

1952

Methods of social research and their application to social casework.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/13371>

"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."

Thesis
Mendelsohn
1952

Boston University
School of Social Work

METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH
AND THEIR APPLICATION TO SOCIAL CASEWORK

A Thesis

Submitted by

Irene Gordon Mendelsohn

(B.A., Calvin Coolidge College, 1946)

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science in Social Service

1952

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
LIBRARY

that are specifically adaptable to social casework.

The author shall attempt to answer the following questions in the development of her study.

1. What is the nature of the relationship which obtains between social casework and social research? Can one field contribute to the development of the other? What are the contributions that have been made and can be made by either of the two fields to the other? What are some of the obstacles facing the mutual contribution of the two fields to each other?
2. What are some of the basic principles in the social research process that make research in the field of human relations scientific? What are some of the pitfalls facing the investigator of human relations? How can these basic elements be applied to social research in the field of social casework?
3. Although there is a plethora of methodologies and techniques in social research, some seem to be more amenable to the social casework process than others.²

2. The distinction is made between methodology and technique on the ground that methodology refers to a general orientation to a theoretical framework in resolving a research problem. The method for studying a problem is usually reflected in the type of study that is designed for placing the problem in its theoretical context. Techniques, on the other hand, are the actual instruments that are used in conducting the study (e.g., questionnaires, analysis of case histories, etc.)

Which are they? How can they be best used in doing research in the field of social casework?

In attempting to resolve these questions the author has examined a number of works pertinent to social research in social work. She has gone over many studies in social casework with the aim of establishing some of the research principles, methods, and techniques that were used in conducting these investigations. The author drew on her experience both as a student of social research in social casework and as a medical social worker involved in a research project on the treatment of the chronically ill in a large New York City hospital. She has attempted to synthesize these approaches into a systematic evaluation of the materials pertinent to the problems posed.

With regard to the scope of this paper, it should be noted that the author does not attempt to examine and evaluate every facet of research in human relations, nor does she presume to discuss the problems of the philosophy of science that are inherent in the discussion of the systematic investigation of human relations. What she will attempt to do is to limit her discussion to the elements of social research that are most salient to social casework research. She will use illustrations and examples from the field of social casework to explain and highlight many of the points that will be made.

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

In the early days of both social work and social research in the United States close ties existed between the two disciplines. The American sociologist of the early 1900's concerned himself with the problems of the breakdown of family life, the integration of immigrants into American life, the problems of criminality, slum-dwelling, and so forth. In his research he leaned heavily on the aid afforded by social workers. Sociology departments featured well attended courses on "social problems" and "social disorganization". As the social work field became more professionalized, however, the old "problem" areas in the field of social relations became the fitting subject matter of a discipline which is "one of society's instrumentalities for adjusting social programs to individual needs and for creating special services for those whose needs are not otherwise being met"¹-social work. On the whole, the old "social problems" courses offered in academic sociology departments have been replaced by the "social process" types of courses.² At present many social workers are expected to

1. Olive M. Stone - "What Can Social Case Work Contribute to the Social Sciences?" American Sociological Review, 15: 66-73, February, 1950.

2. The reader is invited to examine the bulletins of colleges and universities where sociology has been taught for the past 25 years as testimony to these shifts in emphasis. See L.D. Zeleny's article, "New Directions in Educational Sociology and the Teaching of Sociology," American Sociological Review, 13: 336-341, 1948.

carry on meaningful research projects in the most complex areas of interpersonal relations.

In reality what has happened is that a schism has developed between the body of scientific knowledge that contributes to the profession and the profession that applies this knowledge to every day social problems. Social science credits itself with its contributions to social work and social work lays claim to its influence on the social sciences. "Actually," Stone points out, "neither the sciences nor the professions could get along without the other. The profession that tries to feed on itself stagnates. The science that ignores the validation of its hypotheses by tested practice becomes aridly abstract. It is therefore wholesome that present emphasis tends more and more to be not upon what each owes the other or deserves recognition for contributing, but how the two fields are or can be in constant interrelationship, providing a healthy and necessary cross-fertilization."³

Stone goes on to point out that:-

In considering how social case work and the social sciences aid each other, it might be well to trace their common ancestry before examining their mutual interests, methods, and concepts. Social case work and social science both claim descent from the case method of social study of which Le Play was an early exponent....Social scientists have used this case study method for social investigation and for social description. Social workers have applied it to the analysis and treatment of individual problems and needs. Both social scientists and

3. Stone, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

social workers have long employed the case method of teaching.

The mutuality of relationship between social case work and social science is recognized by Kimball Young as well.⁴

Social casework is concerned with social action which must of necessity involve moral judgments. The latter, in turn, are rooted in the cultural matrix of our society. In contrast, social psychology has to do with the collection and generalization of facts with a view to the systematic formulation of laws of social behavior. Yet both fields may and do contribute to each other. The contribution of casework to social psychology would be greatly enhanced by further development of objective measures of their operations. On the other hand, social psychology may learn much from casework, not only of facts regarding behavior, but in many techniques of securing data.

Elizabeth Herzog of The Jewish Family Service in New York was interested in what social casework wants of social science research.⁵ The author sent a questionnaire to 125 family and children's agencies listed under the National Conference of Jewish Welfare, requesting the formulation of question areas in which research was most needed. Focus was placed only on those problems connected with casework and not with administrative problems.

Five groups of questions were discerned in the responses received from the agencies.

1. General problems relating to casework process.

4. Kimball Young, "Social Psychology and Social Casework," American Sociological Review, 16:61, February, 1951.

5. Elizabeth Herzog, "What Social Casework Wants of Social Science Research," American Sociological Review, 16: pp. 68-73, February, 1951.

2. Specific practices in specific situations.
3. Evaluation of casework results.
4. Effects of background factors - economic or cultural.
5. Size of agency and nature of community in relation to casework practice.

Herzog found that the questions in group 1 were concerned with the shift from the client-centered to the process-centered casework view. The second group referred to deriving adequate information about treatment of specific problems such as dependency from statistical analysis. The third group of questions are concerned with objective criteria for evaluating casework effectiveness. The focus of the fourth group is on the types of effect that social and cultural factors have on the entire casework process. The fifth and least pressing group of questions centered on problems involving the size of the agency and the nature of community in relation to casework practice.

Herzog concludes in her paper that:

Aside from its challenge and stimulus to research efforts, social work has much to offer the social scientist through its content. Olive Stone has reviewed some of the content values, though perhaps greater emphasis could be laid on the fact that so much of casework centers about the process of change, a process of key interest to the social sciences...Sociology and anthropology might profit also by closer scrutiny of the role and function of social work in our society.

In Stone's article to which Herzog refers, the author discerns three important ways in which the concepts of social case work can contribute to the social sciences:

1. In the use by social scientists of methods and techniques common to social science research and social case work:
2. In the use by social scientists of analyzed and unanalyzed case-work data:
3. In the review or analysis by social scientists of their own data as tested through case work practice. ⁶

The author argues that:

Social scientists have given scant and often superficial attention to interviewing method and content. The subject is treated briefly in books on statistics. Social case workers on the other hand, have devoted considerable space in publications, as well as time and attention in classroom and field work courses and agency supervision, to testing, and analyzing, presenting, and teaching the principles, methods, and techniques of interviewing... Much can be learned by the scientist from the social worker through discussion, reading and observation.

With regard to the second type of contribution, the author points out that both the analyzed and unanalyzed case data "are not readily usable in their present condition". The writer recommends that "the intermediate step of summarizing a wider variety of case information than is now available except through direct resort to individual case records be taken".

With reference to her third area of contribution, Stone has this to say:

Social case work is not merely a possible laboratory offering data for analysis and conclusion, it is a testing ground for hypotheses developed by the social

6. Stone, op. cit., p. 68.

scientist....The sociologist concerned with social problems may test his hypotheses regarding the family roots of delinquency or dependency against a study of case findings. The economist may like to examine the psychological springs and effects of such customary economic practices as relatives' responsibility for support.

In the same vein the author indicates that the social psychologist can learn about the impact of change in people's attitudes by studying case work records.

In conclusion the author makes a plea for genuine teamwork between social case work and social science. "Fundamental to all studies involving the individual are 'the orderly thinking and disciplined feeling' demanded alike in social case work and in social science. What the case worker adds is a special ability 'to extract valid information from people,' and because he knows how to interpret non-verbal responses along with the verbal, to draw valid inferences from the data thus obtained".

While admitting that there is mutual contribution between social case work and social psychology, Kimball Young feels that social case work must clear up several facets of its process before it can make a realistic contribution.⁷ "Not only must our casework theory and practice be interpreted in terms of our particular value system, but the student of human conduct who has a cross-cultural orientation will realize that we have as yet no proof of there being anything necessarily super-

7. Young, op. cit.

ior in our interpretation of social behavior. One of the most needed things in social work and especially in casework, is a broader understanding of cultural differences".

Young lists six areas of factual delineation facing research in social casework, before its significant contribution is made.

First, he feels that some standard unit such as the family must be agreed upon in order to apply any form of measurement or systematic statical objective analysis.

Second, the author calls for agreement on standardizing the categories of diagnosis and process used by workers and agencies.

Third, he feels that social casework must develop adequate indices of personal and social maladjustment that can be applied uniformly.

Fourth, Young asks for adequate measuring instruments of the effectiveness of casework process on individuals beyond the rather crude "Movement Scale" developed by Hunt and his associates.

Fifth, he calls for systematizing efforts to delineate success and failure so that predictions regarding the efficacy of different processes and goals can be determined.

Sixth, Kimball Young asks for more attention to recording

details of the interview, so that their data can be of more value to the researcher.

William E. Gordon, a long-time research enthusiast in the field of social case work, has this to say about the relationship of research to social work:⁸

The attempts to establish the common elements between social work research and social work seem to have relied mainly on: (a) the kind of phenomena studied (people in need, cases, receiving service, etc.) (b) the setting in which research is conducted (social work agencies, programs, etc.) (c) the kinds of problems dealt with (administrative, evaluative, etc.) or (d) the processes studied...

Much of the dissatisfaction of research with social work arises from the difficulties of conducting studies which are not vitiated from the start by the assumptions which must be accepted without testing or by samples too small to be "reliable". Research includes a considerable body of principles and techniques for conducting such studies with the goal of discovering valid knowledge or facts.

It is clear from the foregoing discussions that there is a recognized relationship of mutual interdependence between the social sciences and the field of social casework. Common roots, interests, and in some cases, techniques lay the basis for a still closer tie between the two disciplines. However, before further integration can be achieved certain steps must be taken. As has been pointed out, social case work and social science must be made progressively aware of each other's potential contributions. Social science must begin to take renewed

8. William E. Gordon, "The Professional Base of Social Work Research - Some Essential Elements," Social Work Journal, 33:19, January, 1952.

interest in the data made available by social casework and the inherent problems of both the social work process and its administration. On the other hand, social casework is faced with the monumental task (a task in which social science research can be of considerable aid) of producing the uniformities of approach and categorization that are necessary for systematic fruitful research. Another task facing the social casework field is that of familiarizing itself with the new techniques of social research.

We shall now turn to an examination of some of the various social research principles, methods, and techniques, and we shall note how they have been applied to casework studies in the past and how they can be applied to casework research in the future.

CHAPTER II

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

The data of social science are awfully complex. It is said. And they involve values that sometimes put a strain on the objectivity of the investigator even when they do not incur resistance from the vested interests of our society. However an important part of the trouble has very little to do with the subject matter of social sciences as such but, rather, is a product of our own bad working habits.¹

This statement by Professor Stouffer of Harvard lays the ghost of the old-fashioned notion that the study of human relationships cannot be "scientific". For, as Lundberg points out, "When a general criterion or definition of science is attempted it is found that such definition tends to be in terms of method rather than of subject matter. All that the terms "science" as applied to particular field come to mean is a field which has been studied according to certain principles, i. e., according to scientific method".²

Rather than enter the polemical arena of discussing the controversy over whether the social sciences are scientific or not, we shall concentrate on the scientific methods of social research which can be readily applied to social work.³

1. Samuel A. Stouffer, "Some Observations on Study Design," American Journal of Sociology, LV: 355-362, Oct., 1950.

2. George Lundberg, Social Research, p. 4.

3. In the paper by William E. Gordon previously cited, the author says, "Social work research may be defined quite simply and traditionally as that research which contributes or attempts to contribute to social work knowledge, its organization and verification." p. 20.

All too often we hear that it is practically impossible to study the social behavior of human beings systematically (that is, so accurately as to make predictions) because of the complexity of human behavior. By complexity is meant in these arguments that individual behavior is so unique in each specific instance that it is impossible to relate the behavior patterns of specific individuals to general over-all manifestations of social behavior among large groups. Lundberg is in essential agreement with Stouffer with regard to this issue. "The complexity of human society...is largely a function of our ignorance of it." Granting the fact that individual human beings manifest unique differences in their social behavior, social science focuses on the similarities between individuals and groups and operates towards understanding the types of differences that do exist.

Lundberg presents the argument of a fictitious social
 4
 worker.

"No two cases are alike," objects the social worker, "the technique to be employed in the different cases is tremendously variable. It varies with every detail of my personality and that of my client. It has to be momentarily adjusted on the basis of actual developments in the course of the interview. How can statistical studies of large numbers of cases, resulting in some average or type be of value in such practical situations?" Objections of this kind can be regarded as resulting only from a misunderstanding of what scientific description and statistical techniques imply. The facts as stated are, of course, true. But

4. Ibid, p. 25.

wherein are such practical problems of diagnosis and treatment in any way different from the problems of applied physical science? Is not the physician confronted with the same situation? Of course, no two cases are exactly alike in all respects. To be sure treatment must be modified on the basis of observed reactions during its course. But who would contend that the principles of diagnosis and treatment on which the physician works are therefore useless? And how are these principles developed? They are arrived at by careful recording of large numbers of different cases and their responses under treatment - a statistical generalization.⁵

Before undertaking a scientific research study of social relations in the area of social casework problems, the investigator must pay strict adherence to three basic principles of social research:

1. The statement of the problem must be put in such terms as to make a meaningful piece of research possible.
2. The hypotheses must be stated so that they can be proved or disproved.
3. The method of resolving the problem must be reflected in an adequate study design.

Failure to comply with one or more of these principles may result in limited studies.

5. Lundberg continues: There is the fact that in all its complexity there is to be observed, even by the casual student, certain patterns, sequences, and order in the multitudinous activities of a social group. Its behavior is by no means haphazard, random and impossible to predict. On the contrary, if we take a group of which we are a part or which we know well we find that most of its behavior is of a highly routine, uniform and predictable nature.

We now turn, in this Chapter and the following one, to a more detailed examination of the three principles, present some of the difficulties surrounding them, and examine their implications for research in social casework.

The Difficulty of Selecting a Research Problem

The enthusiastic challenge, "Let's do a study" is a familiar one to many social caseworkers and social casework administrators. The challenge usually grows out of some need to answer a pressing problem, fill in some statistics for an annual report, serve as background material for some speech to be delivered before a community audience, for the purpose of "evaluating" a technique or program, and so forth. Once the need is felt, it is customary for the agency to appoint a committee to see that the survey is carried out, and usually some caseworker who is already burdened with her own case load is saddled with the extra burden of conducting a "study" that would ordinarily require the full time services of a specialist.

Several motivations guiding the choice of problems to come under scientific scrutiny are outlined by Chein, Cook and Harding:⁶

The scientific way of life is governed by three broad classes of interacting motives: curiosity, the desire

6 I. Chein, S. W. Cook and J. Harding, "The Field of Action Research," The American Psychologist, 3:43, 1948.

to know what is going on when one's back is turned, where one's vision cannot easily reach, or where a situation is too complex for clear viewing; practicality, the desire that the result of one's labors, search, and inquiry should be useful and significant, that they should "make a difference" and intrinsic orderliness, the desire that the masses of accumulated data be reduced to a comprehensible order and that the complexities which have been unraveled in the satisfaction of one's curiosity be not again obscured by the imposition upon the data of an arbitrary order.

Merton has this to say on the all-important problem of selecting the problem to be studied:⁷

The choice of concepts guiding the collection and analysis of data is, of course, crucial to empirical inquiry. For, to state an important truism, if concepts are selected such that no relationships between them obtain, the research will be sterile, no matter how meticulous the subsequent observations and inferences are. The importance of this truism lies in its implication that truly trial - and - error procedures in empirical inquiry are likely to be comparatively unfruitful, since the number of variables which are not significantly connected is indefinitely large.

It is then, one function of conceptual clarification to make explicit the character of data subsumed under a given concept. It thus serves to reduce the likelihood of spurious empirical findings couched in terms of the given concepts.

The authors cited indicate in a rather general way the elements prompting the undertaking of systematic inquiry plus some of the pitfalls inherent in selecting problems that have no intrinsic value merely because they are not presented in a meaningful way. Perhaps an illustration is called for at this point.

7. Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 87.

Let us suppose that the medical social worker assigned to the wards of a general hospital is confronted with the recurrent problem of being unable to place adequately patients who become chronically ill during their stay. Were the worker to conduct a study designed to see why the community agencies are unable to place chronically ill patients she might first formulate her research task somewhat along these lines: The reason that I cannot place these patients who require chronic care is that there are not enough hospitals equipped to fill the needs of the chronically ill. Therefore, I must find out how many hospitals there are in the community fit to care for such ailments, as well as how many patients needing this care are unprovided for. Then I can show the community that it needs more chronic care hospitals which when constructed will eliminate the problem I face in placing chronically ill patients.

The medical social caseworker could then devise a questionnaire, send it to the administrators of the various hospitals, tabulate the results and submit the findings to the proper community leaders, and that would be that. However, were the worker to conduct the study in this fashion, she would not have done a meaningful piece of social research. She would merely have described a situation or a fact. She would not have found out anything about what was responsible for the fact. Her research would be only descriptive and therefore

sterile, instead of dynamic and thereby, fruitful. All this would happen primarily because she could not formulate the problem in clear terms.

Now, let us suppose the medical social worker referred to was well-versed in the philosophy and techniques of systematic social research. Her knowledge that there was difficulty in placing chronically ill patients would lead her to investigate the problem in somewhat more detail. She would observe that some chronically ill patients could be cared for at home, she might ask hospital people about their attitudes towards training for the care and the actual therapy given to the chronically ill. She would investigate some of the prevailing community attitudes and sentiments about caring for these afflicted people, and after considerable cogitation, she might formulate her problem in such a way as to give some answers to her present problem as well as some insight into the entire complex of caring for chronically ill patients. Her reformulated research⁸ problem would then undergo considerable revision.

8. Professor Merton points out a serious deficiency in the ability of practitioners to formulate their research problems with clarity in "The Role of Applied Social Science in the Formation of Policy: A Research Memorandum," Philosophy of Science, 16:162, July, 1949.

Experience suggests that the policy-maker seldom formulates his practical problem in terms sufficiently precise to permit the researcher to design an appropriate investigation. Characteristically, the problem is so stated as to result in the possibility of the researcher being seriously misled as (Continued on following page)

Merton summarizes the necessity for further clarification of research problems in the following statement, "The conversion of empirical uniformities into theoretic statements thus increases the fruitfulness of research through the successive exploration of implications."

Formulating Fruitful Hypotheses

Correlative with the problem of formulating as clearly as possible the general problem designed to come under scientific scrutiny is the one of formulating precise fruitful hypotheses. Lundberg discusses the meaning and function of hypothe-

8. (Continued from preceding page)

to the 'basic' aspects of the problem which gives rise to a contemplated research. This initial clarification (by the researcher) of the practical problem, therefore is the first crucial step in applied social science.

Ernest Greenwood of the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Los Angeles describes the problem formulation process in a welfare agency.

The policy-maker states that he needs certain information. The researcher asks why he needs it and how is he going to use it once he gets it. In the light of the answer the researcher suggests that perhaps he needs something else. The researcher keeps "badgering" the client with questions compelling the latter to define and redefine his own problems. From this interaction emerges the final hypothesis. Another consequence flowing from this dialectic process is that the questions begin to segregate into two classes, those for which the prospective study promises answers and those which require approaches beyond the scope of the proposed study. In this fashion the client is led to appreciate the researcher's insistence for delimiting the problem statement.--Ernest Greenwood and Fred Massrik, "Some Methodological Problems in Social Work Research," American Sociological Review, 15:548, 1950.

ses at some length.⁹

The working hypothesis, then, is a tentative generalization based on a cursory, empirical, examination of certain data. But it may be merely a "hunch" or an "intuitive" supposition. Fundamentally, of course, all "hunches," "intuitions" and hypotheses rest upon an informal, or even "subconscious" inductive basis. An hypothesis is a tentative generalization based on data so vague or inadequate that it is not at the time demonstrable in objective terms. Here, again, of course, there is much difference of opinion when an hypothesis ceases to be an hypothesis and becomes a scientific theory or a scientific law. This question turns on the adequacy of the data on which the generalization is based, which, within limits, will be a matter of opinion.

In short, Lundberg points out that "an hypothesis is a tentative generalization the validity of which remains to be tested." Thus, all available information bearing on a specific problem must be brought into play before the actual research is begun. The marshalling of previous information in the example previously cited, allowed the medical caseworker to ask questions which not only reconciled her immediate problem but added to the general knowledge about caring for the chronically ill.

The difficulty of formulating fruitful hypotheses lies in the fact that not always can hypotheses be judged as fruitful or not prior to actual investigation. In many instances strict adherence to proving a given hypothesis (instead of

9. George A. Lundberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-121. Basically a fruitful hypothesis is a proposition that can be proved as well as disproved.

disproving it, let us say) may result in limited (if not unscientific) information.

Lundberg discusses this problem as well.¹⁰

(An hypothesis is held) with definite purpose of including in the investigation all available and pertinent data, either to prove or disprove the hypothesis. An hypothesis of this character is usually desirable and even essential. It gives point to the inquiry, and, if founded on sufficient previous knowledge, guides the lines of investigation. Without it much useless data may be collected in the hope that nothing essential will be omitted which could have been easily included if the purposes of the inquiry had been more carefully defined. Blind gathering of masses of data does not usually lead to the discovery of unexpected relations between facts or results in new explanations.

The disappointment of some students when they discover that the facts do not bear out, or contradict an hypothesis, betrays an unscientific attitude. From the purely scientific viewpoint, a scientist's contribution is equally great whether he proves or disproves an hypothesis. Emotional attachment to a preconceived conclusion must always be avoided, for it militates against that impartial observation and collection of the data, on which depends the ultimate validity of the conclusions, as well as the usefulness of the other steps in the scientific method.

In many cases method is confused with hypothesis, and in order to make sure that many statistical tables will emerge from the study the researcher narrows his hypotheses so as to guarantee a maximum of precision. "A premature insistence on precision," warns Professor Merton, "(statistical analysis) at all costs may sterilize imaginative hypotheses. It may lead to a reformulation of the scientific problem in order to per-

10. Ibid, pp. 120-121.

mit measurement with, at times, the result that the subsequent materials do not bear on the initial problem in hand."

Another obstacle facing the fruitful formulation of meaningful hypotheses is that of formulating the hypotheses after the data in the study have already been analyzed - in other words the post factum hypothesis. This form of hypothesization occurs particularly in the analysis of case histories, where the researcher traces back many variables in a particular complex, and then decides what variables are most responsible for the condition under study. "The logical fallacy underlying the post factum explanation rests in the fact that there is available a variety of crude hypotheses, each with some measure of confirmation but designed to account for quite contradictory sets of affairs. The method of post factum explanation does not lend itself to nullifiability, if only because it is so completely flexible."¹¹

Perhaps Merton's position is somewhat extreme, since he does not take into account a real function of the post factum hypothesis; namely, that it can be used in the formulation or further clarification of a priori hypotheses. Thus, when a post factum hypothesis (not a conclusion) emerges from a study of case histories, it can serve as a basis for more careful investigation of the phenomena on hand. The major function

11. Robert K. Merton, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

of the post factum hypothesis, then, rests in the exploratory, rather than the conclusive stages of the social research process.

In many instances a social research study develops hypotheses which the researcher did not think of prior to some stage of the actual investigation. These hypotheses suddenly emerge as if by chance or sudden insight. These emerging hypotheses can then be incorporated in the over-all conceptualization of the study, ultimately giving it new dimensions. For example, in the study of the treatment of the chronically ill cited previously in this chapter, the researcher would have wondered why there is a shortage of chronic care hospitals in her community. At first she might have thought that this situation was primarily due to a lack of funds. However, perhaps in an interview with an administrator of a chronic care hospital it turns out that physicians are more interested in treating short-term illnesses so they could enhance their skills. This chance remark could change the orientation of the study or be used to explain that it is not only lack of funds for new chronic care hospitals that makes for inadequate care of the chronically ill, but that there is considerable disinterest in the medical profession itself in tackling the problems of these patients.

An entire series of new hypotheses which might alter the direction of the entire study might then emerge. They could

come forth in the following sequence:

Chronic illls usually are drawn out ailments extending many times over periods of years. The ailments themselves are rather mundane and offer physicians little stimulation either for research or therapy. Because of these factors, there is a general lack of interest in the problems of the chronically ill among medical practitioners and those responsible for the medical curricula. This disinterest may translate itself into a general laxness about treating the chronically ill. These factors plus the knowledge that chronic illness is associated with old age, could lend themselves to a further refinement of the research problem. Chronic illness is positively correlated with old age. The American population is growing older each decade. Greater need for chronic care will occur in the future, yet the medical world shows little interest in it. Why is this so? What effect does this situation have on the community at large? How does it affect the medical social case work process attempting to find adequate care for the chronically ill? Methodologies bearing on resolving these factors then begin to flow from the restatement of the problem.

Such an approach as outlined might be considered an "oblique" one to the caseworker's immediate concern with how to place Patient X in an adequate chronic care environment. This brings us to our next consideration.

In many instances, the research problem as it presents itself to the practitioner is not always amenable to scientific social research. A process of carefully delineating factors that are related, narrowing scope, and bringing into sharper focus so that the problem becomes rooted in several ascertainable referents goes on. However in social research, a frontal attack on problems in many cases is not possible with the instruments that are now available. Inevitably, the focus of the problem is directed away from the problem that first confronts the practitioner.

Greenwood and Massarik take up this problem in their article.¹²

The practitioner has his eyes on the terminal conclusion and assumes that it either exists or does not exist. The researcher has his eyes on the findings from which the terminal conclusions will ultimately be inferred knowing that not the latter but only the former exist subjectively.

...When the hypothesis, including the approach it represents, is an indirect attack upon the central pragmatic problem then the conclusion yielded by the test of that is not the immediate answer to the policy-maker's problem. An extra intervening step is introduced. The conclusion for which the policy-maker is waiting must then be inferred by the researcher from the facts unearthed by the investigator.

It is clear that formulating a clear research problem as well as meaningful hypotheses is a complicated and difficult procedure. Yet, much time and effort must be expended on

12. Ernest Greenwood and Fred Massarik, op. cit., p. 549.

these formulations before the actual research is undertaken. Too often, the major expenditure of time on research projects is focussed on obtaining and analyzing data rather than on concept clarification and development. This is unfortunate, because much time and energy could be conserved by carefully delineating what is it actually that one wants to know, how will he find it out, and what will he do with the information once he has it.¹³

In this chapter the author has attempted to discuss some of the pertinent principles in the social research process with the aim of subsequently indicating how these elements may be incorporated into more systematic investigations of social work problems. No attempt has been made to go into such tangential areas as the philosophy of science, or to cover the entire field of social research, in all its ramifications. Rather, the author has focussed on those factors in the research process which may be of some aid to those social case workers who are confronted with research tasks.

These factors, we have seen, center on the absolute ne-

13. It is an impossibility to "teach" one in a thesis such as this how to formulate fruitful hypotheses. One can only trace some of the factors involved in such formulations. Perhaps the guidance laid down by Professor Stouffer in the article previously cited can act as a summarization of the problem: "Especially, we need to look for situations where two equally plausible hypotheses deducible from more general theory lead to the expectation of different consequences, then if our evidence supports one and knocks out the other, we have accomplished something."

cessity to formulate in the clearest terms possible the problem that is to be investigated. In the time budget allotted to a particular study, major emphasis should be given to spending a good deal of time on delineating the problem to be studied. Next, comes the all-important problem of formulating fruitful hypotheses, that is hypotheses that have the potentiality of being disproven as well as proven. Once these obstacles are overcome, the researcher can then turn to designing his study in terms of attacking his general problem and testing his hypotheses.

CHAPTER III

METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH - THREE TYPES OF STUDY DESIGN

We have noted that the methods of social research are the processes by which the reconciliation of the problems posed are arranged within theoretical frameworks. Put in more concrete terms, the method with which a social research problem is resolved is actually the design of the study that seeks the solution of the problem. Thus, if a social casework researcher were interested in finding out whether her clients were responding to a certain form of therapy, her research method or study design would differ from that were she interested in the attitudes of the population of her community towards a proposed child guidance clinic. From this we see that the methods for resolving social casework problems by means of social research flow directly from the nature of the problem as it is stated.

Study design serves two distinct purposes.¹ If the design of the study is adequate to the problem it is to tackle, it operates to reduce error and cuts down on needless waste of time and effort in the collection of relevant evidence.

Although several methods of study designs may be used to solve a problem, usually there exists a major type of design

1. For a detailed discussion of study design and social research techniques see, Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch, Stuart W. Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations, (Pt. I), Chap. I.

which is more appropriate than others. There are three major types of study design that are generally used in social research. They are:

1. The formulative or exploratory type of design whose prime purpose is to ferret out new types of information for purposes of refining the problems to be investigated or for the formation of new hypotheses.
2. The diagnostic or descriptive design which has the function of assessing the many variables that may be responsible for a particular phenomenon or situation.
3. The experimental design whose primary function is the testing of hypotheses.²

To reiterate, these study designs are not used exclusive of each other, but, rather, under many practical circumstances, they are not actually distinguishable from each other. There is no one way to gain knowledge. Many ways lead to its source. Thus, we may^{have} the situation where one design leads to new ideas and hypotheses that call for another method to be used in the next stage of the same study, and so on. Al-

2. Experimentation enjoys the distinction of being a research method or specific type of study design as well as being a distinctive technique or instrument used in testing hypotheses (e.g., the controlled experiment). We shall discuss experimentation as both a method and technique.

though any combination of the three methods may be used in any one investigation, the general emphasis of the study usually falls under one of the specific methods outlined above.

Let us now look into the three major social research methods in some detail.

Formulative or Exploratory Studies

We have discussed at some length the difficulty surrounding the adequate production of research hypotheses. Where there is adequate knowledge in an area, hypothesization is that much easier. However, where knowledge is lacking, much research has to be done to develop hypotheses in these untrodden fields. In many cases where the researcher cannot set up his experimental situation, he must satisfy his needs with collecting data relating to his problem. Of necessity, the explorative type of study can be nothing else but preliminary. It can never be considered as definitive. A thesis on "Methods of Social Research and Their Application to Social Casework" is typical of the exploratory type of study.

Usually in doing the exploratory type of study, the researcher goes through the literature pertinent to his problem. This review of pertinent literature has a two-fold purpose. It indicates hypotheses that have been tested relative to the researcher's problems. Often new hypotheses emerge from this scrutiny. The second purpose this examination fulfills is that it familiarizes the researcher with the pit-

falls that he may encounter in his own study.

In addition to surveying available literature, often preliminary interviews with individuals who have had experience in the area the investigator intends to study may reward him with insights he could not have otherwise. Jahoda and her associates refer to some advantages of the so-called 'experience survey'.³

An experience survey, as well as being a good source of hypotheses, can provide information about the practical possibilities for doing different types of research. Where can the facilities for research be obtained? Which factors can be controlled and which cannot in the situations one might wish to study? What variables tend to be clustered together in community setting? How ready are agencies, professional workers, and ordinary citizens to cooperate in controlled research studies of the problem in question? The answers to these and to similar practical questions may be one of the by-products of a carefully planned experience survey.

Descriptive and Diagnostic Studies

Descriptive and diagnostic studies focus on the specific characteristics of given situations. Here, unlike the exploratory study, the emphasis is on obtaining complete and accurate information about a given situation. Usually this is accomplished by conducting surveys which are not limited to any one particular research method. Data for such studies may be

3. Marie Jahoda, et al., op. cit., p 41. The experience survey refers to the interviewing of experts or persons who have had comprehensive experience with the phenomenon under investigation.

gathered through interviews, questionnaires, analysis of case records, analysis of community records, participant observation, systematic direct observation, etc. The study of the care of the chronically ill discussed previously would fit into the descriptive and diagnostic type of study design.

Once the problem to be studied has been clarified enough to indicate what data are required, instruments for the collection of these data must be fashioned and pretested. Following this procedure, a sample representing the population to be studied must be laid out. In analyzing the data, careful checks must be maintained to guarantee their accuracy.

Actually, a difference between purely descriptive and diagnostic studies is indicated. The descriptive study usually is limited to an accurate portrayal of a phenomenon or situation. On the other hand, the diagnostic study is oriented toward delineating causal and other relationships between latent and manifest factors.

Experimental Studies

The experiment in social science attempts to test the validity of a given hypothesis by selecting two groups matched on all characteristics considered essential to the testing of the hypothesis. The test factor is then usually introduced to the experimental groups and not to the control group. When one group reacts to the test factor significantly different from the other it is inferred that the experimental factor

"caused" the reaction. This, in general, is the basic outline for experiments in social science, a method considered by a number of social scientists to be the most fruitful technique of investigating human relationships.

Greenwood offers this definition of the experimental
⁴
 method.

An experiment is the proof of an hypothesis which seeks to hook up two factors in a causal relationship through the study of contrasting situations which have been controlled on all factors except the one of interest, the latter being either the hypothetical cause or the hypothetical effect.

This conception of the experiment differs from that of the uncontrolled experiment. The uncontrolled experiment usually concerns events that occur in history generally as a result of legislation or the conscious establishments of new social systems. Lundberg gives a good deal of importance to
⁵
 these types of experiments.

Perhaps the best examples of avowed social experimentation are to be found in the Utopian Community experiments conducted by the associationists of the last century...

Although legislation is not usually enacted for the purpose or in the spirit of experimentation it is undoubtedly the most important type of social experimentation on a large scale in existence today. Legislation or enactments such as the Prohibition Amendment, the Woman's Suffrage Amendment, the government operation of railways during the first World War, the ventures into government ownership and insurance and much social legislation enacted under the New Deal 1933-36 are clearly modifications and innovations of an experimental nature.

4. Ernest Greenwood, Experimental Sociology, p. 28-

5. Lundberg, op. cit., pp. 57-59.

Overshadowing in scope and importance all such experiments, ancient and modern, is perhaps the Soviet regime in Russia. The results of all such experiments if accurately measured and reported would clearly be of the greatest importance to social science.

The trial and error process of legislation with individual unrelated statutes instead of scientific programs of legislation anticipating the effects on all other fields, is, like all trial-and-error experimentation, a blundering and wasteful process. But it is perhaps the only method possible in a new field, where the knowledge of the significant factors and their interrelationship is very limited.

There is serious doubt whether the so-called "trial-and-error" experimental method is actually an experiment in the true sense of the concept.

Greenwood has this to say with regard to the trial-and-error type of experiment:⁶

To regard social evolution as an experiment is to approve of all kinds of trial-and-error attempts at human adjustment. Brearly in his review of the use of the term experiment, provides a category for the exploratory or trial-and-error experiment. To be sure this is a very crude usage and makes any long-drawn-out, blind, hit-or-miss process toward a poorly understood goal an experiment. Experiment, claim Odum and Jocher, may mean a finishing, perfecting, and developing process through which crude beginnings evolve into finished products. Experiment here means trying out, remodelling, trying out again and so on until a final product is attained. Such looseness in terminology may lead to rather bizarre conclusions.

Thus, in its scientific sense, the experiment cannot be merely considered an innovation. The scientific experiment must fulfill certain conditions of manipulation and control before it can make a real contribution.

6. Greenwood, op. cit., p. 16.

In this chapter three methods, or types of study design have been discussed. Each one has a particular bearing on research in social case work, as we shall see in the subsequent chapter. The first type of study design is the formulative or exploratory type where the researcher searches for data that will aid him in formulating hypotheses. The second type is descriptive or diagnostic where the chief goal is to gain complete and accurate information about a given situation. The experimental, or third type of research design attempts to test the tenability of hypotheses under experimental conditions.

CHAPTER IV

THREE RESEARCH TECHNIQUES MOST ADAPTABLE TO SOCIAL RESEARCH
IN SOCIAL CASEWORK

It has been pointed out that a distinction exists between social research methodologies and the techniques of specific procedure that are used in gathering relevant data. Techniques refer to the specific instruments that are used to gather the facts outlined by the needs established by the statement of the problem and the method or study design devised to tackle its solution.

As is the case with methods, the techniques that are to be used in any social research investigation must coincide with the problem and study design of the investigation. Similarly, a combination of a number of different techniques approaching the same problem is usually brought into play. Thus, if one wants to investigate social welfare facilities in a given community, one could be a participant-observer in several agencies for a while; one might undertake a cross-sectional survey of the entire community in relation to attitudes toward social welfare; one could examine case records to gauge the type and extent of casework that was being done in the community; one could conduct intensive as well as extensive interviews with social work administrators and caseworkers, and so on. In this way a rounded picture of a community's welfare needs could be established. In such an investigation no one social

research technique would take precedence over another.

Although a myriad of social research techniques are available to the researcher interested in investigating social casework problems, three major types of **techniques** seem more appropriate, in the opinion of the writer, than the rest.

These three major techniques are:

1. Content analysis
2. Surveys
3. Controlled experiments.

Because social caseworkers are particularly interested in the dynamics of personality development, the systematic analysis of the content of life histories and case records is extremely important in gaining insights into this area. Furthermore, because one of the pressing problems in casework procedure is the necessity for systems of precise recording, analysis of case work records affords the opportunity for discovering and eliminating gaps in recording procedures. For these reasons, it is felt by the writer that the content analysis technique is of major value in social research in the field of social casework.

Surveys receive emphasis by the author because social casework administrators and practitioners are constantly faced with such problems as the range of needs with regard to social welfare, the ways these needs are met, the lacks in on-going programs, and various clusters of public opinion on social

casework operations that exist in the various communities in the country. Similarly, the survey is an important tool in evaluating on-going programs, a need that is felt particularly in the administration of social casework programs.

Because social caseworkers are concerned with the effectiveness of both new and old philosophies and orientations of their field, the technique of the controlled experiment is emphasized by the author as especially suited to research in this area.

Content Analysis

The purposes of the case record are those of: practice, to ensure adequate service to the client; administration, to review and evaluate the discharge of this responsibility; teaching and supervision, to communicate knowledge and improve skill; and research, to discover new knowledge and to assist in social planning and prevention. Records are for professional use, and their contents are of first importance... Records, especially if the problems to be solved are laid down in advance, are extremely important in research. Research is an obligation not yet widely enough assumed to affect current trends in case recordings. It can only be hoped that substantial case work studies will have the effect of producing more comparable, measurable data, develop a more reliable terminology, and through standardized testing devices permit more understanding of the meaning of success and the causes of failure.¹

The case record in all its ramifications (face sheet, medical history, diagnosis, disposition, etc.) is the backbone of social casework data. The case record provides information on the client's characteristics, his psychological and social

1. Gordon Hamilton, Principles of Social Case Recording, pp. 8-9.

problems, his response to therapy, his attempts at reconciling his problems, etc. To the researcher in social work the case record affords a gold mine of valuable untapped social data. However, all too often, in abstracting case records, the case work researcher is put in the position of relying on her own impressions rather than on systematic uniform observations. The technique of content analysis attempts to enable the researcher to systematize his observations.

Briefly stated, content analysis is a social research technique developed for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of any communication or personal document. In social case work a single case history may be analyzed for example to denote how many "resistance" symbols were expressed by a client in each phase of treatment. By counting the number of resistance symbols expressed by a client at any point in the process, the worker could then gauge the obstacles she might encounter at any given point. Dollard and Mowrer charted the change in tension level throughout the period of a client's treatment on the basis of the "DRQ" or the discomfort-relief quotient.² The discomfort-relief quotient was the figure resulting from dividing the number of discomfort words expressed by the number of discomfort

2. John Dollard and O.H. Mowrer, "A Method of Measuring Tension in Written Documents," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 42:4, 1947.

plus relief words combined, for different stages of the case. Thus, it was possible not only to identify the specific points of high or low tension on the part of the client but also to measure the general trend in his tension levels from the beginning to the end of the case.

Content analysis of a single case record in terms of quantifying clinical elements sets forth "a new conception of a 'population' for statistics: a population of events and traits within the boundaries of one person. If the initial promise of this method is fulfilled, it will supply an important bridge between the statistical and clinical point of view."³

Content analysis can be applied to a series of case records as well as to single ones. In 1947 Berelson analyzed social work records in order to compare the problems presented at different offices of the same agency.⁴ The case records were classified by some 80 distinct sets of categories referring to various aspects of the "causes," conditions, and consequences of the case. The analysis indicated that the more intensely the client feels about his problem, the more likely he is to despair of its solution. Similarly, this analysis of case records established a positive correlation between the

3. Gordon W. Allport, The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science, pp.35-36.

4. Bernard Berelson, "The Quantitative Analysis of Case Records," Psychiatry, 10: 395-403, 1947.

client's attitude toward agency service and his degree of confidence in the solution of his problem.

Doing a content analysis study is the same as carrying out any other type of research in that the researcher must clarify his problems, and develop his hypotheses. Having gone through these processes, it is necessary to establish analytical categories which can be objectively measured. The categories must flow from the problem and hypotheses, if the entire study is to succeed. For example, if the researcher is interested in the level of anxiety manifested by clients, she might set up categories such as these:

1. Client shows physical symptoms of anxiety - perspiration, "fidgeting," clasping and unclasping hands, etc.
2. Client overly expresses feelings of anxiety - says he is frightened, says he worries a great deal, etc.
3. Client attempts to conceal anxiety -- nervous laughter and joking, over-optimism, etc.
4. Client shows no signs of anxiety at all.

Based on the hypotheses that resorting to social case work consultation may at first be anxiety - producing for some individuals, and that different types of anxieties may be manifested by different types of problems presented and approaches to these problems, a series of categories set up in terms of the possible manifestations of anxiety during the treatment process would enable the worker to chart the different types of anxi-

eties manifested by different individuals with different problems at different times.

After the analytical categories are set up, a record is kept of each instance where the category applies to either a word, statement, or idea as the case may be. However, once the category is applied to let us say, a statement as a unit of measure, it must be applied consistently for all the content under that particular analysis. Each instance of occurrence within a category is then tabulated. The results of the tabulation are then analyzed for the purpose of denoting statistical differences between categories.

Needless to indicate, content analysis offers tremendous advantages to research of social case work. We are aware of the abundance of case records that crowd the file-drawers of social agencies throughout the country. These records can be systematically analyzed to denote dynamics, trends, shifts of focus, and so on. However, one must call to attention the fact that a good number of these records lack much of the uniform reporting that would make for good content analyses. Yet, content analyses can serve important purposes here as well. Content analyses can, in a systematic way, point out the gaps in case recording so that eventually criteria for uniform case recording may be established.

Surveys

Once it is decided to do a survey, the researcher is immediately faced with two extremely difficult methodological problems. One is constructing adequate questionnaires and the other pertains to selecting a suitable sample.⁵

In an article by Harold Holand, the author gives some common-sense precautions in constructing questionnaires when doing surveys.⁶

1. Is the questionnaire the only, or the most practical way of obtaining the desired information ?
2. Organize your questionnaire, wherever possible, so that answers can be given by check marks or by circling specific words.
3. Make your questions clear.
4. Salt them with common sense.
5. Be brief, be brief, be brief.
6. Last, but very far from least, enclose an extra copy of your questionnaire for the other fellow's files.

Actually, Holand does not begin to approach the problems

5. Many other problems pertain to survey work. Financing, community rapport, recruiting and training interviewers, "interviewer bias," "call-backs," are but few. However, the major problems still pertain to questionnaire construction and sampling. Lundberg defines a social survey as "(a) a more or less comprehensive inquiry into numerous aspects of a situation (b) as it exists in a given community (c) with rather definite educational, propagandistic, and ameliorative purposes." Social Research, p. 388.

6. Harold Holand, "Let's Do A Survey!", The Family, 26: 26, December, 1945.

confronting the researcher in his task of devising good questionnaires.

In deciding what questions one is to ask on a survey, one must first articulate the answers expected to the questions asked. Constructing "dummy" tables bearing the contemplated answers usually can serve as a first step in questionnaire construction. Several sets of answers are usually expected in surveys - answers pertaining to information about the respondent's socio-economic status, his background, personal history and those close to him, and events and conditions known by the respondent. Another set of answers that may be expected in a survey pertain to the respondent's attitudes, reasons, and feelings. Two types of analysis stem from answers to these questions. Explicit analyses stem from the informational responses; inferential analyses are applied to the opinion types of responses. Questions seeking information can usually be put directly; opinion questions must be asked indirectly in most cases.

Generally, two types of questions are available for use in surveys - one is the check list or closed-end type, the other is the free response or open-end type. In the check-list questionnaire straightforward questions can be asked with a number of alternate responses made available to the respondent to check. These types of questionnaires require less skillful interviewing, and makes answering considerably easier for re-

spondents. They are most useful in mailed questionnaires and self-administered questionnaires. However, their severest shortcoming is that they constrain the respondent with pre-fabricated responses which may not reflect his true opinions.

On the other hand, the open-ended question such as "How do you feel about the service you receive from this agency" and "What makes you feel this way" have considerable advantages. In answering open-ended questions, the respondent allows himself spontaneity; he sets his own frameworks, and can express the intensity of his feelings. Free-responses can be followed up with probes and follow-up questions familiar to the practitioners of non-directive interviewing. Open-ended questionnaires also have a disadvantage in that they are lengthy, require skilled interviewers to administer them and usually take up a good deal of time and expense to be analyzed. In practice, a compromise is usually made between the use of both close-end and open-ended questions in the same questionnaire.

Kornhauser outlines a number of decisions relating to the content of questions:⁷

1. Is the question necessary? Just how will it be useful?
2. Are several questions needed on the subject matter of this question?

7. See Kornhauser's discussion of questionnaire construction in Marie Jahoda, Stuart Cook, and Morton Deutch, Research Methods in Social Relations, Ch. 12 --- Also see, Hadley Cantril, Gauging Public Opinion.

3. Do respondents have the information necessary to answer the question?
4. Does the question need to be more concrete, specific, and closely related to the respondent's personal experience?
5. Is the question content sufficiently general and free from serious concreteness and specificity?
6. Is the question content biased or loaded in one direction without accompanying questions to balance the emphasis?

Once these problems are resolved, the survey designer must make sure that the language of the question is comprehensible, that it is clear and uncluttered, that it adequately expresses alternatives that are meaningful to the respondent. He must make sure that there is no emotional coloring in the words used, and that the general wording will not be objectionable to any respondent. The researcher must also decide what sequence the questions will adopt, going from the general to the more specific, and saving some of the background items for the latter part of the interview.

After these decisions are made, the researcher writes out a draft of his questionnaire, perhaps in two versions and then conducts a number of pre-test interviews with a selected group of respondents similar to the ones who are ultimately to be interviewed. Through this process a number of unforeseeable kinks may be discovered and ironed out before actual field work begins. Where there remains doubt about the formulation of any one or group of questions even when the pre-test is com-

pleted, two versions of the same question may be included in the final form, with one group of respondents being asked one version and the other group a second version. The two sets of responses are ultimately compared. After this the questionnaire is finally ready to go into the field.

Because it is impractical to interview every individual in a community, and because smaller numbers of people share characteristics of the entire group (or universe), samples containing manageable numbers of respondents are generally used in survey work.

Stephan has this to say with regard to sampling:⁸

There is no "best" method of sampling that can be followed blindly in all instances. The most effective sampling methods are those that are designed specifically to fit the situation in which they are to be used. They are based on the theory of sampling derived from mathematical statistics and economic theory, and they take advantage of what is known in advance about the population, system of interaction or process that is to be sampled. They are designed to achieve the specific purposes of the study as effectively as possible under the limitations set by the funds, personnel, time, and other resources that are available. In a word, they are tailored to fit the circumstances. In this respect they are like a manufacturing process that is engineered in terms of specifications set by the consumer and the technical equipment and cost relations of the plant. For simple jobs no elaborate planning is necessary; for some products thousands of dollars of preparatory work will be devoted to setting up the operation in order to produce the best results, taking into account many possibilities and considerations.

Generally it is necessary when selecting samples to be

8. Frederick F. Stephan, "Sampling", The American Journal of Sociology LV: 372, January, 1950.

more concerned with the same distribution of characteristics in the sample as obtains in the larger group (the universe from which the sample is drawn). Thus, contrary to the thinking of many uninformed persons, it is not the number of cases in a sample that makes for its reliability, but rather its representativeness of the universe. In that case the more homogeneous the universe, the smaller need the sample be.⁹

The social survey is the research technique most known and used by social workers. The survey when accurately used can provide information on the social work needs of large groups, the facilities that exist to fill these needs, how ongoing programs are perceived by clients and administrators, what recommendations for change exist, and so on. The entire realm of public opinion regarding the various fields of social work can be tapped by careful surveying. The survey too can act as a very important evaluating tool in testing the effectiveness of processes and programs. Thus, for example, if a social work administrator were interested in instituting a service to other mentally retarded and their families in a given community, it is feasible that she would conduct several surveys in the community prior to beginning the service. First, she might survey a sample of the entire community in order to

9. Again it is not the purpose of this paper to enter into detailed technical discussions of all the complex facets of social research. For further exploration of sampling methods, the reader should consult works on the mathematics of probability, statistics and demography.

discern the incidence of mental retardation in that particular population. She then might conduct a small-scale survey among a selected population of families where there is an incidence of mental retardation to discern the range of problems and needs that these families face. Thirdly, she might survey the facilities already in existence that deal with the problem in order to fill in gaps and avoid duplication. However, unless her questionnaires and samples are constructed with extreme care and accuracy, her research efforts will not bear fruit.¹⁰

Experiments

The controlled experiment in social research offers the greatest promise of establishing a truly empirical science of human relations. Stouffer presents in simple diagram the crux of the experimental method is social relations:¹¹

Basically, I think it is essential that we always keep in mind the model of a controlled experiment, even if in practice we may have to deviate from an ideal model. Take the simple accompanying diagram.

	:Before	:	After:	After-Before
Experimental group	: x1	:	x2	d = x2 - x1
	:	:	:	
Control group	: x'1	:	x'2	d' = x'2 - x'1

The test of whether a difference d is attributable to what we think it is attributable to is whether d is significantly larger than d' .

10. The classic use of the survey in Social Welfare research is the one conducted by Philip Klein and associates in Pittsburgh, A Social Study of Pittsburgh.

11. Stouffer, op. cit., p. 356.

The basic element in the experimental method is that of control. Actually experimentation boils down to nothing but observation under controlled conditions. Two types of control can be achieved. One is through direct control or manipulation of persons and groups, objects and situations that are seen or heard. The other refers to the manipulation of phenomena after some reaction has occurred. In the latter case the experimenter does not have the chance to set up an experiment, but rather arrives on the scene after change has already taken place. This type of experiment is usually termed the ex post facto experiment. An example of the ex post facto experiment is indicated. Suppose a social casework researcher wanted to test the efficacy of a new program oriented to the parents of children under treatment in a child guidance clinic. If she traced back the reactions of these parents only in retrospect after the new program was put into effect and compared them with reactions manifest at the time of the study, she would have conducted an ex post facto experiment. However, had she been able to test these reactions not in retrospect, but actually at the time before the new program was first organized, she would have conducted what is termed a 'before-after' type of controlled experiment.

In the before-after experimental technique, the same group is generally used as both the experimental and control group. The same group is tested or observed prior to it being stimu-

lated by the variable to which it is supposed to react. It is then tested or observed again after it has reacted to the experimental variable or 'thing' that is being tested. If there are differences in the reactions elicited after exposure to what is being tested (the experimental variable), it is assumed that these differences are due to the experimental variable. Let us look at an example. Suppose a social caseworker is interested in knowing what effect successful casework consultation has on clients' attitudes toward accepting casework help. The worker would test the attitudes towards accepting casework aid of her clients prior to beginning the consultation process. After the problems were resolved, the worker would again test the attitudes of this group toward accepting such help. Any changes in attitude could then be considered as a resultant of the consultation process.

The classic example in the field of social welfare research of the large scale welfare experiment is Stuart Dodd's study of the effect of education in hygienic practices in rural villages in Syria.¹² Here the researcher first selected two villages in Syria and measured the standards and habits of health obtaining in these places. A mobile clinic was then sent to educate the populace of one village in modern techniques of health practice while the second village was allowed to

12. Stuart C. Dodd, A Controlled Experiment on Rural Hygiene in Syria.

continue its usual health practices.

After the two-year period the hygienic status of the two villages were then carefully measured again. This comparison in the hygienic scores of the two areas were then carefully analyzed. It was found that both villages improved somewhat during the time with the experimental village showing somewhat more improvement (although the differences were not statistically significant).

The controlled experiment as illustrated by Dodd's work holds significant import for the field of social work. Through genuine controlled experimentation, social workers can begin to scientifically test the efficacy of their various philosophies and techniques. They can be in a position of evaluating the specific effectiveness of specific processes. With carefully planned controlled experimentation, the social worker can begin an approach to the ever-pressing query, "How do you know?"

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In this paper the author has discussed the relationship between social research and social work. She has outlined the major elements that make for fruitful research and has indicated some ways in which good research techniques can be applied to social case work projects. Specifically she has discussed three research techniques that are most adaptable, in her opinion, to the research problems facing social case workers; content analysis, the survey using representative samples, and the controlled experiment.

It is obvious that the relationship between social research and the field of social work is a mutual one. The two processes share common roots, and in the area of furthering knowledge about social processes, share common goals. From social research, social work can get tools for furthering knowledge about its own techniques, programs, processes, and philosophies. From social work, social research can get the abundant social data that are available in the files of the myriad agencies both in this country and abroad. Although there exists this mutual relationship between the two disciplines, there is a need to reenforce it for two reasons. First, the emphasis in such fields as sociology and psychology (primary developers of sophisticated social research techniques) has

shifted from the so-called problem areas to the investigation of processes. Second, the pressures of pragmatic process problems have not allowed social case workers to develop advanced methods of research. This paper has attempted to examine the relationship between social research and social casework by pointing out some basic elements that are inherent in good social research and by indicating through example how social research techniques can be better applied to social casework.

Although the two disciplines of social research and social work are strongly interrelated, social researchers find that they cannot always draw on social work data, since in many instances these data lack the uniformities of recording that make systematic investigation feasible. On the other hand, the social case worker burdened with mounting case loads and administrative duties can devote only limited amounts of time in carrying out rudimentary research in her field. Somehow, these conditions must be overcome. Pointing out some of the basic elements in social research may be of some help.

The social case worker attempting to carry out systematic investigations in her field that will make genuine contributions to the fund of scientific knowledge, must be constantly aware of the problems of study design. The first problem of design that she faces is that of clarifying the problem to be investigated in as precise terms as possible. From the clear

statement of the problem to be investigated flow the hypotheses that are to be tested, the techniques that are to be used, the questions that are to be asked, the sample that is to be used, and the type of analysis that is to be undertaken. Unclear statements of the problem will make for a murky, unfruitful study.

Once the problem to be investigated is laid down in as clear a fashion as possible, the researcher then must develop hypotheses which, when tested, will answer the original question posed. In establishing hypotheses to be tested, the researcher must make sure that her hypotheses are of a fruitful nature, that is, that they can be disproved as well as proved. Hypotheses are developed from insights, hunches, prior knowledge, and in the course of investigation. A debate about whether the a priori or ex post facto hypothesis is the more useful seems a bit spurious in the face of the fact that under certain conditions either type or both types can yield an abundance of meaningful data.

Although a combination of several types of design may be used in tackling a social research problem, three basic types of studies carried out by social researchers have been examined here. The first is the formulative or exploratory type of study where the investigator has no pertinent body of data to go to prior to his own investigation. Here the researcher may survey relevant and tangential literature, interview persons

having experience with the phenomenon under study, study case histories, etc. in an effort to find some material bearing on his problem. The second type of study is the descriptive or diagnostic type where the researcher is primarily concerned with the discovery of general law and the diagnosis of specific situations. These studies are designed to focus on the specific characteristics of a given situation, although diagnostic studies are more prone to emphasize causal relationships than do descriptive studies. Generally, the survey method is applied in carrying out these types of studies. The third type of study conducted by social researchers is the experimental one. The experimental method attempts to test the tenability of an hypothesis, usually under controlled conditions. Here the main technique applies the use of matched groups, one of which is exposed to a phenomenon and the other not. Differences in reactions in the matched groups are then considered to be caused by the test variable. These three types of study design are available to the social worker interested in carrying out scientific research in her field. From these designs techniques that can be specifically applied to social casework research are manifest.

Although aware of the efficacy of numerous other techniques, it is the opinion of the author that three basic research techniques current in modern social investigation are most adaptable to the research needs of the field of social case-

work. Content analysis, particularly of case records, is the first. Content analysis is the objective and systematic technique of analyzing manifest content of communications or personal documents. Content analysis can trace the types of reactions that clients manifest in specific casework situations. It can outline common and different background variables of similar groups of clients receiving similar treatment. It can provide clues to the personality organization of clients, and can point up the need for uniform case recording. The range of usefulness of the technique of content analysis is limited only by the amount of ingenuity with which it is applied in the social casework area.

The second of the most useful research techniques available to social case workers (and the most widely used as well as mis-used) is that of the survey. Contrary to popular thinking, the survey is a most complex research technique which requires tremendous amounts of knowledge, skill, and administrative ability. Here too, problems must be initially clarified and specified, hypothesis developed, and the most stringent attention paid to the adequate formulation of questions and samples. The crux of the good survey is that the questions to be asked are so formulated as to provide the answers anticipated. In sampling various populations, extreme care must be taken to assure adequate representativeness. Great numbers do not make a sample. Surveys, when adequately carried out, are of tre-

mendous importance in mapping out community needs and facilities; in discerning public opinion on many issues affecting the social welfare of communities and smaller groups; in assessing the effectiveness of on-going programs, and so forth.

The controlled experiment, in the mind of the author, is the most promising research technique of which social casework can avail itself. In setting up and analyzing situations where one of two matched groups is exposed to a process, program, or orientation and the other not, the social caseworker will first begin to scientifically test many of the fundamentals of her assumptions, philosophy, and techniques. Needless to say that although the outline of the controlled experiment here presented is somewhat simplified, it is basic to all fruitful usages of experimental techniques. More and more experimentation of the controlled variety and not of the so-called trial-and-error approach must be adopted to the needs of research in social casework. It is only after such experimentation has been undertaken on a large scale that social work can begin to validate much of its operation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A major point developed in this paper is that there are many methods and techniques of social research that are both available and adaptable to social caseworkers interested in doing adequate research in their fields of interest. The problem is how to make this knowledge more readily available. One

ance for the social researchers to re-interest themselves in the research problems of social work. It is time once again for sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and economists to interest themselves in the study of human welfare. Once this new interest is rekindled great strides in attacking large areas of research problems in the social work field will be made on a mutually cooperative basis between the theorists and the practitioners.

Another major problem implicitly developed in this paper is that of the slipshod way in which much social case work data are collected and recorded, making research in this area a near impossibility. One often hears the complaints of such researchers as Kimball Young who say that there is little uniformity in categorization in social work recording and that the studies that are available in social work research are based on small selected samples which are practically useless in making statements of predictability.

How to overcome these problems that make for dissatisfaction among researchers with social work data is a research problem in itself, interestingly enough. Naturally, it is of the utmost concern to both researcher and ultimately the practitioner to see to it that the raw data that are made available in the field of social work are of the nature that makes for systematic fruitful inquiry.

It is the hope of the author that she has in some small

way contributed to the continuing re-integration of social case-work and social research. It is her opinion that the seeking of knowledge in the field of social work is as important as learning its philosophies, practices, and operations. She is in accord with the statement made by William E. Gordon, who writes:²

The seeking of knowledge is the generic element in research - the choice of knowledge and facts to be sought is peculiar to the setting of the research and rests largely with goals and values outside and beyond the process. It follows, therefore, that in its goal of seeking knowledge, research in social work is the same as research anywhere else. The differences arise in the knowledge sought by the research process which in social work will usually be the knowledge deemed necessary at a given time and place to further the goals of social work - no more - no less.

Approved:

Richard K. Conant
Richard K. Conant
Dean

2. Gordon, op. cit., p. 19.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Abbot, Edith, Social Welfare and Professional Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942.
- Cantril, Hadley, Gauging Public Opinion. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942.
- Greenwood, Ernest, Experimental Sociology. New York: King's Crown Press, 1945.
- Hamilton, Gordon, Theory and Practice of Social Case Work. New York: Columbia University Press, 1940.
- _____, Principles of Social Case Recording. New York: Columbia University Press, 1946.
- Jahoda, Marie, Morton Deutsch, and Stuart W. Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations. (Parts 1 and 2). New York: The Dryden Press, 1952.
- Klein, Philip, et al., A Social Study of Pittsburgh. New York: Columbia University Press, 1938.
- Lundberg, George, Social Research. (Second Edition). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1942.
- Merton, Robert K., Social Theory and Social Structure. Chicago: Free Press of Glencoe Illinois, 1949.

Monographs

- Allport, Gordon W., The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science. New York: Social Science Research Council, Bulletin 49, 1942.
- Dodd, Stuart C., A Controlled Experiment in Rural Hygiene in Syria. New York: American Press, 1934.
- Hunt, James Mc V., Leonard S. Kagan, Measuring Results in Casework, A Manual on Judging Movement. New York: Family Service Association of America, 1950.
- Merman, Ida C., Philip M. Klein, The Contribution of Research to Social Work. New York: American Association of Social Workers, 1949.

Periodical Literature

- Berelson, Bernard, "The Quantitative Analysis of Case Records," Psychiatry, 10: 395-403, 1947.
- Bowers, Raymond V., "Conceptual Integration and Social Research," American Sociological Review, 3: 307-319, 1939.
- Chein, Isador, Stuart W. Cook, and John S. Harding, "The Field of Action Research," The American Psychologist, 3: 43-50, 1948.
- Cottrell, Leonard S., Jr., "Present Status and Future Orientation of Research on the Family," American Sociological Review, 13: 123-129, 1948.
- Davis, Kingsley, "The Application of Science to Personal Relations," American Sociological Review, 1: 236-247, 1936.
- Dollard, John, O. H. Mowrer, "A Method of Measuring Tension in Written Documents," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 42: 1-32, 1947.
- Gordon, William E., "The Professional Base of Social Work Research-Some Essential Elements," Social Work Journal, 33: 17-23, January, 1952.
- Greenwood, Ernest, Fred Massarik, "Some Methodological Problems in Social Work Research," American Sociological Review, 15: 546-550, 1950.
- Herzog, Elizabeth, "What Social Casework Wants of Social Science Research," American Sociological Review, 16: 68-73, 1951.
- Holand, Harold, "Let's Do A Survey!," The Family, 26: 26-29, December, 1945.
- Merrill, F. E., "The Study of Social Problems," American Sociological Review, 13: 251-259, 1948.
- Merton, Robert K., "The Role of Applied Social Science in the Formation of Policy: A Research Memorandum," Philosophy of Science, 16: 161-181, July, 1949.
- Morgan, John S., "Research and Social Work," Social Service, 103-108, Winter, 1949-1950.

Preston, M. G. and others, "An Experimental Study for Abstracting the Content of Social Case Records," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 45: 628-646, 1950.

Rose, Arnold, "Conditions of the Social Science Experiment," American Sociological Review, 13: 616-619, 1948.

Stephan, Frederick F., "Sampling," American Journal of Sociology, 50: 371-376, January, 1950.

Stone, Olive, "What Can Social Casework Contribute to the Social Sciences?", American Sociological Review, 15: 66-73, 1950.

Stouffer, Samuel, "Some Observations on Study Design," American Journal of Sociology, 50: 355-362, October, 1950.

Young, Kimball, "Social Psychology and Social Casework," American Sociological Review, 16: 54-61, 1951.