Bringing the Past Into the Present: Giving New Life to a Legacy in *Norms, Groups, Conflict, and Social Change: Rediscovering Muzafer Sherif's Psychology*

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In "Norms, Groups, Conflict, and Social Change: Rediscovering Muzafer Sherif's Psychology," the editors Ayfer Dost-Gözkan and Doga Sonmez Keith bring together an assortment of perspectives and discussion of the life and work of Muzafer Sherif in order to make his work relevant again. The different chapters—which vary from historical analysis, discussion of theory, and modern application—come together to uphold the modern importance of Sherif, his interdisciplinary work, and his experimental methods. In accomplishing this goal, the volume also offers poignant models for the modern social psychologist facing challenges of specialization and the preeminence of laboratory analysis.

Psychology has become a field dominated by specialization and compartmentalization, as a wide array of specific subcategories has emerged over the last fifty years. The resulting pressure is to define research within one of these narrow categories and more often than not, to use the laboratory in order to isolate specific variables. Within social psychology, laboratory experiments and the narrowing of focus have also become highly valued. While these approaches are important and do not prevent understanding the human as a whole, when employed alone, they make holistic analysis more difficult. As the social psychologist Fathali Moghaddam (2009) notes, "[Psychologists] do not have time for such 'large' questions, we are too deeply immersed in our specialized lines of research to be able to look about and critically examine the larger picture and our own development as whole persons. This continues to be the plight of the individual in an age of individualism" (p. 2).

The new volume, *Norms, Groups, Conflict, and Social Change*, highlights these struggles within the context of offering hope for managing them. The book details a successful path to managing the dilemma by describing the life, research and legacy of Muzafer Sherif (1905 – 1988), a social psychologist whose work was both interdisciplinary and employed naturalistic observation. Some of his most influential research brought together social and developmental psychology and was conducted with subjects in real-world settings. Despite his profundity and influence on current theories about group dynamics, Sherif is not a widespread part of psychological curriculum today. In this context, one may wonder: why is Sherif's contribution not often more explicitly recognized, why have the naturalistic

observation methodology and interdisciplinary approach that he effectively employed waned, and are the two trends connected?

This volume does not explicitly answer these questions, but rather advocates for a more prominent place for holistic analysis and natural observation experiments by breathing new life into Sherif's legacy. The book specifically employs a compelling, historically-rooted and truly interdisciplinary approach in constructing much more than a simple biography. The chapters span an array of approaches to studying Sherif, and together they fluidly weave a portrait of the man and his foundational work, while supplementing that with connections, applications and extensions that affirm the modern relevancy of his legacy for social psychology. Through this, the volume seeks to validate Sherif's naturalistic methods and interdisciplinary approach. Sherif, in fact, synthesized different traditions in psychology in a variety of ways. As noted by both Jaan Valsiner in the preface and the volume's editors, Ayfer Dost-Gözkan and Doga Sonmez Keith, in the introduction, not only did Sherif's work span the fields of social and developmental psychology (among others), but also his story physically bridges two cultures. He spent his early years in Turkey, first teaching at the Istanbul University Darülfünun, and then worked as a professor and researcher during his later years in the United States.

The volume begins here, in this historical and biographical background, before discussing Sherif's theories and their applications. The first part focuses on Sherif's early years as an academic. Both Sertan Batur's opening chapter on Sherif's youth in Turkey and Ersin Aslitürk's section on Sherif's beginnings in the United States demonstrate how Sherif's ideas were influenced and developed across countries and within the complicated sociohistorical context of the early 20th century. This background serves to orient a reader not familiar with Sherif to his life, while providing an important backdrop and basis for the rest of the book. For the lay reader or the student of psychology, this context is crucial because of how infrequently Sherif is discussed today.

From this opening, the volume proceeds in the second section to Sherif's years in the United States after World War II, while the third integrates the implications of his life and work on contemporary psychology. Each chapter is framed not as an isolated time in Sherif's life or aspect of his work, but rather as part of an intricate web that encompasses salient concerns for social psychology in the modern-day. Some of Sherif's iconic experiments that were based in rigorous research and real-life group dynamics are of prime importance in this section. In particular, his Robber's Cave experiment is mentioned in various contexts, giving it a broader significance than simply that of a single investigation. In this experiment, named for the State Park where it took place, twelve-year-old boys were brought to a summer camp and separated into two groups. Each group was put through a series of bonding activities in isolation from the other group, and in these activities, they developed their own names, cultures and group norms. When the two were brought into contact during a competitive phase involving games and prizes, the members of each quickly developed increasingly hostile attitudes and behaviors toward the

other, "out" group, while affirming the favorableness of their "in" group (Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961).

The Robber's Cave experiment weaves its way through the second section of this volume as the different chapters underscore its influence on an array of theories, topics, and psychologists. As a whole, this treatment of the experiment particularly upholds its naturalistic methodology as a relevant and effective model in social psychology. In Chapter 3, Donald K. Routh describes it, along with other experiments, as part of attempts by Sherif and his wife, Carolyn Wood Sherif, to emphasize the social focus of social psychology. Routh's argument bolsters applying the label of interdisciplinary to Sherif by stressing that the pair were heavily influenced by Durkheim's concept of "social facts"—that is, aspects of a society's culture that extend beyond the individual—and sociology in general. The Robber's Cave experiment remerges in Chapter 5 as part of Lucas B. Mazur, Rashmi Nair, and Johanna Ray Vollhardt's discussion of Sherif's influence as extending beyond much more than just this one, foundational experiment. The chapter starts by noting the role of the Robber's Cave work and its results in the formation of Realistic Conflict Theory, first described as such by Donald Campbell in the mid-1960s. This theory explains how opposition between groups and associated prejudices or discrimination emerge from conflicting ambitions and competition over limited resources. The strength of this theory and the underlying research lies not simply in its explanatory power, but also in its methodology. It offers insights into human nature—and especially the forming of norms and group relations—within the complex web of real group interactions.

The final section continues to draw on Sherif's research and analysis, but moves forward to bring it into relation with modern concerns for social psychology. As a whole, the section offers a compelling narrative that Sherif's work, despite remaining in the background of psychology curriculum today, has poignant influences and applications. Chapter 10 begins with the statement that if not for Sherif, there would not be Social Identity Theory (which describes how an individual's self-concept derives from how the person views their membership in a social group) or Self-Categorization Theory (which details the circumstances under which a person perceives a group as existing). From there, Michael J. Platow, John A. Hunter, S. Alexander Haslam, and Stephen D. Reicher compare and contrast an extensive array of Sherif's work with that of John Turner and Henri Tajfel, who developed these two theories in the 1970s and 1980s. In Chapter 12, Sandina Begić also makes an intriguing modern application of Sherif's work by employing a case study. She begins with the story of the detention and processing of a retired Bosnian army general for war crimes, and then uses the Robbers Cave experiment to employ theory on group formation and social change to a particularly powerful slogan that arose in the demonstrations following the arrest. Each and every chapter of this third section deepens this interplay between a historical understanding of Sherif and modern social psychology, its theories and its issues.

Overall, the book successfully reinvigorates Sherif's legacy through this portrait of a social psychologist whose methods and impact have moved to the background. Sherif, his work, and the path he set, however, are not completely lost in social psychology. Many researchers, including those in fields like cultural psychology and those in particular subfields but with wider collaborations and connections, do employ holistic lenses and build theories through methods that interact with everyday realities and behaviors out in the world. They are interested in not only what goes on in a lab—or with a Western, specific population—in order to understand the complex human being and his behaviors.

One clear example is the very author of this volume's concluding chapter: Moghaddam. That his own place in modern social psychology echoes that of Sherif is not a significant leap at all; his conclusion opens by paying homage to Sherif's influence on him and the practical model that Sherif provided for Moghaddam. Moghaddam's work includes such topics as intergroup conflict (based in a mixed methods and diverse approach), theories on social behavior relating psychology and the humanities, and an awareness of the power dynamics inherent in how the field of psychology disseminates and emerges differently in the first, second, and third worlds.

Perhaps most pertinent to this discussion and to his example in integrating differently fields is his work with Rom Harré on positioning theory. At its core, positioning theory examines why and how people act toward others, but reframes the discussion away from being a response to social stimuli. Instead, people find their position in respect to rights and responsibilities within storylines that they employ in constructing and describing personal attributes (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003). Rather than just focusing on laboratory results, strictly quantitative analyses or ideas that are pigeonholed into a particular context, this theory assumes a more holistic and narrative description of human behavior, incorporating the work of academic disciplines like anthropology, philosophy and political science.

While Moghaddam and others like him show that inclusive research and insights are possible, the challenges to conducting such work—and, especially, to reaching a more developed point in one's career where creating this intellectual space is possible—are significant. In higher education in the United States, undergraduates are often presented with set paths to achieve their degrees, completing sets of requirements and fulfilling specific obligations in their studies. At the graduate level, many programs and funding opportunities encourage specific definition and centering research in one tradition and a particular methodology. In order to step across boundaries, a developing psychologist must appeal to a value of "interdisciplinary" or "trans-disciplinary" work. This approach, though playing a prominent part in modern academia, does not have deep historical roots. As Valsiner highlights in the preface, this conceptualization did not exist during Sherif's time because academic departments had not been compartmentalized to the extreme that they are today. Now, "such inventions are social guidance devices that promote—but do not guarantee—the reintegration of ideas" (Valsiner, 2015, p. viii).

For a social-psychologist-in-training, the challenge to conduct holistic work can be even greater: he or she must conform to narrow academic specializations in graduate education and publish in journals with constricted focuses (Moghaddam, 2009).

Ultimately, the most powerful aspect of *Norms, Groups, Conflict, and Social Change* is how it offers applications and lessons for social psychologists today. The modern psychologist, or psychologist-in-training, reading this work can see Sherif's life and theory not simply as an outdated foundation, but rather as living, vibrant and persuasive justification for employing naturalistic methods and finding interdisciplinary spaces. The book's message is not to reject modern, narrow subfields and laboratories—which can produce poignant, specific insights—but rather to reexamine and reincorporate a more holistic approach that has been fruitful and pertinent. The volume conveys this lesson through an array of different approaches to examining Sherif's life and discussing his work, and the diverse chapters come together as a cohesive whole around this purpose. Thus, the book is a guide and an inspiration, rather than just a theoretical analysis or an analytic history. Considering Sherif's own life, it is quite fitting that a volume on him would seamlessly extend beyond the bounds of any one purpose and impact its reader in these varied ways.

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