

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PROCESS OF GROUP LIVING*

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This is an unusual *S.P.S.S.I.* meeting, the result of a last-minute decision to discuss the pressing problems of war psychology in spite of the difficulties of coming together. There was no time to prepare a survey of recent research work and to evaluate it fairly. I suppose people are able to get along anyway without the well-balanced words of approval and criticism with which presidential addresses feel themselves entitled to reward the good and to punish the bad colleagues.

However, I would like to discuss with you in a more informal manner some problems which are connected with the work of this society and the progress of psychology in that field to which this society is devoted. These problems and ideas are connected with *practice* and with *theory* in more than one way.

PSYCHOLOGY AND GROUP WORK

Since we will have no regular business meeting, it may be appropriate to start with a short report on the state of the *S.P.S.S.I.* After an enthusiastic beginning, the membership of our society has declined slowly but steadily. I'm happy, therefore, to report that this year a substantial gain in membership—70 new members—has taken place. Obviously, one of the reasons for this gain is the war. The desperate struggle in which we are involved has made it clear to an increasing number of people how vital socio-psychological problems are, and how imperative it is to approach them in a much more radical and earnestly scientific way. Many of those who have been well aware of this fact, as for instance the members of this society, still have found few channels for such work and have been frustrated in this desire to make a more intensive use of their psychological knowledge for the improvement of social life today.

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Now, the *S.P.S.S.I.*—thanks to the initiative of Ronald Lippit—has joined hands with the *Association for the Study of Group Work*. This association seems to have a position among the 10,000 group workers in the country similar to that of the *S.P.S.S.I.* among psychologists. Its more than 1,000 members desire a deeper scientific insight into their daily work: the handling of groups of children and adults of all social strata. The co-operation of both societies seems to promise an excellent means to satisfy the frustrated desires of both groups. The field is theoretically fascinating and of the greatest importance for the immediate war work and for the work which we hope to do to win the peace.

The first joint activity took place at the meeting of the *American Association for the Study of Group Work* some months ago at New Orleans, with the help of their president, Charles Hendry, Director of the Research Department of the Boy Scouts, and of L. K. Hall, of Springfield College, who represents the group work association in the joint committee with the *S.P.S.S.I.* This meeting dealt with the training of leaders and was a promising beginning for an elaborate plan of co-operation throughout the nation. Everyone of you is invited to take part most actively in your own locality. If I may judge from my own experience, you will find in such co-operation an unexpected widening of your horizon. There will be plenty of problems to put your teeth into, whether you are interested in leadership or in character education, in children or in adults, in measurement of attitudes or in psychopathology. Although the scientific investigations of group work are but a few years old, I don't hesitate to predict that group work—that is, the handling of human beings not as isolated individuals, but in the social setting of groups—will soon be one of the most important theoretical and practical fields. It is a commonplace knowledge today that science has failed most in making us understand group life, group structure, and group movements. There is no hope for creating a better world without a deeper scientific insight into the function of leadership, of culture, and of the other essentials of group life. Social life will have to be managed much more consciously than before if man shall not destroy man.

There are many indications that group work will not be limited to the problems of group management as such. Some of the recent

studies indicate the importance of a fact which has always guided the practice of revival meetings or the gatherings of their forerunners; namely, that it is easier to affect deeply the personality of 10 people if they can be melted into a group than to affect the personality of any one individual treated separately. I am looking forward to the time when more than a few psycho-pathologists will seriously face the implications of the fact that a dominant factor in psycho-pathology is the social situation of the patient. A temporary psychological isolation of the patient from the social world in which he suffers will probably always be one of the decisive tools for a beginning treatment. That does not mean, however, that the psychological treatment should be performed in a situation which approaches a social vacuum as closely as possible. The group of two—composed of patient and doctor—is only one of many groups of different types, size, character, and composition which should be considered. What group is best fitted for different patients and for different periods of the treatment is a question wide open for investigation.

We are slowly coming to realize that all education is group work. Education of children and adults, education in families and schools never deals with the individual on the one hand and the subject to be taught on the other. It is common knowledge that the success of a teacher of French depends as much on the social atmosphere he creates as on his mastering the French language or the laws of learning. Probably in no country have the schools been as much aware of the importance of group management for education as in the United States. Still, the psychologist who has spent an immense amount of time studying learning curves has left the problems of social management in education almost entirely to the practitioner, who is forced to base his procedure on the primitive method of trial and error, or upon a peculiar mixture of philosophy and instinct.

The situation is not much different in regard to the problems of group management in family life, in the factory, or in the army. Everywhere science has made but feeble beginnings toward studying the psychological result of different group organizations, group atmosphere, or different types of leadership for the productivity of groups in reaching their group goal; for the stability or instability of the group; for the happiness or tension among their members;

and for the thousand and one effects which the group has on the well-being, the development, and the character of the individual member. Yet, the manipulation of groups will be able to fulfill its immense function in education or in any other field of human endeavor only if it can be based on a scientific foundation. Throughout history, political geniuses have arisen who have been masters in group management, such as Napoleon or Hitler. The only hope, however, for a permanent foundation of successful social management, and particularly for a permanent democratic society of the common man, is a social management based to a high degree on a scientific insight which is to be accessible to the many.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND HUMAN NATURE

That American public opinion has been so slow in grasping the real world situation, that we started so late to arm, is, to a very considerable degree, due to the fact that everyone considers as "human nature" what actually is the character of his own specific culture. That a German news reporter could send from the front the dispatch (March 22, 1942), "much more than for wife and security are our soldiers longing for a new, a more beautiful, and a more bloody war" is hard for an American to realize. The people of this country flatly refuse to believe the existence of a culture which considers peace to be an unavoidable, but unattractive, pause between wars; a culture where, for generation after generation, the military caste has had the highest status in the social hierarchy; a culture which does not know the concept or the term "fairness"; a culture which, as Gregory Bateson has pointed out, is thinking mainly in terms of "rule or obey." We will have to pay a frightful price for the lack of understanding foreign cultures and there seems to be little hope for a better world organization after the war unless we learn these facts.

This understanding of the effect of culture upon the group life and upon the conduct of the individual has been much hampered by an incorrect formulation of the problem. Usually the question is raised: *Are human beings everywhere essentially alike or are they essentially different?* The democratic tradition favors the answers which sustain the essential quality of man. This sentiment has become still stronger and more determinant since the all-out

war of Nazism to establish, philosophically and practically, an all-out inequality of man. However, let us not forget that the democratic belief in the equality of man means—as you well know—the granting of equal rights to individuals of *different* character, race, or creed. This principle acknowledges essential differences between individuals and between groups; indeed, it encourages and safeguards these differences by promising tolerance for all but the intolerant. In other words, the democratic equality of man means the right of individuals or groups to be different.

This political credo, of course, does not prove that cultural differences are actually of great consequence for human conduct. One might say that many facts suggest that human nature is essentially the same everywhere. Are not all people given to love and jealousy? Is it not correct that “All people love peace”? Can we seriously doubt that the German soldier, too, would like to be out of the bloody mess in spite of the Nazi reporter?

To clarify the issue, let us turn to an experimental example. Studies of the ideology of children show that the eight-year-old child is frequently dominated by the ideal of “generosity.” If he has to distribute four good and four not-so-good toys between himself and another child, he is likely to give all four good toys to the other child and keep the poor ones. If one asks the child which toys he would “like” to have, he of course answers, “the four good toys.” But in spite of his wishes and likes, his action is dominated by his ideals. Similarly, the Nazi soldier might “like” peace. I feel sure, however, that at least 95 per cent of them are unable to conceive of a pacifist in any other way than of a disgusting coward and deserter.

Wishes and ideology are both important for the conduct of men. Which of these factors “is more important,” that is, which factor wins in a case of conflict, or which deserves more consideration, depends upon the particular situation and the problem on hand. In comparing modern cultures it might be correct to say that—by and large—the level of wishes shows a similar pattern and the same dynamics everywhere, and that the differences within one culture are greater than between cultures.

This level of wishes and individual temperament is important. However, instead of insisting on an “either—or” statement about the effect of culture, we should realize that ideology, too, is an

important determinant of conduct and that for certain problems ideological differences are decisive.

It would be a tragic mistake if the organization of the peace-to-come should be based on a misconception which has blinded American opinion in a most unfortunate way during the whole period leading to this war: namely, that satisfying the hunger of a nation for food and raw material suffices to make that nation peace-loving and democratic. If we want to establish a basis for permanent peace, we should be very clear that satisfying needs without changing culture will lead us nowhere.

What progress science will make in understanding the effect of culture on conduct and character will depend greatly on the ability of the psychologist to deal with these problems and to co-operate theoretically and practically with the group workers, the cultural anthropologist, and the sociologist.

APPLICATION AND THEORY

Why have we psychologists not done more in this important field? As it happens frequently in the development of sciences, objective difficulties and certain sentiments have converged to block the way. The psychological study of groups may be viewed as closely related to problems of "applied psychology." There was a period in psychology when theoretical and applied problems had equal status among psychologists. It may be that psychologists were a bit too bold or too naïve or too commercial in their endeavors in the field of application. Anyway, a period seems to have followed where the scientifically-minded psychologist did not look with much favor upon applied problems.

Today, it seems to me that a new type of synthesis is needed. We should be aware of the value of theory. A business man once stated that "there is nothing as practical as a good theory." During the last decade, psychologists in this country have increasingly realized the importance of theory for psychology at large. That this recognition comes slowly is, to my mind, all to the good. Although we need theory, we will have to watch out that theory never breaks loose from its proper place as a servant, as a tool for human beings. In some European cultures, science, together with religion, politics, or the state, has been considered for generations one of those super-

human entities which are supposed to rule rather than to serve man. In such a culture, the wife of the professor is addressed as "Mrs. Professor" and the wife of the Mail Carrier is addressed as "Mrs. Mail Carrier." This is only one of the many daily symptoms of the character of a culture which conceives of happiness as a mere biological fact and where participation in superhuman values is considered the only way to elevate man from the level of the animal. It may be that in such a culture theory progresses faster and the soldier is more ready to die for the state. It has been an outstanding characteristic of the culture of our country to see culture as the servant of man. I can conceive of permanent peace only in an atmosphere where equity and the dignity of man as man are fundamentals of human relations and of cultural values; where man is not conceived of as a tool for other men nor for the supposedly superhuman values of the state, of economics, the arts, or sciences.

In a democratic culture, the attitude of the man of action toward science and of the scientist toward theory should be similar to that of the public toward government. It should contain a great deal of distrust and an eternal vigilance against an over-extension of power. Given this as the foundation, however, we should be clear that neither the problem of government nor of theory can be solved by a negative attitude of neglect or hostility. A positive treatment is necessary; it is a question of "how" rather than of "whether or not." The weight of the government in politics and the weight of theory in science has to be great if they are to fulfill that function of leadership without which no democracy or science can live.

That research in the psychological problems of group life has not been more bold and more extensive is, of course, not only the result of the attitudes of the psychologist. There are very essential methodological difficulties which have to be overcome.

The first task of science is to register objectively and describe reliably the material one wishes to study. We have learned to register fairly accurately the *physical* aspects of behavior. But in regard to the *social* aspects of behavior, the task of objective scientific description seemed for a long time insoluble. Not many years ago, a methodological study of this problem in one of our leading universities came to the following pessimistic conclusion; observing

the inter-relation of a group of individuals, it was possible to collect reliable data about such items as, who moved his arm, turned his head, or moved from one place to another. However, no reliable data could be obtained about friendliness or unfriendliness or many other social characteristics of behavior. The study seemed to lead to the unfortunate conclusion that what can be observed reliably is socially meaningless and what is socially meaningful cannot be observed reliably.

Fortunately, during the last years, a number of studies have shown that, after all, the social aspect of inter-personal behavior can be observed with high accuracy and with a degree of reliability which satisfies fully the scientific requirements. It may be worthwhile to pause a moment and consider how this methodological step forward has been accomplished.

SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND INTERPRETATION

One of the fundamental difficulties is related to the distinction between "observation" and "interpretation." In all sciences, it is important to keep observation as free as possible from theories and subjective interpretation. In psychology, too, the observer has to learn to use his eyes and ears and to report what happened rather than what he thinks should have happened according to his pre-conceived ideas. That is not an easy task. Can it be accomplished at all in social psychology? Can a friendly or an aggressive act be observed without interpretation in the same sense as the movement of an arm can be observed?

Until recently the majority of psychologists were inclined to answer with an emphatic "no" and even today they may give that answer. Actually such an answer implies the impossibility of a scientific social psychology. If we ask the same psychologist, not as a "psychologist" but as an ordinary human being, how he gets along with his wife, he will probably be eager to tell us that—with few exceptions—he and his wife are well able to understand the social meaning of each other's behavior. If we were unable to perceive adequately and objectively the majority of social interactions with our colleagues and students, we would hardly be permitted to remain on the campus for long. Child psychology has established beyond doubt that within the first year of life social per-

ception is well under way. Within three or four years, the child can perceive rather complicated social actions. He is not likely to be fooled by the superficial friendliness of a hostile or uninterested aunt. He is able to "see through" such a surface. Frequently he seems to perceive more clearly than an adult the character of certain social inter-relations in his surroundings. This social perception has to be adequate in most of the essential cases if the child is to survive socially. Therefore, objective social observation *must* be possible and the psychologist should find a way to do in science what any normal three-year-old child does in life.

I think we would have sooner found our way, if we had not been blinded by philosophical considerations. For more than 50 years psychology has grown up in an atmosphere which recognizes only physical facts as "existent" in the scientific meaning of that term. The effect of this atmosphere can be observed in every psychological school, in the classical form of Gestalt theory as well as in Behaviorism. As usual, the conservative power of philosophy—this time in the form of physicalistic positivism—did its part to keep alive an attitude which once had a function for the progress of science, but which now has outlived its usefulness.

What is needed in social psychology today is to free its methodology from speculative limitations. We do well to start again with the simple facts of everyday life for which the possibility of an adequate social observation never could be in doubt because community life is unthinkable without it. Such an empirical basis should be one basis of the methodology of social psychology. The other should be a progressively deeper understanding of the laws of "social perception."

I would like to mention a few aspects of the problems of social perception. How is it possible today to get reliable observations of social action which could not be recorded reliably yesterday?

If a biologist is to observe the growth of a leaf during a fortnight, he will never finish his job if he tries to follow the movement of the ions contained in that leaf; nor will he succeed if he watches only the tree as a whole on which this leaf grows. The first prerequisite of a successful observation in any science is a definite understanding about *what size of unit* one is going to observe at a given occasion.

This problem is of fundamental importance for social psychology. For a long time, we have misinterpreted the scientific requirements of analysis and have tried to observe under all circumstances as *small* units as possible. It is true that sometimes a twinkle of the eye means the difference between acceptance or refusal of marriage. But that meaning is the result of a defined and specific setting. An observation which approaches the movement of the arm or head in isolation is missing the social meaning of the events. In other words, social observation should look toward units of sufficient size.

In addition, the observer should perceive the units in their particular setting. This again is by no means a problem specific for psychology. A physician who would cut up the X-ray picture of the broken bone into small pieces and classify these pieces according to their shades of gray would have destroyed all that he wanted to observe. To give another example, if two persons, *A* and *B*, are running one behind the other, it may mean that the first is leading and the second following, or it may mean that the first is being chased by the second. There is frequently no way to distinguish between these possibilities if the observation lasts only a few seconds. One has to observe a sufficiently extended period before the meaning of an act becomes definitely clear. One does not need to be a Gestalt psychologist or be interested in field theory to recognize these facts which are well established in the psychology of perception. All that is necessary is to acknowledge that the same laws which rule the perception of physical entities also rule social perception.

Like the physician who has to read an X-ray picture, the social psychologist has to be *educated* to know what he can report as an *observation* and what he might add as a more or less valuable *interpretation*. A transition exists between observation and interpretation in the case of the X-ray picture as well as in regard to social data. But that does not weaken the importance of this distinction. Observers have to be trained; then they are able to give reliable observations where the untrained person has to resort to guess work or interpretation. That holds for the flyer who has to learn to recognize enemy planes even under adverse conditions, for the physician studying the X-ray picture, and also for the social psychologist.

All observation, finally, means classifying certain events under certain categories. Scientific reliability depends upon correct per-

ception *and* correct classification. Here again the observers have to be trained and trained correctly.

There has to be agreement among observers as to what is to be called a "question" and what a "suggestion," where the boundary lies between "suggestion" and a "command." Exactly where the boundary is drawn between two such categories is to a certain degree a matter of convention. However, there are certain basic facts to be learned that are not a matter of arbitrary conventions. If the teacher says to the child in a harsh, commanding voice, "*Would you close the door?*" this should not be classified under the category "question" but under the category "command." The statement of one of our native Nazis that the President's neck is well fitted for a rope is definitely not to be classified under the category "statement of facts" nor under the category "expression of opinion," in spite of its grammatical form. In the attempt to be objective, the psychologist too frequently has made the grammatical form of a sentence, or the physical form of behavior rather than its social meaning, the criterion for classification. We can no longer permit ourselves to be fooled by such superficialities, and will have to recognize that the social meaning of an act is no less objective than its grammatical meaning. There are, of course, also in psychology boundary cases which are difficult to classify; however, experience shows that the observer who is well trained to look for the social meaning of the action is able to perceive correctly and to classify reliably his data.

We should be aware that the problems of social perception has very broad theoretical and practical implications. To name but a few examples: the development of better methods for psychologically correct classifications of social actions and expressions could be of great value for the legal and political aspects of free speech.

Recent experiments have shown that the training of leaders is to a high degree dependent upon the sensitizing of their social perception. The good leader is able and ready to perceive more subtle changes in social atmosphere and is more correct in observing social meaning. The good scout master knows that a joking remark or a scuffle during the ceremony of the raising of the flag is something different than the same scuffle during a teaching period or during a period of games; that it has a different meaning if the group is

full of pep or all tired out; if it occurs between intimate friends or between two individuals who are enemies.

SOCIAL UNITS OF DIFFERENT SIZE

Observation of social behavior is usually of little value if it doesn't include an adequate description of the character of the social atmosphere or the *larger unit of activity* within which the specific social act occurs. A running account of such larger units of activity should record whether the situation as a whole has the meaning of "discussing plans" or of "working," of "playing around," or of a "free-for-all fight." It has been shown that a reliable description of the larger units of social events is possible and that the beginning and end of such periods can be determined with an astonishing degree of accuracy. The statistical treatment of the data and their evaluation must carefully take into account the position of a social action within that unit to which it actually belongs. This is as important theoretically as practically. For instance, on the average, the democratic leader will give less direct commands and will more frequently place the responsibility for decision on the members of the group. That does not mean, however, that whenever a leader gives a command, he turns autocrat. In matters of routine, even an extremely democratic group might gladly accept a leader or a parliamentary whip who has to see to it that certain objectives are reached efficiently and with a minimum of bother for the members. The democratic leaders who may have to be careful to avoid commands in his first contacts might be much freer in the form of his behavior after the social character of the group and his position within it is clearly established. The social meaning and the effect of a command depends upon whether this command deals with an unessential question of "execution" or an essential problem of "policy determination"; whether it is an isolated event, which as Fritz Redl says is "antiseptically" imbedded in the general social atmosphere or whether it is one of the normal elements of this social setting. It is not the *amount* of power which distinguishes the democratic and the autocratic leader. The President of the United States always had more political power than the Kaiser in Germany. What counts is *how* this power is imbedded in the larger social unit and particularly whether in the long run the leader is respon-

sible to the people below him. In Hitlerism, the leader on any level of the organizational hierarchy has no responsibility whatever to the people below. The leader above him is his only judge and his only source of power.

Of course, much is a question of degree. However, two points should be clear; first, that a democratic leader is neither a man without power nor a traffic policeman nor an expert who does not affect group goals and group decisions; secondly, that the evaluation of any social atmosphere or organization has to take into account the full spacial and temporal size of the social unit which is actually determining the social events in that group.

It is clear that observation and theory in social psychology faces here a number of problems which we have barely started to attack. In physics, we are accustomed to recognize that an ion has different properties than the atom of which it is a part, that the larger molecule again has specific properties of its own and that a macroscopic object like a bridge, too, has its specific properties as a whole. A symmetrical bridge might be composed of unsymmetrical molecules and the stability of the bridge is not identical with the stability of its molecules. These are simple facts beyond dispute. In social psychology the same facts hold: the organization of a group is not the same as the organization of the individuals of which it is composed. The strength of a group composed of very strong personalities is not necessarily greater but frequently weaker than the strength of a group containing a variety of personalities. The goal of the group is not identical with the goal of its members. Frequently, in a well-organized group, the goals of the members are different. For instance, in a good marriage the husband should be concerned with the happiness of the wife and the wife with happiness of the husband rather than the husband and wife both being concerned only with the happiness of the husband.

That a social unit of a certain size has properties of its own should be accepted as a simple empirical fact. If we refuse to see any magic into it, we will be better prepared to perceive these units correctly and to develop methods for their scientific description.

The greatest recent progress in methodology has been made in the study of relatively small units: of the single social acts and of face-to-face groups. Some of the characteristics of group structure, for

instance the degree of sub-grouping for work, can frequently be recorded with rather simple means. Sometimes a filming or a recording of the physical grouping of the members gives a fairly accurate picture. Beyond that, methods have been developed which I think, are able to secure a pretty adequate and reliable picture of the social atmosphere and the social organizations of the group. The leaders and sub-leaders within the group can be determined and their form of leadership can be measured accurately in a rather short time in many face-to-face groups. Such measurement makes it possible, for instance, to determine typical forms of social management of the good leader and compare it with the typical forms of group management of the poor leader in the same organization. Such measurement is obviously of greatest importance for the training of good leaders. We should be aware of the fact that good leadership in one organization is not necessarily good leadership in another organization. Leadership should be tailor-made for the specific organization. Even the symptoms, for instance, for an autocratic leader are fairly different in different types of activities. They are different in teaching, in dancing, or playing football. They are different in recreation, in the factory, or in the army, although they all are parts of one democratic culture.

In studying and evaluating problems of leadership or other social actions, we should be careful to determine how much in that social setting is *imposed* on the life of the group by the rules of the organization or other social powers which limit the freedom of action by the members of the group. There is not much chance of distinguishing the democratic from the autocratic scout master within the opening ceremony of flag raising. The way a foreman in a factory treats his workers might be determined by a fight between union and management to such a degree that no training of the foreman in social management could affect the social relations between the foreman and the worker to any considerable degree. In this case, a change in the relation between management and union would be a prerequisite to any essential change in the foreman's behavior. Such an example shows clearly that the size of the social unit which has to be taken into account for the theoretical or practical solution of a social problem is not an arbitrary matter which can be decided by the social psychologist in one way or the other. What

social unit is decisive for a given social behavior is an objective question and a problem which has to receive much consideration in any social study.

For instance, the interest which the church or the school which sponsors a Boy Scout troop has in scouting and the status which scouting has in the community might be more important for the membership and the group life of a scout troop than the behavior of the scout master. It is of prime importance in studying morale in the army to know whether the loyalty of the soldier is preliminarily directed toward his squad, his platoon, his regiment, his corps, or to the army as a whole.

In studying the relatively small face-to-face groups we are, I think, well on the way to measuring even such more dynamic properties of a group as the degree of group tension, the degree of cohesiveness, and, of course, its ideology. It is possible to conduct experiments, with a group as a whole, which fulfill the requirements of standardized settings to a degree not much different from what we are accustomed to require of an experiment with individuals. It is possible, also, to study empirically the question to what degree group life, in a given case, depends upon the specific personality of its individual members.

Some properties of groups such as the degree of homogeneity of its ideology can be measured on all sizes of groups. On the whole, however, we are at present much less able to deal adequately with the properties of the social units beyond the size of a face-to-face group. One of the reasons seems to be that the time period which has to be taken into consideration for one unit of events within this larger social group is frequently of considerable extent. The action within a smaller unit—particularly if one deals with children—lies usually within the grasp of an observer who spends an hour or two watching the group. This provides him with a sufficient background to perceive the meaning of the social acts he wishes to study. However, to determine the social meaning of a foreman's conversation with a worker, a continuous observation of the foreman alone, even for weeks, might not suffice. It might be necessary for adequate observation of the foreman to attend a number of meetings of the workers, of certain committees which include

management and workers, and to attend some meetings of the management.

In studying such larger units, the interview of certain persons is one of the most essential means of investigation. It is very important to know in what position within the group one is likely to find the best "informants." The psychologist can learn much in this respect from the cultural anthropologist. The questionnaire which has been somewhat in disgrace in psychology may come back in a slightly different form for the study of group life and particularly of the ideology of a group. We are gradually giving up the idea that the answer to the questionnaires or interviews is an expression of facts. We are slowly learning to treat them as reactions to a situation which is partly determined by the question, partly by the general situation of that individual. We have to learn to treat questionnaires as we are accustomed to treat a projective technique. In short, we need most urgently a real theory of questionnairing and interviewing which offers more than a few technical rules.

The difficulties which lie ahead should not discourage us. I think social psychologists have every reason to be confident and somewhat proud about what has been accomplished within the last years. After all, who would have been bold enough to predict five years ago that we would be able today to measure social atmospheres, measure and train leaders, to study group tension and the process of group decision in the way in which we can do it today.

One technical point seems to hold great practical promise for the future: although groups of different sizes have their specific problems nevertheless certain dynamic characteristics seem to depend more on the structural properties than on the absolute size of the group. Therefore, we might be able to investigate the properties of large groups on relatively small scale models. We don't need, for instance, to study whole nations to find out to what degree our perception of the ideals of other persons depends on our own culture. We can study the same phenomenon in the eight and eleven-year-old child who perceives the degree of egoism, generosity, of fairness of his surroundings according to his own degree of egoism, generosity, or fairness.

To mention another example: the morale of a group of any size seems to be stronger if its action is based on its own decision and

on "accepting" its own situation. For instance, the ability of an individual to "take it" in a shock situation is much greater—according to a recent study of the Harvard Psychology Clinic—in persons who create this situation themselves than in persons who are pushed into the situation from without. A comparison of a lecture method with a method of group decision for changes of food habits in housewives shows that the method of group decision is much more effective.

The success of the fight for equality of an underprivileged group seems to depend greatly on finding leaders who have fully accepted, for better or for worse, their own belonging to this minority or who have joined spontaneously the underprivileged group, as it happened in the French Revolution.

CO-OPERATIVE RESEARCH

There is one last point I would like to mention. The scientific study of group life is frequently beyond the scope of the work of a single psychologist or those small research co-operatives which are customary. We will have to resort to research co-operation on a much larger scale. This is an important and by no means easy problem, the solution of which will greatly depend on the way in which we psychologists ourselves act as a group.

This brings us back to a problem which is of basic importance to the *Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues* and to its members. Science and research is not a product of isolated individuals called "scientific geniuses" but is a co-operative endeavor deeply connected with the culture of the people in which it occurs. There is no country anywhere in the world where the social status granted to psychology as a science and the opportunities given to the psychologist as teacher and research worker approaches that opportunity which is granted to him by the public and the government in these United States. Whether we will live up to this opportunity and responsibility will depend largely on the degree to which we see the problem of psychological research as a part of a group process. In other words, it will depend upon the way in which the psychologists organize themselves as a group and the degree to which they apply scientific insight and democratic principles to their own organization.

The *S.P.S.S.I.* is one of the organizations of the psychologists of this country. Our members, I suppose, are quite democratically minded. We are all deeply interested in the scientific study of social problems. But as a group, we have, I feel, just started to get together and to experiment about the best organizational means to promote such studies. There is more than one famous example on hand where a number of excellent psychologists were gathered together for what seemed to be a natural task for co-operative endeavor and where the result has been much hate and little accomplishment. For every co-operative task, there exists an optimum combination of independence and organizational unity.

A half year ago, the committee on "Leadership and Morale" of our society was re-organized. Instead of being a planning committee, which tells other people what they should investigate, the committee is now composed of psychologists actively engaged in, or responsible for, research in this field. This experiment with a circuit of research workers, who run under their own steam, but are glad to accept help from each other whenever they need it, seems to be nicely underway after a promising start under its acting chairman, Alvin Zander.

For a decade or two, psychologists have been dreaming of getting "close to life." The progress in scientific methods of the last years has brought us closer to the "real" problems of life than we have ever been before. As long as our experiments dealt with the individual in the laboratory, our troubles were rarely worse than persuading a reluctant colleague to use his students as subjects or persuading a hard-boiled superintendent to permit our using the children in his schools.

Today, things look a bit different. The boss of a powerful organization might be eager to have certain problems of his organization studied, but he might be as eager to prevent the appearance of any data which, to his mind, would be detrimental to the prestige of his organization. We might be dealing with such highly organized, at the same time rigid and extremely sensitive social bodies, as the army or a factory. In such, and in many other "hot" situations, the psychologist is bound to wonder whether he has not stretched out his hand a bit too far into the "real social life." After all, he had planned to make science and not politics his work.

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, we might as well be clear that the psychologist is caught, for better or for worse, in a situation which is unavoidable. The study of social relations, of groups and of their culture, will, of necessity, bring us in close contact with all the social forces which are ruling the life of these groups. We might be able to handle these problems more or less cautiously and more or less wisely. But we will have to be prepared for occasional attacks by local or national politicians. Goodwin Watson, the editor of the yearbook of the *S.P.S.S.I.*—which, by the way, seems to be highly successful—has been honored by such an attack. We were happy when this affair was finished victoriously for him by an unanimous vote of the Senate. It is clear that no one can face such problems single-handed.

The *S.P.S.S.I.* can help to organize and to facilitate the study of social problems by providing certain channels of research. However, an organizational frame-work means little in itself, particularly in a democracy. The success of the *S.P.S.S.I.* and the success of the psychologist at large will depend on the same factors which determine the success of other group endeavors in a democracy; namely, on the courage and the determination of its members and on the vision and the wisdom of its leaders.

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