WALLY LAMBERT'S CONTRIBUTION TO UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Wally is best known for his work on second language learning, and for his great success in applying these ideas and findings in the community and in the classroom. Less well-known are his contributions to understanding social behaviour in Canada and internationally. This short tribute is intended to serve as a reminder that Wally made substantial contributions to this broad field.

In the early 1970s there was a growing concern for understanding social behaviour in broader social and cultural contexts than were the usual basis (which were typically artificial laboratory settings). A clarion call was issued for a new approach to examining social behaviour in more natural and larger contexts by Israel and Tajfel (1972). At the same time, in Canada, a similar approach was being advocated (Berry & Wilde, 1972). In the Canadian case, the question being asked by some psychologists was whether for Canadians (as a people occupying a unique territory, and managing a society with a unique set of institutions) there are particular social behaviours that accompany these unique social and cultural features. At the forefront of this discussion, Wally presented his views in an article with the title "What are they like, these Canadians? A social-psychological analysis" (Lambert, 1970). In this overview paper, Wally sought to take stock of some core features of Canadian society, and some social behaviours that are related to them.

These issues were followed by an edited textbook (Berry & Wilde, 1972) with the title "Social psychology: The Canadian context". This volume bought together the writings of historians, essayists, poets, and political scientists, as well as research by social psychologists. The Foreword was provided by the historian Arthur Lower, who outlined some of the historical features of Canadian society that should be examined for their psychological import. These included: early colonisation (mainly from Europe), subsequent immigration, and the vast territory that came to be incorporated into the country. He concluded that the role of such an approach to social behaviour is"… to illuminate the nature of our own humanity, to make ourselves comprehensible to ourselves, to cast light on the mysterious course by which a given collection of human beings takes on form, shape, character, and secures a local habitation and name".

The 1972 textbook included a paper by Anisfeld and Lambert (1972) which used the 'matched guise' technique that was introduced to social psychology a few years earlier by Wally. This technique involves asking people to listen to the recorded speech of bilingual speakers reading a passage in English and in French. Then participants were asked to rate the speakers on a variety of psychological characteristics (such as tall, good looking, amusing, intelligent etc). The speakers were the same persons speaking, but in both language 'guises'; furthermore, there were no visual or other cues about the speakers. This allowed Wally to argue that the ratings (both the terms used, and their evaluations) could provide evidence about the stereotypes and attitudes held by the participants toward English- and French-speaking Canadians.

Wally attended a conference in Istanbul in 1971 (where we met for the first time), presenting a seminal paper on the French- language immersion project (Lambert

& Tucker, 1971). The conference attendees were amazed at the findings that he reported; other psychologists and educators internationally soon attended to this approach and set of empirical findings. As noted by other contributors to this volume, the world of second language teaching and learning took a whole new course.

In addition to studies of language and social attitudes, Wally carried out a parallel programme of research with children. This included an international study of the views of children about foreign peoples (Lambert & Klineberg, 1967) and another international study of child-rearing values (Lambert, Hamers, & Frasure-Smith, 1979). Wally also contributed much to the understanding of the development of children's personal and ethnic identity (Lambert, 1981) and to intercultural relations (Lambert & Taylor, 1996).

Beyond these focused projects and reports, Wally was concerned with providing broader overviews of the field of social psychology and of his own contribution to it. Early on, he wrote a general textbook in social psychology with his brother Bill (Lambert & Lambert, 1953; revised in 1973). He also sought to draw together the various stands of his numerous contributions in more general volumes (Lambert, 1972; Reynolds & Lambert, 1991). These latter volumes are very helpful for us to grasp his broader vision of the complex relationships among culture, society, language and social behaviour.

We owe an enormous debt to Wally, not only for his core contribution to understanding the teaching and learning of second languages through his development of language immersion programmes, but also for his substantial contributions to understanding social behaviour in context, both in Canada and internationally.

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