



GORILLA, MAN-WOLF AND OTHER PECULIAR PEOPLE: HOW DO FAMOUS CASE STUDIES IN PSYCHOLOGY INFORM US

Ljubomir Žiropada (2021). *From Gorilla to Man-Wolf (Selection of Interesting Cases in Psychology)*. Belgrade, Serbia: Algoritam, 21 cm, 168 pages

Contemporary psychology appears to be ambivalent regarding case study as a method. On one hand, authors of elaborated handbooks on the method in the very foreword warn potential researchers to be prepared their studies to be underestimated (Yin, 2007). Authors of some often -referred textbooks in methodology of psychological research treat case study as just one of qualitative methods (Todorović, 2016). The other authors analyze the method more thoroughly, paying more attention to problems than to benefits it carries (Fajgelj, 2020). In his book Žiropada had chosen to describe and to critically evaluate course and outcomes of those cases that simply stood out as overall fascinating phenomena. Such cases often can be considered starting point in defining, and source of the most convincing evidence in favor of particular perspective on some significant psychological phenomenon, despite method's undisputable metodological limitations. This review will be presented by provisionally grouping cases in groups of those who possessed remarkable abilities, those who had lost common abilities due to a brain injury, those who became involuntary subjects in a natural experiment due to severe deprivation they were exposed, and those whose cases which bare great significance for psychopathology understanding. One of eleven cases reported falls out of classification proposed, namely the case of Catherine "Kitty" Genovese, victim of violent crime which galvanized research on readiness to help out persons in trouble and peril.

Gorilla (!) Coco would be classified in the first of groups described. Coco was not the first chominide to raise attention of comparative psychologists (just remember famous Gardners' chimpanzee Washoe), but certainly constitutes the most documented example of members of her species mastering some of symbolic functions. Thanks to Francine Patherson who taught, instructed and tested Coco, she became "bilingual", being able to actively use over 1000 word signs from sign

language, and to comprehend about 2000 English words. Her intelligence was measurable with Stanford-Binet scale, while she displayed a sort of self-consciousness by reacting to her own image in well-known mirror test. Coco also made kind of jokes by misleading people with false sign messages, and she unequivocally expressed sorrow when she learned that actor Robin Williams who she knew died.

Solomon Shereshevsky whose case described Alexander Luria lived a less happy life. His incredible memory apparently was based foremost on unique blend of eidetic and synesthetic abilities, but also on well-known mnemotechnics he employed in memory tasks. However, Shereshevsky's brilliant memory apparently disrupted his abstract thinking by making him difficult to notice regularities and patterns in materials he was exposed to. Besides that, constructing metaphors and grasping abstract concepts were operations that put him in trouble. Consequently, he was not able to express his thoughts and ideas clearly and concisely. In Luria's words, Shereshevsky's extraordinary ability could not help him to avoid "passive-receptive" attitude, and faith of a failed man, as Jerome Bruner described him.

Most of the cases presented are neuropsychological ones. Henry Gustave Molaison, famous H. M., was at the age of 27 subjected to surgical procedure of bilateral lobectomy to treat his intolerable un-focal epilepsy bursts. On that occasion his hippocampus was removed along with other associated subcortical structures which, to his misfortune, later will be proven to play a crucial role in consolidating primary memory contents and its transfer to long-term memory. H. M.'s became the most famous amnesic syndrome case, he was sentenced to living in, as it was described "eternal now", and to pursue a "career" of subject in various neuropsychological research that lasted longer than fifty years. His memory problems served as the most compelling evidence for separating short-term from long-term memory system, but also provided valuable insights into autobiographical memory functioning, and neural basis of explicit and implicit memory. Phineas Gage experienced what seemed to be a miraculous recovery from dramatic head injury that left him without significant portion of frontal lobe tissue, unexpectedly retaining most of his memory. On the other side, Gage's character has changed notably, he has lost abilities to plan and initiate his own actions, all together pointing unequivocally at significance of unhampered intact frontal lobes activity for domains of psychological functioning mentioned.

Following two neuropsychological cases suffered from specific language deficits. Gustav Theodore Leborne got his nickname Tan Tan after only syllable he was able to pronounce repeatedly. His case is the first thoroughly documented case of aphasia, the disorder marked by inability to speak while being able to comprehend speech. It was Leborne's misfortune which brought him to Pierre Paul Broca's surgical ward, but which also allowed Broca to thoroughly examine and follow Tan Tan. Only after post-mortem was Broca able to cautiously conclude that it was damage to specific, restricted area of left frontal lobe that was responsible for Tan Tan's

language difficulties. In years that followed his initial findings Broca's discovery was further corroborated by histories of other similar cases, term "aphasia" for the disorder became widely recognized and accepted, and the brain region damaged in Tan Tan got the name that we use today – Broca's area. G. R. was a person who after self-inflicted head wound had suffered brain damage comparable to that caused by epilepsy in Tan Tan. Besides speech disruption characteristic for aphasia, G. R. displayed a complex pattern of deficits in reading and writing marked by semantic paralexias (replacing words red with other words semantically similar), inability of reading pseudowords, problems with reading words belonging to specific word categories, to name but the few. Pattern of G. R.'s problems which he was unable to overcome was established and defined as deep dyslexia, a disorder different from already well known and described surface dyslexia. Studying those disorders later led to establishing and further corroborating famous Dual Route Model in normal reading.

Sydney Bradford and Susan Wiley "Genie" both experienced severe deprivation that lasted years. S. B. virtually lost his sight at the age of 10 months, and remained blind for next fifty some years (he regained vision at the age of 52 after cornea transplantation), but was able to integrate acquired tactile experiences with some of his later gained vision faculty functions. His case forcefully pointed out vision scientists to significance of studying vision in joint action with other senses. Genie was deprived of any social contact at the age of 20 months when her father locked her down in a room denying her any contact with the rest of the world. Studying consequences of Gennie's isolation that lasted 12 years had significant impact on understanding role of social factors in cognitive and language development, as well as for understanding interplay of those abilities in normal development.

General public might well be most familiar with cases involving psychopathology. Famous Little Albert's case was thoroughly revisited, starting from Albert's history prior to the research, the research background and theoretical foundations, through detailed description of the very process of fear classical conditioning to the epilogue of this famous experiment. Case of Shirley A. Mason, aka Sybil, is probably the most notorious multiple personality case, Sybil having had as much as 16, some of them even of male gender. After 10 years of treatment that included psychotherapy, but also hypnosis and sodium-amytal ("truth serum") application, Sybil's recuperation consisted of integrating all the personalities into one of her own. Recovery enabled her to continue her life professionally engaged in helping emotionally disturbed children. Author of the book has paid the most of attention but also addressed sensible critique to the case of Pankeyev, Freud's Wolf-Man. This case, the one of four, some consider possibly five, of Freud's thoroughly described cases is the least mentioned and reviewed in literature. However, the case was of extreme importance for Freud, because in his opinion it contained all the data necessary for establishing his concept of infantile neurosis as the major factor of neurosis development in

an adult age. Notably, this concept of Freud's departed far from Jung's infantile ethiology neglect and from Adler's denial of sexuality importance in neurosis understanding.

Cases that were selected were presented in historical context, with reference to similar cases. Each case's distinctive features were thoroughly explained, and its significance for wider themes in psychology understanding was carefully highlighted. Quality that distinguishes this book from even the most well-known literature of the kind (e. g. Rolls, 2015) lays in scrutiny and healthy criticism author displayed in analysing both evidence on the cases and original conclusions drawn from cases' analyses. Here we present only a few examples to illustrate our point. Paterson who spent years with Coco often was the sole interpreter of signs Coco created which makes her reports a bit questionable. Some of Luria's Shereshevsky's performance explanations, especially the one of eidetism, were based solely on Shereshevsky's introspective reports. Contemporary reconstructions of H. M's brain have shown that his hippocampus was to a significant extent preserved. There exist testimonies that P. Gage's behavioural problems were largely overstated. It was not before 7 months after Sidney Bradford's operation that examinations started. Little Albert's fear was not unequivocally generalizable, and attempts of fear conditioning in other kids often failed. Sixteen personalities of Sybil might have appeared not spontaneously but in the course and as the consequence of amytal treatment. Sybil's problems might have been over exaggerated for commercial purposes. Finally, several authors today dispute diagnose Freud established in Man-Wolf's case and claim that infantile neurosis borne no significance for problems he was treated for. Authenticity of materials collected during almost 1300 hours of psychoanalytic sessions was also questioned.

Author had used numerous footnotes to explain several concepts from the main text, which made book understandable to a reader without deeper knowledge in psychology but willing only to occasionally look in dictionary for some professional expression meaning. Had the footnotes been included in the main text and book equipped with references list, author and subject indexes, it would have possessed all the qualities required from a textbook in psychology. Obviously, this was not the author's intention. He had chosen instead to enrich book with numerous vivid, even jovial details and remarks such as the one of Tan Tan being able besides syllables to shout swear, or that Pankeyev spent an equivalent of today's 285.000 dollars on his failed psychoanalysis, etc. Hence, in our opinion, "From Gorilla to Man-Wolf" is the book which in the best manner popularizes and praises psychology, unlike numerous editions which despite such aims declared and proclaimed actually trivialize it.

■ REFERENCES

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