

| *A review and appraisal of behavioral science self-surveys by five universities in the light of their value for medical social workers.*

The Behavioral Sciences and the Professions

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THE CONTRIBUTION of the social sciences to the practicing professions has received increasing attention since World War II. That concentrated investment in mutual destruction produced, ironically, a major impetus to the science of human behavior and relationships. None of the "helping professions" today is without its contingent of members who advocate infusing professional knowledge and practice with social science theory and research.

There are, however, serious obstacles to effective collaborative work. The patterns evolved in the physical and biological sciences for relating basic and applied research do not apply directly to the field of human behavior and human relations. The social sciences are in about the 17th century in their development relative to the natural sciences. Yet the very fruitful division of labor between theory-focused and practice-focused research which has been evolved between the natural sciences and their related fields of application continues to challenge social scientists and social practitioners.

A stimulating analysis of practice-science relationships in the social field is one of the outcomes of the surveys of the behavioral sciences conducted at Chicago, Harvard, Michigan, North Carolina, and Stanford Universities during 1953-54 under the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation. The surveys have been reported in administrative documents issued separately by the universities (1-5). Of particular interest to medical social workers and others in the health field is the survey conducted at Harvard. The Harvard Survey Committee included six professional schools in its study: medicine, public health, dentistry, business administration, education, and law. I have drawn on the Harvard survey particularly in preparing this review. The Michigan survey also included a particularly useful discussion on the utilization of the behavioral sciences in the professional fields.

One cannot read these documents without becoming aware of the striking similarity of the problems which physician and industrialist and lawyer and social worker encounter in seeking to make use of social science theory and research. This similarity stimulated the present attempt to identify common elements in the relationships of professional fields and the behavioral sciences and to suggest some of the conditions for effective collaborative work.

A parenthetical note is in order before proceeding to this review. For purposes of this paper the distinction between the behavioral sciences and social sciences is not important. Behavioral science is the term which the Ford Foundation has adopted to cut across the con-

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ventional divisions of knowledge concerned with individual behavior and human relations. The term thus makes it possible to exclude portions of political science, for instance, which are historical or philosophical and to include work going on in biology, geography, or law. Behavioral science cuts across the present organization of academic fields, but, in spite of this, coincides to a large extent with the subject matter of the traditional social sciences. The term social science is used throughout this paper except when the term behavioral science appears in a quotation or refers to the surveys.

The General Atmosphere

A reading of the behavioral science survey reports brings out a fundamental difference between the social sciences and the professions which can be expressed best as a difference in atmosphere or climate. There are three ways the difference in climate is expressed.

The first has to do with the premium placed on action in the professions as contrasted with development of knowledge in the social sciences.

In discussing the law school, the Harvard committee wrote, "The lawyer is attuned to the pressure for relatively immediate practical action. Many social scientists . . . resist being drawn into the vortex of action responsibility. . . . A social scientist . . . is likely to be interested primarily in the struggle for adequate noncontradictory generalizations. . . . The lawyer, on the other hand, is likely to be interested in general descriptive theory primarily insofar as it yields a clue to the solution of particular problems demanding action" (2a).

The subculture of all the professions is action oriented. The subculture of the social sciences is oriented toward analysis and explanation. This difference in climate has to be recognized in understanding the interaction processes of persons who come from the diverse backgrounds of science and practice.

Another difference in climate has to do with the deeply ingrained anti-bureaucratic, anti-hierarchical attitude of the social scientist and the ready adjustment of the professional to administrative policies and channels and to organizational requirements.

The mere conduct of the behavioral science surveys was seen as a threat by the social scientists. One social scientist at Harvard said, "The philosophy, in part, behind [these surveys] appears to be that science and scientific investigation can be channelized, organized, or even evaluated. Taking the latter, I know of no objective criteria for establishing whether a given project in basic research is 'good,' 'sensible,' 'useful,' 'worthwhile,' or even 'sane'" (2b).

Another one said, "I'm afraid you might come to some conclusions about the areas of potential growth in social science. I feel the area of potential growth lies exclusively in a genius having a new idea" (2b). This is typical of the academic individualism which prevails in the basic social sciences.

Viewed ideally, the university is a community of scholars who are roughly equal in authority and who are self-directive and self-disciplined (6). In contrast to this there is a comparative absence of the ideal of equalitarian anarchism in the professional schools. In the Harvard business school, the survey committee commented, "It is interesting to note that there have been no expressions of outright faculty opposition to central administration of the research program by the Division of Research" (2c). On the contrary, there were suggestions as to how the Division of Research, which presently "administers" the research program in the school and does not "direct" it, could be strengthened as a facilitating, coordinating, and planning unit.

In the Harvard Medical School the doctors found the anti-organizational bias of the social scientists puzzling and troubling. The physician is accustomed to being responsible to the patient and the hospital and to his colleagues and has difficulty accepting the social scientists' preference for a free scholarly approach.

The typical problem in a professional field is likely to cut across a number of scientific disciplines, and a group approach is frequently essential. Persons involved in establishing group research projects had better be sensitive, however, to the social scientist's resistances to having his work organized and made subject to an administrative hierarchy.

So much for climate. Additional differences

could be noted, but the point here is that climate does differ, and special attention to problems of acclimatization is required if the social scientist or practitioner is to survive and be useful in an alien setting.

Differences in Goals

Now, as to differences in goals, the typical goal of the social scientist is development of adequate laws or generalizations or theories to account for the portion of the world that he studies. The typical goal of the practitioner is knowledge as a guide to actions for which he is responsible. This statement implies a black-and-white contrast between science and practice, but it should be understood that there are various shadings of gray in the actual way in which a particular social science or profession may present itself. Some of the social sciences are much "purer" than others in the sense of seeking knowledge for the sake of knowledge. There is considerable variation between campuses in this regard. The committee at Harvard concluded that, on the Harvard campus at least, "the balance seems definitely to favor the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake" (*2d*).

Just as theory rather than application takes priority in the social science disciplines, so does research methodology become a goal which is seen as worth while in itself. This acceptance of tool development as a worthwhile goal in itself is seen perhaps most clearly in the strong support expressed in several of the surveys for strengthening the field of mathematical statistics. The attitude reflects a division of labor in social science which is so taken for granted it is not always explained or justified.

However, there are some dissenting voices in the social sciences themselves with respect to methodological preoccupations. One Harvard social scientist commented that social scientists are more preoccupied with ways of thinking about problems than in actually working on them (*2e*). And another one quoted approvingly a comment of Freud's to the effect that there comes a time when you ought to stop cleaning your spectacles and take a look through them (*2f*). All of this simply underscores the fact that between the black-and-white contrasts

being pointed up here, there are important shades of gray.

Perhaps one other difference in the goal of the social sciences and the professions is worth noting. In the professions, the object of research is not simply the condition being treated, whether it be a disease or a falling profit rate or the breakup of a family. The practitioner is interested in the facility for treating the condition. In the medical social work field, this means the physician and hospital, the medical social worker, and the various resources that can be called into play in working with the patient. Action must always be guided by understanding of both the condition and the treatment. To the scientist, however, the treatment may appear too variable to lead to knowledge of general significance, and it will not be the focus of his research as frequently as the condition being treated.

So much, then, for differences and similarities in goals. The differences appear, we must recall, at the point where two activities which are seeking to maintain their institutional identities come together. Seen from a broader view, the goals of the professions and the social sciences are unified within the broad societal goals which form the ground within which a division of labor has taken place.

The Methods of Science and Practice

There are just two contrasts between the methods or procedures of the social sciences and professions which I want to report to you from the surveys made of the social science departments and professional schools. One is the widespread use of the case method in all the professional schools, but particularly law and business administration. The stress on the case method reflects, I think, the basic caution of the practitioner about the danger of the "trained incapacity" of the social scientist, to borrow one of Thorstein Veblen's terms. That is, the social scientist, by focusing on that portion of reality which is abstracted and brought into focus by theory, may obscure the larger context of the object of study.

An interesting instance of this came up in a discussion between a sociologist and social case-work teacher at the University of Michigan

during one of the discussions of a faculty seminar on the research basis of social welfare practice. This seminar participated in the behavioral science survey at that university. The sociologist had reviewed the findings that had been developed in social psychology about the effect of class status on the way a child responds to frustration. He then wanted to know why material of this kind could not be organized systematically and taught to social work students in place of the time-consuming and un-systematic method of case teaching. The case-work teacher finally traced her reluctance about following such a procedure to her concern lest students see class status as the only or primary factor in the child's reaction to frustration instead of as one of several forces operating in the child's experience.

The case method of teaching assures that generalizations and theories such as those about the influence of class status will always be seen in the context of the total life experience of the individual. Professionals always have to take into account the total situation which falls within the province of their particular service, not just a conveniently circumscribed aspect of it. This is probably one of the important reasons for the retention of the case method in law, in business, and in social work even as knowledge has become better organized and systematized.

The other characteristic method of the professions, as contrasted with the social sciences, in carrying on their research and educational work, is an intimate and continuing interaction with the applied field. The Harvard Law School's Committee on Legal Education said on this point, "[This professional nexus] is the only practicable insurance against getting lost in intellectual blind alleys. The scholar who isolates himself from the practice of his profession easily confuses what is intellectually challenging with what is really significant in human affairs" (2g). Now to the social scientist, exposure to and involvement in the complex and practical concerns of a profession is a hazard and may subvert his ability to make his peculiar contribution. Isolation from the concerns of a profession, on the other hand, is a hazard to the professional and may render his contribution peripheral or irrelevant.

There are many more characteristics of the social sciences and the professions which are pointed up in the behavioral science surveys. I have not attempted a systematic cataloging of them but have selected those which I think are particularly relevant to the situation of medical social work and the social sciences. The question now comes, what are the implications of this review for research and teaching in medical social work?

Suggestions for Collaborative Work

Several general suggestions for collaborative effort can be found in the survey volumes. Before reviewing these, it is worth noting the expressions of conviction about the worthwhileness of collaborative work. A visiting committee of scholars from other universities, which was assigned the task of reviewing and commenting on the report at Harvard, wrote: "The net impression is imparted that collaboration is fraught with very great difficulties. Its advantages are so great, however, that we wish to express our belief that the gains are worth the costs" (2h).

From the University of Michigan Survey Committee comes this appraisal of the need for more active collaboration between professional schools and social science departments: "The professional school staff member is likely to be intimately acquainted with the history and the current institutional factors in the field situation. This rapport with administrators and practitioners in the field gives him valuable insights into relevant problems and variables. Those behavioral scientists whose work requires a field setting will undoubtedly find it desirable if not necessary to work in collaboration with professional school faculty who may approach the same substantive situations with somewhat different interest" (3).

A wholesome warning not to exhaust one's energies in looking for the best pattern for relating professional practitioners and social scientists is given in the Harvard report. The Harvard committee observes that the organizational formula which might insure fruitful research remains, like the philosopher's stone, undiscovered. Formulas put forward eagerly by one or another exponent of science in prac-

tice are suspect in any case. The fact is that collaboration remains more of an art than a science and must be played by ear if errors are to be corrected as they appear.

Nevertheless, considerable wisdom about collaboration between the sciences and fields of practice is embodied in the surveys.

The first point I wish to report is the consensus in these behavioral science surveys that the adaptations of science to the professions must take place in the professional schools. For social work, this means the application of the various behavioral sciences to social work problems will not come about if dependence is placed on departments of psychology, economics, or sociology to do this work. It must be done within and by the professional schools themselves.

The School of Education at Harvard provides an example of a bold approach to this problem. Some years ago the Harvard School of Education established the laboratory of human development and brought in a psychologist to head it. Its present head is an anthropologist. The laboratory was designed as a social science research center, not as a research service available for teachers and school administrators. The problems selected for research are those seen by the scientists as important and amenable to research with the theory and methodology available in the sciences.

Noting the heavy emphasis which has resulted on basic rather than applied problems, the Harvard committee states: "Some might feel that the School was neglecting its responsibilities to the educational profession by taking this position. It is felt, however, that more applied problems will eventually be more adequately solved if they are attacked with the methods and assumptions which have been developed by basic research, than if they are approached on an ad hoc basis. It is possible that this policy of the school will result in the neglect of more applied problems and too much emphasis on basic research, but the behavioral scientists on the staff do not think it will" (2i).

Every profession would be strengthened if a few of its professional schools set themselves the long-range task which the laboratory of

human development at Harvard has set for itself. It is worth noting that this research center is organized around one component in the educational process: the child. Other components such as the organization of the school system, the selection and training of teachers, and so forth, will need to be met with other research resources.

The surveys contain examples of other models for incorporating behavioral scientists into the professional schools. The School of Business Administration at Harvard provides us with a case in point.

A committee in the School of Business Administration expressed concern lest a scientific approach result in singling out one part of a problem, and underscored heavily the importance of seeing and weighing all the facets of a problem in the practice of business administration. The committee writes: "It is this recognition of the multidimensional character of the problems of business administration which has led to the belief at the School that the adaptation of the basic disciplines of the behavioral sciences to the problems of business administration must be made here at the School, rather than by various groups of behavioral scientists themselves. Each problem must utilize knowledge, insights, and techniques of analysis derived from more than one of the behavioral and social sciences" (2j).

How to tap the contributions of the social sciences for business administration? A number of procedures are suggested, but perhaps the crucial one is this: "There is need to add to the permanent faculty a few men thoroughly trained in the range of behavioral sciences embraced by the Social Relations Department who would serve as focal points in the faculty to assist in the adaptation of these fields to the problems of business administration" (2k). Note that it is assumed the men brought in will remain social scientists and not become experts in business administration. But their attention will be focused on the problems of business, and their research will draw heavily on the business setting for its data.

Of course, the presence of social scientists in a professional school will not affect theory and practice in the field through some mysteri-

ous process of osmosis. Provision must be made for collaborative work on the part of social scientists and professionals in concept formulation and research and writing. The committee in the Harvard business school wrote on this point: "The School has recognized that research is essentially a full time activity. The School has set forth as a goal, therefore, that each member of the faculty can have the equivalent of one year in three free from instruction responsibility to engage in research" (2l). This is an ambitious goal. It is based, however, on a realistic appraisal of the investment required in time and energy from the field of practice if collaborative work between practitioner and social scientist is to bear fruit.

Another way to achieve a setting for productive collaborative work between social scientists and members of professional schools is the device of dual appointments. A social scientist is given faculty status both in his own discipline, thereby protecting his own career line, and in the professional school, thereby giving him an identification with the profession and its goals. This arrangement is already in effect in several universities and no doubt has value.

If we turn to the health field, both medicine and public health, we find in the Harvard report numerous statements indicating uncertainty as to the best procedures for fostering collaborative effort. The committee states: "We are unwilling at this juncture to make specific permanent recommendations with regard to integration of behavioral scientists in the health area. There are a number of fundamental issues which involve both the behavioral sciences and the health schools on which policy decisions must be made on both sides before any sort of organizational change could be reasonably advocated" (2m).

Of the several factors one can look for in the Harvard report in explanation of this uncertainty, the underlying one seems to be the self-sufficiency of medicine and the extremely effective indoctrination which medical education is able to achieve with respect to the goals and the methods and the theory of medical care. The committee encountered extensive ignorance about the social sciences in the medical school faculty, and many doctors saw no difference be-

tween the role of social scientists and trained social workers. There were some who had strong feelings that the social scientist was not really scientific, failed to understand the problems of the physician, and did not accept the type of responsibility which seems natural to the physician.

The social scientists, on the other hand, saw the doctor committed to short-term goals which made difficult the conduct of research that did not have an immediate pay-off. Also they found that the doctors tended to insist on administrative "control" of projects, thus threatening the integrity of the research as seen by the social scientist.

Out of this analysis of the problems of research in the health setting, the Harvard committee came up with a proposal that parallels almost exactly the proposal which the Michigan faculty seminar on the research basis of social welfare practice, referred to earlier, developed with respect to the field of social work. Let me quote:

"The experience of the committee in preparing this report has made patent the need for a forum in which the study of human behavior in relation to medicine can be continued. . . . It is recommended that a standing committee drawn from the faculties of the Schools of Public Health and Medicine with appropriate representation from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences be established. The nucleus of the committee would consist of an executive secretary and sufficient clerical help to enable it to function continually. As conceived, the committee would in no sense make policy or act as an authoritarian body but would exist primarily as an interfaculty study unit and consulting service . . ." (2n).

Essentially, the approach arrived at by the Harvard committee and the Michigan faculty seminar is to avoid elaborate administrative machinery and to provide, instead, staff service and research funds to stimulate cooperative work between interested behavioral scientists and interested members of the professional school faculty. No centralized direction of research effort is contemplated, but instead a building on existing interest and strength. The approach rests on the faith that the best way

to define problems and plan research is to do research. Regardless at what point one starts, an encounter with the data brings to the fore the salient problems and directs research effort along these lines.

Conclusion

The kind of surveys sponsored by the Ford Foundation and carried out by the five universities are valuable and have their place. They are an excellent first step in establishing communication and in identifying common interests and goals. Not until research is under way, however, not until particular social scientists and particular members of practicing professions sit down together to design research and collect and analyze data, will we be able to answer the kinds of questions which caused the Harvard committee to refuse to make specific recommendations as to how to integrate the social sciences and the health professions.

Medical social work is in a strategic position in many respects to work out and demonstrate effective ways of bringing the specialized approaches of the behavioral sciences to the problems of practice in both the health and welfare fields. Medical social workers know their way around the health field; they are aware of the subculture of the hospital and clinic;

and they share the same sense of responsibility as does the medical doctor with respect to the patient. At the same time, the primary focus of the medical social worker is the same as that of the social scientist: individuals and institutions and their interaction.

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Application Deadlines Waived

Deadlines for filing applications for research grants for studies of limited scope and size have been waived by the National Institutes of Health of the Public Health Service in order to provide rapid and flexible support for meritorious, limited studies. As of March 21, 1956, the usual deadlines of March 1, July 1, and November 1 have been waived, on an experimental basis, for about one year.

Types of applications still subject to "regular deadlines" are those that request more than \$2,000 plus indirect costs or request more than

one year of support or supplements to existing grants or applications.

Other policies and rules governing applications remain in force. If more extensive support should be required to continue the studies initiated, the investigator should apply for a grant according to the usual deadlines. Grants are not intended to support research typically designed for writing a thesis.

All applications as well as requests for forms or information should be addressed to the Division of Research Grants, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda 14, Md.