
A Web of Lives - The Gittinger Connections

Dick York, Ph.D.

When Ed Gunberg called about a program to honor John Gittinger I immediately responded, "Great - I'd love to and it *is* time," meaning while 38 years of memories are still retrievable. Events in connection with John show a rather continuous development of several strands in the web of our lives. For this very abbreviated story I will highlight my initial attraction to John's Personality Assessment System (PAS), a characterization of John in his own PAS terms, and a parallel interpretation of his behavior and contributions from my IFU perspective.

I first met John in 1954 when he was a consultant to our LSD clinical research project at the old Boston Psychopathic Hospital (BPH), subsequently renamed Massachusetts Mental Health Center. He came from an obscure funding source called the Geschichter Foundation every few months, spending much of his time teaching our small research team the elements of a developing assessment system, initially with just the famous I-E "quadrants". We put his ideas right to the test, where he predicted the LSD reactions of our "normal" volunteer subjects. We got substantial confirmation of his diagnostic predictions from the clinical diagnostics made by an independent psychiatrist who saw each subject near the peak of their drug reaction. The quadrants were Iu, Ic, Eu, Ec. The I-E axis he calls constitutional and the u-c axis experientially conditioned as spontaneous or reactive. As predicted, the Internalized subjects pre-LSD had more chronic schizophrenic-like reactions

to the drug, the Externalizers more affective, manic reactions while the c's had more turmoil and mixed reactions (York, Salvator & Rapperport, 1964). The then embryonic assessment system could indeed handle both "normal" and "pathological" adjustments, even including the connections between the two.

Other strongly appealing aspects of John's system became apparent as he continued his BPH visits from 1954 to 1957. This was the period of time when he was working out specifications for the Procedural and Social Role dimensions to complete what became named the PAS (Gittinger, 1982). It became obvious the whole framework provided a way to describe the characteristics and requirements of a task, social situation or cultural setting in the same terms used for describing individuals. This was most satisfying to a sociologically oriented clinician who found (1) contemporary social psychology focusing on small groups and, (2) clinical psychology, in its infancy, very addicted to Freud's intra-psychic model. I have found this type of linkage between individual and situation very effective and efficient in counseling as well as in initiating new programs in existing agencies, to assess the degree of "fit" and sources of potential stress. (A PAS "template matching" scheme will be found in Bem, 1983.)

There were other gaps on contemporary concepts and methods that John's system addressed. He operationally defined many stock in trade terms

such as repression, reaction-formation, projection, insight, dependency, sadism, etc. These were general, process-descriptive Freudian terms with systematic individual differences unspecified in developmental aspects. So with the PAS you cannot only specify the degree of repression or awareness a person has for a given behavior tendency, but provide a reliable description of the consequences for interpersonal behaviors. The linking of initial behavior tendencies with their developmental conditioning can indicate preferred behaviors and specific stress factors for a given individual.

The final but very persuasive appeal of the PAS was the way the Wechsler was utilized. By identifying inherent psychological functions as continuous or bi-polar variables, low sub-test achievement is not interpreted as a failure but as indicative of a different set of skills, attitudes or behavior tendency than does a higher sub-test achievement. The interpretation of positive or negative significance depends on other aspects of the person's make-up and the situation of concern. This has been called a "user kindly" aspect of the PAS and makes the test feedback process more fun and productive.

By the end of 1956 the intellectual and professional value of the then completed scheme of John's system was firmly fixed in my mind. We had transcripts of his informal staff talks and interpretations of individual profiles with various clinical research findings but nothing published explicitly PAS. The LSD project was coming to an end. Dr. Robert Hyde, the project director and Assistant Superintendent at BPH was going to become the superintendent of a re-opened Butler Hospital in Providence R.I., in order to transform it into a comprehensive Mental Health Center with considerable federal support. He asked me to go with him and three other research team members but I had decided to take the position of Director of Research at a new Veterans Administration (VA) hospital in nearby Brockton.

I had worked in the VA as a clinical trainee, as a staff psychologist and manager of a collaborative inter-hospital project. The VA regional people, my former supervisors and colleagues, had worked for some months to get the research position with a high pay grade. When that was certain I wrote a required formal acceptance.

Within a week of my telling Dr. Hyde of the final formality, out of the blue, he called me into his office to meet with "guess who" on an unscheduled visit. Yes, there was John with the gentle disclosure that he was from the CIA as was part of my pay on the project. "Would I please change my mind and go with Robert Hyde to Butler *and* a new project continuing with John's involvement?" Faced with the two most innovative professionals I knew, admired, and enjoyed, the outcome was certain. For the first (and last) time in my professional life I deliberately broke a written commitment. The stress was not lessened for me because I couldn't reveal the Gittinger part of the reason for switching but my VA friends were forgiving and the Washington office was aware of the importance in the national picture of the Butler experiment, starting with two large National Institute of Mental Health Research and Development grants.

John was a frequent visitor at Butler from 1957 to 1960. His research project was funded out of the newly established "Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology" in NYC and described in Butler's 1958 second annual report as a project "...to investigate the psychological, social situational factors determining reactions to chlorpromazine and to alcohol when a subject does not know which substance, if any, is received. Methods of personality appraisal and evaluation of social situations developed are finding application in patient care (Butler Health Center, 1958, p. 24)." The experiments were conducted in a simulated cocktail lounge in the basement catacombs of the very ancient asylum, with volunteer subjects from the staff of Out, Day and In-Patient services and

neighborhood volunteers also. John did his blind profile interpretations in clinical and other staff meetings so the PAS language became prevalent and the "System" institutionalized. (A number of events and agencies connecting people in the eventual formation of the PAS Foundation are described in York, 1982.) The Butler experience demonstrated the usefulness of the PAS as a clinical and staff development tool, making important contributions to the development of self-appraising, self-renewing culture. Currently it has been a great pleasure for me to experience at Hocking College an even greater integration of PAS models into scholastic and administrative processes.

Now, enough of the power of John's Personality Assessment System. What is there to say about John the originator, teacher, friend, and his "personality"? To sort out so many events and connections seemed difficult to describe briefly, until I realized it was not necessary to separate John from his system of description and analysis. The effectiveness and integrity of the PAS grew directly out of the makeup and experiences of its author. To describe John in terms of his own dimensions is, of course, ultimately very fair since any objections or disagreements can be dealt with on a level of playing field.

Accepting the definition of Global Intelligence as the capacity to see relationships, we know that John is not only very intelligent but even repetitively so. Just count the times he says or writes, "now this variable in relation to that dimension gives meaning in relation to this other term... etc." Back in the early days at BPH I was stopped by a secretary at one of those old disc transcribing machines. She said, "Can I ask you a question about Mr. Gittinger? You know we have talks by people from all over the world who come through here. I have typed talks by stutterers before but haven't encountered this very repetitive phrasing 'in relation to' before." I told her that seeing

relationships is a sign of intelligence and Mr. Gittinger is a very wise guy. I then hurried on without responding to her blank stare.

John's ability to see relationships which are outside the conventional, to experience intuitively the implicit orderliness in complex behaviors, and to frame or articulate the intuitively discovered in a logical, measurable manner describes a process germane to all scientific discovery and genius. On the personal level we benefit from his insightfulness, warm heartedness, true humility and nonjudgmental acceptance. These qualities stem from his astute observational capacity (E-ness) with the sensitivity and empathy (F-ness) contributing to his unpretentious role performances (Uo).

His role in psychological exploration and invention, touched on briefly above, is beautifully described by John in the first volume of the Foundation's Journal (Gittinger, 1982). In the role of teacher he followed a model well known in all enduring ancient traditions. It consists of face-to-face apprenticeship, teaching by example, and oral transmission. After Butler, I spent four years working directly for John in Washington. As a boss, I never heard him give an order to anyone or put anyone down, at least in the presence of others. We suffered no extensive staff or committee meetings. He never played favorites or used his boss status to dominate others. In trying to figure out how he managed an extensive network of people and operations in that manner, one key element came through. He spontaneously received from others that deep respect which mirrored his respect for them. So when he asked, it was done.

John's role as a Psychic permeates much of his behavior. He revealed aspects of ourselves of which we were unaware and taught us to attend to our everyday experiences in new ways. He has been consistent in avoiding the use of his intuitive skills for a power trip, a common pitfall of Seers and

Psychics. Rather he turned his intuitions into a productive tool for others to use.

For a while, it seemed he would be unable to describe one of his "psychic viewing" skills which is crucial to determination of the whole PAS profile pattern from Wechsler sub-tests. There didn't seem to be any way for John to teach us to see the "imaginary line" he saw on each scatter sheet, later called the Normal level. After 29 plus attempts Dave Saunders, with his famous hi-tech methods, rescued John and the rest of us from being labeled illusionists and we now have a formula to arrive at approximately what John gets intuitively.

Whenever I get into my "mystical and philosophical orientation" in John's presence he always says, "I just don't understand you I's." His statement can only be partly accurate since the quote on my orientation is from John's 1964 Atlas description of the basic IFU (Gittinger, 1964). While he may be especially object to praise as coming from an Internalizer source, he can and does own up to constructing a framework that brings us all together, with a "place" for everyone. At an Annual Meeting several years ago while John and I were reminiscing he remarked, "It's amazing how many different types the PAS appeals to." We thank you for shedding so much light on the web of life that binds us together John, and for the wisdom, honor, and integrity that marks your friendship.

REFERENCES

- Bem, D. J. (1983) Toward a response style theory of persons in situations. In M. M. Page (Ed.) *Personality-Current theory and research: The 1982 Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*. 30, 201-231.
- Butler Health Center. (1958). *Annual Report*. Providence, RI.

Gittinger, J.W., (1964). *Personality Assessment System, Vol. II: The I Series*, New York: Human Ecology Fund.

Gittinger, J.W., (1982). Origins of the Personality Assessment System. *Personality Assessment System Foundation Journal*, 1, 13-28.

York, R. H., Salvator, S., & Rapperport, A. (1964) *The predictive potential of Gittinger's theory*. Massachusetts Mental Health Center (Boston Psychopathic Hospital), Unpublished report to the Geschichter Foundation, Washington, D. C.

York, R. H., (1982) A developmental history of the Personality Assessment System Foundation. *Personality Assessment System Foundation Journal*, 1, 3-6.