainly to women, and something like \$23 million for future efforts to improve the situation. This decision, in particular the financial teeth behind it, spurred companies to implement programs to enhance the status of women in management, such as MetLife's and IBM's awareness programs.
4. *Gender.* In the 1970s there were very few female I-O practitioners in the New York City area. In addition to myself, there was **Pat Dyer** at IBM and **Mary Tenopyr** and **Virginia Boehm** at AT&T and perhaps one or two others. I was the first woman to receive a degree in industrial psychology from NYU and the first female I-O president of METRO.

Looking back, it was an exciting time to be a practicing I-O psychologist in New York City. We were a collegial group and all doing interesting and for the time, cutting-edge research in our companies.

Allen I. Kraut: Why I belong to METRO. METRO (The New York Metropolitan Association for Applied Psychology) is the largest "local" organization of I-O (mostly) psychologists in the USA. It currently has about 215 active, paid members and a mailing list of 2,200. METRO meets monthly, about 10 times a year with a guest speaker, refreshments, and time to mingle.

I have belonged to METRO for more than 40 years. I kept showing up at meetings through my many years working at IBM and later while teaching at Baruch College, CUNY, and I am still a member. Once in a while, people ask me why. That is a fair question and one that deserves a thoughtful answer.

Some recent studies (Farmer, Shapiro, Sylvan, Zugec, and Whelan, 2015) show that the major reasons most people belong to local I-O groups (like METRO) are networking, professional development, fellowship and, of course, the particular topic (or person) being presented.

These same reasons account for me showing up at METRO meetings. I enjoy networking and the fellowship of my friends, and there has rarely been a meeting where I did not learn something useful.

When I first joined, METRO met in the Harvard Club, courtesy of a former METRO President, Henry Morgan of the Psychological Corporation. The club exuded classiness and old money. I loved the atmosphere. After Morgan passed away, we met in the Grand Hyatt and then at the Helmsley Hotel until their fees became

unreasonable. Now we are comfortably at an NYU location; these changes testify to METRO's adaptability (and mine).

George Hollenbeck, a former METRO president who worked at Merrill Lynch much of his career, refreshed my memory of the early days with the following comments:

NYC had a big chunk of applied psychology in those days... including one of the early consulting firms, Richardson Bellows and Henry, and companies were using psychology...like IBM, GE, ATT, J C Penney, Metropolitan Life, Prudential in Newark, Equitable Life, ITT... The concentration of people in Manhattan meant that getting to meetings was easy.

Back in the 1970s, someone suggested that we have a sit-down dinner, with a speaker, on Groundhog Day. This became a tradition that lasted about 3 decades. Two guest speakers stand out in my memory:

The famed anthropologist Margaret Mead, whose work covered the sexual mores of tribes in the South Pacific, was a fabulous and entertaining speaker and left me with an important message. Namely, that much of social science reinvents the wheel because the researchers have not looked back in the literature to studies that have already shed light on what we are interested to know. That is a useful fact to remember.

At another meeting, soon after Arthur Jensen published some controversial articles on Black-White differences in intelligence, he was invited to speak at METRO. He started by apologizing for reading his talk, but said he wanted to say exactly what he intended to say.

As soon as he finished, several members of the audience attacked him for his statements, which they said were anti-Black. Each time he calmly answered, "I did not say that. Let me repeat what I said" and then he read from his paper exactly what he did say, which was often quite different from the accusation.

Those exchanges showed that controversial research can get very heated, and it is best to be prepared for follow-up discussions!

Many other meetings have been informative and gave members a great chance to meet old friends and make new friends. Exchanging news and professional gossip are also worthwhile activities.

Of course, our membership has changed somewhat, with a much smaller proportion from industry than in the past, and more people coming from consulting practices and academia. METRO's vitality has survived many changes. It continues to adapt and to create experiences that are satisfying, thought provoking and helpful for professional growth, and I keep showing up.

References

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