

Muzafer Sherif. *Social Interaction: Process and Products*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967. Pp. vii + 512, \$9.75.

Sherif has been one of the most influential and productive social psychologists of mid-century. His initial work, conducted in the 1930s, consisted of a series of ingenious experiments on the "autokinetic effect," a phenomenon in which a fixed point of light appears to move about in a dark field. Sherif seized upon this as the main element of a set of experiments designed to test the effect of other people's judgments on the individual's beliefs. More generally, he was able to use the autokinetic effect as a way to test hypotheses about social influences on the person's perceptions, and of both of these on the development of the frame of reference by which the person interprets new perceptual stimuli. He recognized then how arbitrary definitions of situations may provide bases for interpreting reality and government behavior; how social norms and others' expectations influence the individual's beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Much later he extended his experiments from the laboratory to the field, demonstrating that intergroup hostility develops when one group attempts to reach its goals by preventing another from reaching its goals and that intergroup tension is reduced when two groups cooperate to reach their goals. Some of the political implications of this work are obvious and have been presented in the literature. Others, such as the implication that if Group A impedes the attainment of B's goal attainment but B does not impede A's goal attainment then B will "hate" A but A will not respond in kind, appear not to have been explored. One can easily imagine all the other possible combinations for two groups, and then generalize to three or more groups, but I do not think this has been done; this is unfortunate because this sort of elaboration on his thinking might well help us understand and soften today's ethno-economic rivalry.

This book is a resumé of Sherif's life work. The earliest laboratory experiments and their derivatives, the later field experiments and their implications, are summarized here by means of selected and edited articles, chapters, and lectures. The main two themes of his approach to knowledge are presented over and over again: theory without application is sterile; practice without theory is blind. So also is the main theme of his approach to social psychology: there is no one method by which all issues of the field may be resolved. Certain fundamental psychological and social influence processes are best studied by laboratory experiments. Questions of intergroup sentiment may be best studied in field experiments. Historical analysis yields real-life illustrations of phenomena known abstractly through experimentation.

Sherif's work reminds us that differences in behavior among persons at one time and of an individual at different times can be ultimately traced to individual and group efforts to bring order, and thus predictability, into the self and the environment. More immediately, his work shows individual behavior to be a series of responses (some innovative, of course) to social influences. This view is certainly not new to sociologists and economists, but Sherif, not they, has provided experimental evidence to demonstrate it. His position, nevertheless, contrasts with widely held (if often implicit) assumptions of his fellow

psychologists. Anyone who has worked with counselors in the school systems must be aware of how dominant is the position that factors within the person determine behavior. Such a position leads one to analyze the person in order to understand his behavior; one looks for constant drives, for hereditary factors, etc. Sherif almost completely ignores such variables. His "motives" are attitudes and they are conceived to be sociogenic. His position leads us to analyze the social environment of the person in order to understand his behavior. He looks to reference groups, norms, stereotypes, culture, etc., as concepts by which the social environment may be analyzed and the behavior of the person understood.

If you want to see much of the depth and breadth of thought of one of the greater contributors to social psychology—one who has contributed to theory, who is methodologically innovative, and whose conclusions are relevant to real social problems—then you will find this book rewarding.

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