

Biography – Allen I. Fleishman, PhD

Born and raised in the Bronx, I originally studied Pre-Med. All their weird and unique names did me in (after all, Ulna should be the first name of an ugly Hungarian barmaid). I switched majors to cognitive psychology. Cognitive psychology is the experimental branch of psychology looking at how we think and process information. I got as far as two years when I realized that the entire field of psychology is math illiterate. Psychology completely lacked the tools to study individuals. So I made the change to the University of Illinois and the mathematical/statistical end of psychology, where I received a PhD. At the U of I my work was entirely mathematical/statistical, despite the psychology major. My dissertation was a computer simulation examining ways to optimize prediction in the face of little data. I believe they still use the term 'Fleishman' as a synonym for a computer job lasting more than twelve hours (small jobs are pico-Fleishman). My only human experimentation was my infamous (at least at the local Institutional Review Board) study: "Asking my wife what she thinks", a factor-analytic study of one person. To those of us who studied psychology, it was an unpublished implicit personality theory study. I feel it demonstrated that current theories of personality (e.g., by Freud, Osgood, Cattell) are not universal. If everyone is idiosyncratic, then there will be people for whom the 'Oedipal Complex' is true and people for whom it is not. Furthermore, even for the Oedipal Complex people, it will be true at some times in their life, exacerbated by certain situations, but not all. Therefore, individuals and time/situation MUST be factored into any 'General Unifying Theory of Psychology'.

It is my strongly held belief that "Psychology is a Crock", until 1) every psych graduate student is completely proficient in time series analysis, three-mode factor analysis, cluster analysis and newer statistical multivariate and time series methodologies; 2) every psych PhD student has done at least one 'N of 1' research project; and 3) full professors would be expected to have integrated many 'N of 1' studies to demonstrate a theory. Any psychologist who confirms a theory by comparing two averages (across many people) or computes a correlation (across many people) at a single or a couple of time points should be laughed at, or pitied. Given that maturation takes decades, I can forgive ignoring time/situations, but never ignoring people – individuals. You cannot study people (Psychology) by computing averages. Those pseudo-psychologists who are unable to make the transition, should be moved over to Sociology, where group amalgams are appropriate.

I briefly taught statistics and psychometrics at a graduate school, when I switched to becoming a full time statistician for the pharmaceutical/medical device industry. I've been a statistician for the last 28 years, helping to prove that the drugs you take both work and are safe. I've witnessed the birth of a number of useful drugs, as well as their death when they aren't safe or effective.

For those of you who have heard the claim "Lies, Damn Lies, and Statistics", the answer is no. Statisticians are not liars – they follow very rigid rules which prevent lies, but liars (aka marketers) can take statistics classes. In case you're wondering why, it's the same reason the protagonist of the book, David, would never consider lying. If everything you do is being monitored and achieved, your truthfulness is completely open for review by those who have access to it (i.e., in the lingo of the story – the 'Ins'). Under those conditions telling the truth is as natural as breathing, with the negative equally true – lying is completely alien and doomed to certain failure.

A few years ago, my wife suggested I extend my writing from short blurbs on my D&D characters. I took up her challenge, thinking of plot lines on long commutes into Cambridge Mass (I live 30 miles west, but 2 hours away on bad days). I completely enjoyed the process. I would like others to enjoy my work, but realize that publishing is a one in ten thousand prospect. I know what a probability of 0.0001 means.

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