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Section: Ethical Considerations

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Ethical Considerations

Early American sociologists were very concerned about ethical issues and particularly those connected with the goals of justice, social welfare, democracy and peace. Courses reflected these interests ¹ as did professional meetings. For example, in 1892 The School of Applied Ethics in Massachusetts held a week of “instruction . . . devoted to the Theory of Social Progress, being a study in sociology” (Adams, 1893: viii) during which Franklin Giddings (1893) gave a presentation entitled “The Ethics of Social Progress.” Another week was devoted to “Philanthropy in Social Progress,” and sociologist Jane Addams (1893a,b) gave two presentations on social settlements.

The earliest presentations and publications on ethics include Jane Addams’ 1896 presentation at Hull House entitled “Ethical Impulses Working Toward Social Reconstruction,” her lecture at the University of Chicago in 1906 on changed ideals and public morality and her article (Addams, 1897–98) “Ethical Survival in Municipal Corruption.” Two articles focusing on ethics also appeared in early issues of *The American Journal of Sociology*—Alfred Lloyd’s (1905) “Ethics and its History” and Harald Hoffding’s (1905) “On the Relation between Sociology and Ethics.” In addition, Charlotte Perkins Gilman gave a series of six lectures in 1895 to the Social Science Club at Hull House.² Her last lecture was entitled “Social Ethics.”

Sociologists during the last 100 years have been concerned with the range of topics that fall under the heading “ethics.” Some have undertaken studies in which they have tried to be objective observers providing needed information about the development of, and adherence to, different ethical systems. At the other end of the spectrum are those who have tried to provide passionate and persuasive analyses which call into question the kinds of topics sociologists choose to study and the frequently uncritical acceptance of funds for social science research and practice. These writers want sociologists to accept responsibility for the outcomes of their actions or lack of involvement.

The documents which we have chosen to include here are two articles and the current ethics code of the Sociological Practice Association. The first article is “Ethical Limitations on Sociological Reporting,” by Joseph Fichter and William Kolb, which first appeared in a 1953 issue of the *American Sociological*

Review. Fichter and Kolb present what they identify as important variables in developing an ethical system. While they are dealing specifically with the reporting of research on communities and groups, what they say has applications to sociological practice. The authors mention that an "explicit code of ethics . . . seems urgently needed."

In 1981, The Hastings Center published Martin Bulmer's "The British Tradition of Social Administration: Moral Concerns at the Expense of Scientific Rigor." Bulmer provides a great deal of information about the relationship between scientific interests and ethical concerns in the development of sociology in the United States and social administration in Great Britain.

Bulmer (1981:41) prefers the "enlightenment model . . . where the social sciences . . . provide a general framework within which social processes can be examined." He does not advocate sociological practice and says, in fact, that sociologists "need not provide definite predictions about the direction of social change, nor offer technocratic solutions to discrete problems." He does think that the framework offered by social scientists "must necessarily take into account of the ends of social action, and deal with the moral dimension of human affairs." Bulmer asks if it is possible to "integrate formal theory and rigorous methodology with historical and ethical sensitivity."

Fichter and Kolb recognized the need for an ethical code and they, as well as Bulmer, discussed the difficulty of combining scientific rigor and ethical sensitivity. While these writers directed their remarks to the research community, the issues are even more complex when one tries to establish a complete ethical code, one which will cover research, teaching, and practice.

The ethics code developed by the Sociological Practice Association (adopted in 1982 and revised in 1987) is the most complete code to cover the professional activities of clinical and applied sociologists. The association reviewed approximately twenty codes of professional groups before selecting a basic model and adapting it to the specific needs of scholar-practitioners in relation to their students, colleagues, employers, and clients.

The code underlines the values of the association including humanism and contributing to the advancement of human welfare. All association members who apply for clinical certification are expected, as part of the certification application process, to write an ethical statement. They also will be questioned about their ethical practices as part of their certification demonstrations. All members of the association are provided with opportunities to revise the code and to discuss ethical dilemmas, and procedures have been established for resolving ethical questions.

Notes

1. As Bulmer (1981:35) noted: "Albion Small and E. A. Ross combined in their teaching scientific analysis and direct ethical prescription. From 1906 sociology at Harvard University was taught in the Department of Social Ethics."
2. The Working People's Social Science Club met weekly at Hull-House from 1890–1895. Some information about the establishment of the club and its programs is available in the Jane Addams Memorial Collection at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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Ethical Limitations on Sociological Reporting

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In his primary task as the discoverer of new knowledge, the modern scientist is governed by the obligations to search for truth, to be objective, to discern the relevant, to check meticulously his data, and, in some circles, to accept responsibility for the use to which his knowledge is put. This ethical code, however, fails to cover the problems arising from the relations between the scientist and the objects of his observation and experimentation. This may be due in part to the very conceptualization of phenomena as "objects." Only "subjects" have rights which must be respected.

There is evidence, of course, that social scientists are vaguely aware that they incur responsibilities which extend beyond the procedural ethics of science itself: that men are subjects as well as objects and that even when studied as objects they retain certain of their rights to privacy and respect. Thus the experiments on living human bodies of prisoners, made by Nazi doctors, gained them infamy rather than fame. The theoretical literature of American psychiatry hides the identity of most of its patients. And sociologists and anthropologists frequently attempt to disguise the communities they study.

The lack of consensus in this area of responsibility attests to the fact that the norms underlying such efforts to respect people who are studied have never been systematically formulated as part of the procedure of scientific research and reporting. Indeed individuals and groups receive the greatest protection when scientific research is linked with the doctor-patient relation as in the case of psychiatry. In other areas protection seems to depend upon a diffuse and uncertain feeling of respect for the human "object." This protection is

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adequate, however, only where it does not interfere seriously with the gathering and reporting of data or where its violation would take such extreme form as to severely shock both the scientist and his society.

Under present conditions, the possibility of disturbance and shock seems greatest where research and reporting directly involve identifiable small groups and individuals. Research workers also seem to be effectively barred from experimentation which threaten the physical wholeness of the individual. Beyond these areas of investigation every research worker seems to be largely on his own in determining what research shall be conducted and what report shall be made so far as the impact of the research and the report on the objects of the study are concerned.

In this state of normlessness even the individual and the small group can be threatened if the possibility of identification is only indirect or if the violation of rights is not obvious and flagrant. Thus men may not be plunged into freezing water involuntarily, but children have been placed in authoritarian situations to discover the effects on their attitudes and behavior. Sexual relations between husband and wife cannot be observed by the family sociologist, but other forms of private behavior have been observed and reported. The psychiatrist will guard the identity of his patient, but the student of a community may report behavior on the part of an individual who can be indirectly identified by other members of the community or by other people in the larger society.

Although the psychologist and the social psychologist face ethical problems in experimenting with human beings, the sociologist seems most vulnerable in his studies of small groups and communities. His problem, since he does not often experiment, seems to be the question of whether there are ethical limitations on the "complete" objectivity of a research report concerning such groups and communities, for it is in this area of research that there are signs that the ethical sense of the sociologist is either dormant or only intermittently and uncertainly active. An explicit code of ethics which will govern the social scientist in reporting such data seems urgently needed.

In attempting to develop a system of relational ethics the sociologist must remember that while the people he studies have rights, these rights cannot be secured by an unqualified assertion of the "subject" status of his objects of investigation. It is an obvious absurdity to assert that these "subjects" are entitled to absolute anonymity, privacy, and protection, for in various circumstances the sociologist may be obligated to describe in full detail the actions of identifiable groups and individuals. Moreover the development of a code of ethics will not relieve the sociologist of moral choice, but can serve only as a guide for the making of decisions for which he must accept responsibility. Having said all this, however, it remains true that sociologists need to formulate a system of ethical norms to protect the objects of sociological reporting. It is as a tentative statement of the conditions relevant to such norms and of a

few of the most important norms themselves that the following discussion is offered.

Before presenting our conception of some of the important normative variables in the formulation of such a system of ethics, it is necessary to consider first the matrix of conditions into which the system must be placed. Two aspects of this matrix seem particularly important. The first of these has to do with the various groups of people to whom the reporting sociologist has obligations; the objects of the study are only one such group. The second aspect concerns the fact that even in community and small group studies certain *kinds* of data and certain *modes of data presentation* pose the ethical problem in its most intense form, while other data and modes of presentation offer only minor problems. It is necessary to distinguish these factors, since, as scientists, maximum freedom is desirable and hence no needless restrictions are in order.

In preparing a research report on a small community or group the sociologist has a moral duty toward several different groups. Because his obligations to each of these differ in kind and degree while at the same time they condition and limit one another, it seems necessary to set forth briefly the categories into which they fall.

1. For practical, as well as moral reasons, the sociologist must consider the wishes and needs of those persons who have allowed, invited, sponsored, or cooperated with the study. Management of a factory group, officers of a labor union, ministers, and city officials, are all examples of people who may have some concern for the results of sponsored research. The sociologist's obligations to such persons are truthfulness, the honoring of confidences, scientific objectivity, and honest reporting.

2. The sociologist has obligations to the source from which research funds were obtained. Like anyone who enters a contractual agreement, he has the ordinary obligations to employ these funds honestly and usefully, and to abide by the terms of the agreement concerning publication and ownership of data, and by any other explicit provisions which might have been incorporated in the contract.

3. The publisher of the research report has a call upon the moral consideration of the sociologist. Again the obligations are derived from the ordinary desirability of honesty and thoroughness, or from legal rights relating to libel suits and other embarrassments in which the report may involve the publisher.

4. Social scientists in general may be said to have a claim on the findings of the social researcher. The scientist's colleagues have a moral expectation that the findings will be made available to them in a serious, honest, and competent report. In addition to these expectations which do not differ much from expectations of professionals in other areas of work, there are the specifically scientific demands for a free exchange of data and knowledge unhindered by secrecy and suppression.

5. Another kind of group has a similar claim, perhaps not on the individual scientist but certainly on the discipline, to receive the findings of social research. In the long run this group is the society itself, for it is particularly important that social science knowledge ultimately become the possession of all the people. If there are reasons for the holding back of research findings from the general public for a short time, this group will still contain, at a minimum estimate, the key persons in a community or group who are in a position to utilize the research findings in programs of social improvement. The sociologist himself must bear the responsibility for determining who these persons are, unless they are defined by legal norms of the community of which the social scientist himself is a member.

6. Against the claims of all these groups on the findings of the sociologist, there exist the rights of the community studied, its subgroups, and its individual members. Their rights to secrecy, privacy, reputation, and respect, will vary according to circumstances and to the demands of the other groups, but they are intrinsically present—a society like our own which in its central tradition accords dignity and worth to the individual. The sociologist has not discharged his duties when he has met his obligations to sponsors, fund sources, publisher, social scientists, and the general public; nor has he completely discharged them when he makes a perfunctory effort at disguise, ambiguity, or anonymity. He is always faced with the moral problem of how much to tell about the lives and habits of the members of the community or small group.

The problem varies in its intensity, however, with the kind of data and with the mode of presentation. It seems obvious that historical material allows more latitude for reporting than contemporary material. Every study of a small group or community seems to require a brief sketch of historical background, and through this research the scientist may discover certain skeletons in the closet. Their revelation may be pertinent to the understanding of the group and will probably not intrude too greatly upon the community's or its individuals' reputations.

Within the area of contemporary material a distinction can be drawn between studies of primitive societies and civilized communities. It is supposed that the details of social life among the Samoans were not reported to these people, and if any reputations suffered from such study it was only among non-Samoans. There have been instances, however, of anthropologists' reports getting back to American Indian tribes, causing some dissension and suspicion among the members of the tribe. In either case the sociologist must consider these people as the subjects of human rights, even though the prospect of moral damage may not be great.

In studying contemporary communities the problem of reporting varies according to whether the data concerned are sacred or non-sacred. The analysis of behavior patterns which involve high traditional values (like religion, family

and sex, ethnic and group loyalties) should, of course, be as objective as possible, but an effort should be made to avoid needless and callous affront to the people who hold such values and such an effort requires special attention and care. In non-sacred areas (such as economic and political activities, housing and recreational problems) there can be greater freedom of reporting.

A related and equally important distinction must be made between public and private facts. This is something more than the difference between hidden and open knowledge. By definition, the sociologist deals with social and group relations. Hence, in a sense, his data can rarely concern completely private and secret activities. Nevertheless it is obvious that widely-known facts allow a much wider margin of expression in the research report.

The manner of presenting the data may be equally important as the kind of data presented in increasing or lowering the intensity of the moral problem of what to report in a community or small group study. Although the custom of sociologists of providing anonymity to the community, group, or individual is not an adequate safeguard of the rights of these subjects, it does make possible a wider margin of expression than would a complete and open identification. There are, however, other and more important differences of mode of presentation.

The happiest situation for the social scientist is one in which statistical analysis of, and reporting on, the actions and characteristics of people is possible. Where large numbers of people are involved it is obvious that the problem of ethical limitations on the report hardly exists. But even in communities where situations are revealed that may be somewhat distasteful, the sub-groups and the individual may be adequately protected by the use of statistical categories.

As soon as the sociologist leaves the field of quantitative analysis and attempts to describe in conceptual terms the social relations in a small group or community, the problem of what to report becomes much greater. Even when the community is cloaked in anonymity, indirect identification is almost always possible, and there is likely to be a subtle and unintended violation of human rights. The threat becomes even greater when the sociologist adds to his description of the social relations in the group or community an interpretation of the motivation which supports these relations and other social behavior. Thus, where systematic sociological description and interpretation of motivation combine, the sociologist faces the gravest moral challenge, and particularly so where this mode of description and analysis is applied to a leading member of the group. The likelihood that such a person will be identified and his social behavior and personal reputation placed under scrutiny by his fellows on the basis of the research report is very great. Here, more than anywhere else, the sociologist must take care not to needlessly injure another human being.

The problem of truth telling thus becomes a circumstantial one. This means that while telling the truth cannot *per se* be wrong or harmful, the ethical

question of whether or not to include a certain objective fact always arises in relation to person and circumstances. Thus complete objectivity, or telling all the truth in all circumstances, is not necessarily a morally good act.

This is true for several reasons. The researcher is, of course, bound to secrecy where information has been given in confidence or where he has made promises of secrecy. At the same time, as a scientist, he will discover natural secrets, which by their seriousness demand silence on the part of the reporter. There is also the problem of detraction—the injury of another's reputation by revealing what is detrimental but true about him. If the harmful fact is already widely disseminated or if the subject is mistaken in the belief that the fact will result in the impairment of his reputation, the sociologist may not have any obligation to conceal the fact. Otherwise its revelation is a serious matter.

In summary, it can be said the problem appears in its most intense form when some member of a community or group is singled out for description and analysis and where such description and analysis may result in the revealing of secrets, the violation of privacy, or the detraction of reputation. Placed in this situation the sociologist must evaluate the claims of the individual, or of the sub-group and community, in their relations with the claims of the research sponsors, the donors of funds, the publisher of the report, the expectations of colleagues, and the rights of the larger society. We suggest that if the researcher accepts the values of human dignity and worth and does not want needlessly to injure the objects of his investigation, he will take the following four variables into account in attempting to arrive at a decision.

1. *The sociologist's definition of the nature of science.* Some positivists seem to regard science only as a fascinating game played according to a set of rules.* It is doubtful that the sociologist using this conception of science may ever legitimately overrule the rights of the people studied. The simple wish of the people to conceal certain aspects of their behavior must then be considered sufficient to bar the report of that behavior.

If one regards science as a search for truth as an end to itself, the demands of the objectivity of science will carry much weight in the decision to publish all pertinent data. Except in history, however, the truth for which the social scientist searches is nomothetic, not idiographic, truth. It may be necessary to base generalizations on certain idiographic items, but man has the entire span of his career on earth to discover and disclose such items. Certainly a particular item of current behavior turned up in a community study need not be used to support a generalization if such use inflicts injury on the people being investigated.

*"Science after all is one of the games played by the children of this world, and it may very well be that those who prefer other games are in their generation wiser." Carroll C. Pratt, *The Logic of Modern Psychology*, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1939, p.57.

There is a third conception of pure science. Social scientists may believe that science is both a rigidly ruled game and a search for truth which is valuable for itself, but they usually also believe that science well developed and used by experts or disseminated among the people can make for a better life. There is a sense of urgency about accomplishing this mission of pure science in the modern world. Thus, within this perspective, considerable pressure arises to ignore the rights of people who are scientifically studied. Despite this pressure it remains true that a wilful disregard for the rights of persons and groups to their privacy, reputations, and secrets, will tend to destroy the very values which the scientist hopes his basic research can render more achievable.

Frequently the scientist makes a community or small group study not as a pure scientist but in one sense or another as an applied scientist. He may carry on the research for what he himself considers desirable practical ends; he may be employed by officials of the community or group or by those of the larger society; or he may be employed by some private group with a specific selfish or altruistic interest. In all three of these instances there is pressure to report all the significant findings even though injury may be done to the objects of the study. Nevertheless the sociologist must abide by the rule that he exercise every effort to determine whether or not the values to be implemented by the study, and the probability of being able to achieve them through the use of its findings, justify the harm done to the members of the community or group.

Preoccupation with applied science is frequently accompanied by the temptation to look for and publish data which will further the realization of what the researcher himself regards as the good society or community. He is likely to believe that all of his data must be revealed in all circumstances. It appears to us that a scientist of this persuasion is most in need of the virtues of tolerance, compassion, and love, because he is in danger of placing the considerations of the "good" society above all consideration of individual rights and injuries.

The hired scientist, moreover, cannot avoid responsibility for revealing data injurious to individuals and groups by pleading loyalty to community or nation or by indicating his contractual responsibilities to a private group. Loyalty to community or nation may require injury to individuals and groups, but in such cases the scientist shares whatever guilt is incurred with all other responsible agencies. In instances of purely contractual research the scientist must accept full responsibility, because loyalty to nation or community is not involved. He is free to refuse the job, and if the values of the employing group are wrong or do not justify the amount of injury done the scientist must accept the moral responsibility.

2. *Determination of the extent to which a person or group will be injured by the publication of data concerning their behavior.* Those instances in which the scientist can foretell with certitude that serious injury will be done to the objects of his study seem to be very few in number. It is also likely that the

largest proportion of his data will be free of possibly injurious materials. It is the in-between area of probable injury that is most difficult to determine and yet which must be determined.

To know what the effect of exposing a group's secrets will be, to realize how seriously a person's reputation may be damaged, and to visualize the effects of violation of privacy presupposes knowledge on the part of the scientist which he may not have. This knowledge can be approached to the extent to which the scientist saturates himself in the social relations of the group which he studies. It probably cannot be achieved by the aloof scientist who simply culls the reports of those who have done the actual and basic data collecting.

Since there is a great difference between imaginary and objective derogation of reputation, the sociologist may tend to brush off the former as relevant and uncontrollable. Human decency, however, would seem to require that the scientist make an effort to inquire even into this possibility of psychological and subjective injury. The scientist cannot guard against all such contingencies and against the unexpected and unwarranted complaints of people, but he should do his human best to avoid them ahead of time and to be sympathetic to them if they come.

If the sociologist attempts to interpret the social behavior of the people he studies, he must assess the responsibility of the people for their own actions. *False sentimentality must not result in the denial of the fact that a person must accept the consequences of the acts for which he is responsible.* The scientist cannot erase the responsibilities, duties, and obligations, of the objects of his study. Yet, at the same time, he must recognize that the human being is never completely responsible for his actions, and that in many cases factors over which the person or group has no control may come close to completely determining certain acts. Since the assessment of responsibility will be contained in the research report, injury can be done if the assessment is not carefully made.

3. *The degree to which people or groups are actually members of a moral community of which the scientist is also a member.* At the core of the Western value system is a belief in the basic dignity and worth of the human being. This belief is based on different assumptions according to the particular stream of tradition in which one locates it: the Fatherhood of God, natural law, universal human needs and aspirations, or human reason. Whatever the base, the belief implies that men are bound to one another in a moral community. Membership in this community requires that the individual's rights to privacy, secrecy, and reputation be respected, even though the human beings studied may not be members of the sociologist's own society.

The belief also implies that a man or group can renounce membership in the moral community by choosing modes of action which violate these basic values of dignity and worth. In mid-century it seems probable that men like Hitler and Stalin, organized groups like "Murder Incorporated," the Ku Klux Klan, and

some others, have placed themselves outside the moral community and have surrendered the protection of its norms. Thus the social scientist need have no qualms about reporting in full detail the activities of such groups and people. Although this norm has never been explicitly formulated, it has guided a great deal of the research and reporting in social science.

Yet the decision of the sociologist to place particular persons or groups outside the moral community involves great responsibility, and he must be careful that his criteria of judgment permit tolerance, compassion, and wisdom. This is especially the case when he studies "unpopular" racial, religious and political groups, prostitutes, homosexuals, drug addicts, and the psychologically ill, the poor and powerless. It is hardly questionable that these people remain members of the moral community and hence retain their rights of privacy, respect, and secrecy. The needs of the society may require a limitation of their rights by the courts or by the social scientist in his reporting, but basic rights can be limited only to the extent that they *must* be limited. Beyond that point such people must be treated in the same way as other members of the moral community.

The recognition of basic human rights which accompany membership in the moral community is an important means by which social scientists can avoid the dangers of the use of purely subjective criteria. Within the consensus of the Western tradition it is objectively true that there are moral evils and modes of action which place the perpetrator outside this community. We must know as much as possible about such people and the scientist need have little inhibition in the report he provides about them. All other persons and groups, no matter how personally distasteful to the scientist, seem to require the respect of their fellow-members in the moral community.

4. *The degree to which the larger society, the local community, or the group, needs the data of the research.* Real urgency must be defined in terms of the pressing needs of a group, community, or society, or in terms of some impending problem of which the scientist but not the group or community being studied is aware. Rights and duties are never qualified in society and one of the qualifications seems to be that the society sometimes has a prior right to information which is necessary and useful for itself even though it may be harmful to an individual or sub-group.

The social scientist may find himself in one of several moral situations when he is trying to determine whether or not the social need is greater than the individual or group right. If the duly appointed authorities of a community or of the larger society believe certain information to be vitally needed, there is a *prima facie* case for the scientist to reveal such information. However, these authorities must show to the scientist the ground for the need. If he does not know and cannot find out from the authorities whether there is an urgent need for certain data which will be harmful to individuals and sub-groups, he is free

of moral obligation to reveal it. If he is certain that the information is not necessary, he may in good conscience refuse to reveal it even though the authorities demand to know it. It must be recognized that his freedom in such instances is moral and not legal, and he may have to pay a price for his refusal.

In a similar manner the obligations which the scientist has to the group studied may require the revelation of information damaging to individuals or sub-groups. In this instance the scientist himself is likely to be the best judge of the need for his data. If he understands and accepts the basic values of the group and takes his obligation to the group seriously, he may find it imperative to disclose such information. Since he cannot plead ignorance, and since there is no demand from competent higher authority, the responsibility for the assessment of urgency rests squarely on the scientist.

Finally, even though neither the higher authority nor the representatives of the group studied place any demands upon him, he may become aware of facts which are vitally needed by the social group studied or by the society. In such cases he must not only accept the responsibility for violating the rights of individuals and groups, but also must arrive at his decision with very little outside aid. In clear-cut instances where the comparison and balancing of the rights of the various claimants can be easily accomplished, the decision may be easily reached. But it is certainly in this area that the researcher will be forced to consider most thoroughly the importance which he, himself, has placed on the value of the information in its relation to the needs of the group.

The complexities exhibited in the discussion of the four central variables indicate that the problem of ethical limitations on sociological reporting cannot be reduced to a simple either-or proposition of a conflict between the scientific objectivity of a research report and the ethical inhibitions of the person who writes the report. It is apparent that the sociologist must act simultaneously according to a highly developed procedural code for scientific reporting and a code of ethics based on the belief that the objects of his study are also subjects. These codes are not irreconcilable, but the resolution of specific conflicts between them may be a very complex task, involving the claims of many groups and the interrelationships of the four variables. Yet the sociologist must resolve them. If there is a tendency for the sociologist to become more scientific, he must also become increasingly sensitized to the rights, feelings, and needs of the people he studies. Treating them as subjects means that to the best of his ability he will treat them with justice, understanding, compassion, and, in the last analysis, love.

The British Tradition of Social Administration: Moral Concerns at the Expense of Scientific Rigor

Martin Bulmer

American social science is, tentatively and perhaps belatedly, discovering ethics, particularly in issues surrounding the uses of social science research for policy making. Although the concern may seem novel to many social scientists, in fact the discipline is rediscovering its roots. In Britain the links between ethics and social science were never so completely severed, but were forged in a quite distinctive way, through the creation of the field of Social Administration. The development of Social Administration, with its particular strengths and weaknesses, offers a useful basis for comparing the American and British experience.

Less than a century ago the social sciences in Britain and the United States were directly and explicitly concerned with ethics. American sociologists such as Albion Small and E.A. Ross combined in their teaching scientific analysis and direct ethical prescription.¹ From 1906 sociology at Harvard University was taught in the Department of Social Ethics. In Britain leading figures such as the social philosopher L. T. Hobhouse and the early social investigator Seebohm Rowntree combined scientific concerns with specific ethical and political interests. A recent history of British social science between 1870 and 1914 is titled *Ethics and Society in England*.² To modern eyes several of these figures now seem distinctly quaint, if not anachronistic, throwbacks to the origins of social scientists from the ranks of Protestant ministers. The university professor (mis)using his position to preach prescriptive doctrines, a practice that Max Weber so fiercely attacked, is the prototype.³

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The New Scientific Spirit

These early tendencies were not sustained, and those who advocated a fusion of social science and ethics were eclipsed by those who favored more scientific approaches to social questions. This new conception of social science first and foremost insisted upon the objective, detached, and *scientific* character of the academic study of society, modeled (to some extent at least) upon the natural sciences. Around the end of the First World War new and distinct disciplines (such as sociology, political science, and anthropology), each characterized by particular theories *and* methods, took a shape still recognizable in those disciplines today. Their practitioners concerned themselves with scientific and analytic ends in which moral and prescriptive explorations played little or no part. Indeed, moral concerns were regarded as an intrusion more characteristic of muckrakers, do-gooders, and reformers than appropriate to new disciplines striving for professional status.

In the 1920s the University of Chicago, home of famous "schools" of political science, sociology, and economics, was a leading exponent of these trends. In political science Charles Merriam pointed the subject more in the direction of rigor and quantitative inquiry, and pressed for a more systematic and expanded study of public administration.⁴ The scientific purpose of the enterprise crystallized at the national level in the Social Science Research Council, set up by Merriam in 1923.⁵ In sociology Robert Park represented the new scientific spirit, advocating the detached, scientific study of social phenomena untrammelled by political or philosophical ends. One of Park's major interests was race relations, which he effectively established as a field of academic study (though there had been one or two precursors, notably W. E. B. Du Bois).⁶ The fierce academic passions that the study of race arouses today—it is enough to mention the Moynihan Report on the black family of 1963; the article by Arthur Jensen on race and IQ in the *Harvard Educational Review* of 1969; and the James Coleman-Thomas Pettigrew exchanges over busing⁷—stand in sharp contrast to the dispassionate and scholarly approach that Park was able to maintain. As Ernest Burgess recalled in a memorial *festschrift*, "Students attracted to the field of race relations, whether white or negro, generally held strong sentiments against racial discrimination and for negro rights. They were predisposed to fight valiantly for them. Park told them flatly that the world was full of crusaders. Their role instead was to be that of the calm, detached scientist who investigates race relations with the same objectivity and detachment with which the zoologist dissects the potato bug."⁸

Despite its academic base, social science was regarded as relevant for policy formulation and the guidance of government. Merriam had been actively involved in city politics for twenty years, nearly being elected mayor in 1911. Park had been secretary to Booker T. Washington, and was the first president

of the Chicago Urban League.⁹ Both encouraged academic studies of a markedly applied kind, relating to policy problems. However, these studies were to be carried out scientifically, within the framework of an academic discipline (whether sociology or political science) with its own body of general ideas and its own developing scientific methods of investigation. William F. Ogburn carried on this tradition when he joined the Chicago department and undertook (together with Wesley Mitchell and Merriam) the work for Herbert Hoover's Commission on *Recent Social Trends*.¹⁰ Here was explicit policy research (a forerunner of the modern social indicators movement, which attempts to measure social change statistically), conceived within a rigorous scientific framework of detachment and objectivity, from which ethical concerns were entirely excluded.

The tendencies begun in the 1920s have been strongly maintained in American social science to the present. The exclusion of value concerns is reflected in methodological principles such as "value-freedom" in sociology; a definition of economics ("positive economics") as the study of means to given ends; and the use of rigorous experimental designs in psychology. It is also revealed in empirical studies of society. In sociology, for example, the scientific social survey has become the dominant methodology and the most widely used technique in policy research, although other types of research design also exist.

Why were philosophical elements so rigorously excluded? The main reasons lie in the conception of social science as science and the drive to professional respectability. Scientists generally believed that moral and ethical judgments introduced a weakness and flabbiness into scholarly work. Western social thought in the twentieth century widely reflected the philosophical distinction between is and ought, fact and value, the positive and the normative. Social scientists, it was argued, should not permit their own judgments about the good society to permeate their work any more than historians, linguists, or classical scholars allowed moral and ethical values to color *their* work. The institution of slavery, for example, might be evil and pernicious; nevertheless the task of the social scientist was to understand it as an economic and social system and to explain why it persisted for so long, rather than to pass judgment upon those who originated and perpetuated it. As a recent survey by Donald Warwick, a social psychologist, has shown, ethics acquired distinctly pejorative overtones in the teaching of some social sciences.¹¹

Accompanying the rise in scientific objectivity was the salience of social science in America and its integration into the policy-making processes of the government. Although the enterprise may not seem so vast to American social scientists, the volume of funding, the size of particular projects, and the number of social scientists involved take a Britisher's breath away. The status of social science policy research in the United States is grounded in its *scientific rigor*. Such respectability as it has—which certainly should not be exaggerated—rests

on methodological competence and sophistication and the ability to produce representative and reliable evidence bearing on relevant policy problems.

Fundamental Questions

Recently, however, some social scientists have argued that the claims to scientific rigor have been oversold, that the discipline cannot deliver the goods that it promises to produce.¹² It is certainly not clear that more social science data have led to greater clarity about policy objectives. One thinks, for example, of David Cohen's account of the effects of educational research on policy in the twenty-five years since the *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation decision.¹³

True, critical voices have been raised before. Throughout the last half-century, some have asked whether academic social scientists were as disinterested as they claimed to be. Writers such as Thorstein Veblen, Karl Mannheim, Robert S. Lynd, Gunnar Myrdal, and C. Wright Mills pointed to the various ways in which social background, material interests, political beliefs, and moral concerns entered into the background assumptions, analytical frameworks, and conclusions of mainstream social science. But their critiques failed to have a major impact until the late 1960s and early 1970s. At this point a variety of developments coalesced.

Social ferment, particularly in universities in the industrial world, led to critical questioning of received theories of social science such as "structural-functionalism" and marginalist economics. Attacks by thinkers as diverse as Charles Taylor, Herbert Marcuse, Barrington Moore, Jr., Alvin Gouldner, and Richard Bernstein evoked support that had formerly been lacking. Greater openness to philosophy began to characterize several social science disciplines. Major ethical and political discussions focused on particular pieces of empirical social science research, from the secret tape recording of the Wichita juries in the 1950s, through the Moynihan Report, the U.S. Army-sponsored research in Chile called Project Camelot in the 1960s, to the covert observations of homosexual encounters described in Laud Humphrey's book *Tearoom Trade* and the Coleman-Pettigrew debate over busing in the 1970s.

In the last fifteen years federal support for social science has increased dramatically, following the enormous increase in federal expenditure on social welfare. New styles of policy research such as social experimentation and evaluation research have tended toward the hard, more scientific, end of the spectrum of social science methodologies. But the growth of such research has also led to penetrating questions about the ends that were being pursued and the alternatives that might be chosen. Even apparently "scientific" enterprises such as the large-scale negative income-tax experiment led to queries about whether the experimenters were not circumscribing the policy options in order to make their

work more acceptable to legislators. The applications of social science to public policy raised philosophical questions more fundamental and more problematic than had hitherto been suspected.

Ethics in the Welfare State

Ethical issues underlying social science policy are now firmly on the agenda for public discussion. British experience seems likely to be relevant here, particularly in its tradition of Social Administration. Why has one particular academic area of study—that of social policy and administration—evolved a markedly different relationship among the social sciences, policy analysis, and the policy-making process, in which ethical concerns figure as central? This discussion is *not* an account of British social science as a whole, or of British sociology or British political science. It focuses on *one* particular field of study in order to examine the relationships between academic social science and public policy.

Social Administration has no precise academic parallel in America. Its nearest equivalent in the United States would be a hypothetical department that embraced applied economists, applied sociologists, political scientists interested in policy analysis, social historians of the state provision of welfare, and social philosophers with interests in citizenship and social justice. To my knowledge, no such department exists. Social Administration's most remarkable feature is its ability to blend analysis with moral concern to produce a subject of practical import.

Social Administration exists in British universities in separate departments of that title distinct from departments of sociology, political science, and economics. Nor is it to be confused with the teaching of social workers, which is a distinct and separate function. It is interdisciplinary, bringing knowledge from different fields to bear on understanding how welfare policies have developed in fields like housing, education, social services, income maintenance, health, race relations, and social deviance. The contributory disciplines include sociology, psychology, political science, economics, philosophy, history and—in a different relationship—statistics.¹⁴ It is an academic, not a professional, subject, though some undergraduates go on to professional courses in social work later.

Social Administration in Britain does not have a monopoly on policy studies. Political scientists study policy-making processes. The field of international relations is of course well developed either on its own or as part of political science. On the domestic front, industrial relations is usually taught in separate departments, and not covered in Social Administration teaching. In a few universities there are special departments of criminology and/or of race relations, but more usually these are part of Social Administration. Though professional

social-work training is separate, teaching and research on *policy* in the personal social services (that is, the delivery of social-work services) *are* part of the field.

There is a close connection between the subject of Social Administration and the development of the British welfare state. The subject focuses on *identifying social needs* and determining the structure of administration necessary to satisfy them. It studies the nature and distribution of social benefits and social costs; the rights and duties of the citizen both as contributor to and consumer of social services; and the three systems of welfare (social, occupational, and fiscal) that constitute collective intervention to meet selected needs. The administrative structure that meets these needs includes state education, social security, the National Health Service, local authority housing (what Americans call public housing), and other directly administered services and transfer payments. Benefits may be provided—needs may be met—either in cash (for example, social security payments) or in kind (for example, free hospital services), but in all cases government and not the economic market is the allocating agent for rights, duties, and collective consumption. The ideal toward which government is striving is “integrated community services, preventive in outlook and of high quality for all citizens in all areas irrespective of means, social class, occupation or ethnic group.”¹⁵

The academic study of Social Administration as a distinct subject originated with the growth of the welfare state. The subject developed in British universities in the period after 1945, when large-scale welfare legislation was being passed. In addition to empirical analysis of its actual workings, there was direct discussion of philosophical issues. Many of the subject’s most distinguished practitioners—Richard Titmuss and Peter Townsend in Britain, Martin rein in America,¹⁶ to name but three—have emphasized the role that positive value choice has played in the direction of their academic research. Many of its British practitioners have either been active members of the Fabian Society—a small, elite intellectual group of social democrats founded by Beatrice and Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw in the 1890s—or have maintained close links with civil servants and politicians in London.¹⁷ Others, coming from a background in economics, have pointed to the operation of market forces in welfare provision and have been less identified with social-democratic politics.

At the academic core of the subject is a concept of “need,” which is philosophical and value-laden in a way that concepts in other subjects (“social system” in sociology, “government” and “power” in political science) are not. It provides a direct link to ethics and an avenue by which ethical criteria may be fed into social science. The importance of this value element has been recognized by leading social scientists such as R. H. Tawney, Gunnar Myrdal, and C. Wright Mills; their writings are widely used in teaching Social Administration students.

“Need” is usually defined with reference to an existing state of affairs and a desired end that is different from the status quo. “To speak of a need is to imply a goal, a measureable deficiency from the goal, and a means of achieving the goal. The goals may be set by some sort of consensus within society, by the person in need (‘felt’ need) or by experts with a knowledge or specific means for achieving particular aims.”¹⁸ In specifying need several different approaches have been followed, including the postulation of ideal norms (“good health”), minimum standards (“freedom from want”), comparative definitions (cross-national comparisons of low-income groups), or “felt” needs (relative deprivation).

Writers in the British tradition have been readier to employ the concept of need than to analyze it deeply. Recently, they have come under attack from fellow-practitioners with backgrounds in economics for indulging in “needology”¹⁹ and for making heavily value-laden statements of the “need” for more and better public services, whether in the health, housing, education, social security, or personal social science fields. Economists such as Alan Williams and A. A. Nevitt urge an approach based on “demand” rather than “need,” or a redefinition of social needs as “demands which have been defined by society as sufficiently important to qualify for social recognition as goods or services which should be met by government interventions.”²⁰ According to this view, if a social need has not been recognized and converted into a public demand, it behooves those who have identified it to change public taste and show that other goods and services should be deferred in order to meet the new demand that this need creates.

This controversy continues, but both sides recognize that the allocation of resources between competing ends in the social field involves choices that are partly a matter of value judgment. Whether postulated as “needs” or “demands,” ethical criteria are relevant in determining how social priorities should be ranked in allocating resources.

Social Choices in Allocating Resources

An excellent example of this approach is provided by the last book of Richard Titmuss, the founder of *Social Administration in Britain* and undoubtedly its greatest figure. Titmuss was professor of Social Administration in the Department of Social Science & Administration at the London School of Economics, the leading department in the subject in Britain. He held that post from 1950 until his death at the age of sixty-five in 1973. Titmuss was a most unusual man, not least because he was appointed to the senior chair in the subject without ever having held a university post. Like Robert Park, who came to sociology late via journalism, Titmuss was then over forty. Unlike Park, who had a Harvard M.A. and German Ph.D., Titmuss had no university degree at

all, and never obtained one (other than honorary degrees). Yet by the time Titmuss died, "he had created a new discipline and was one of the few truly original social scientists of his generation."²¹

The Gift Relationship, published in 1970,²² is a study of the provision, in different societies, of human blood for transfusion. Medical services require a regular and predictable supply of blood; modern medicine requires blood in ever larger quantities. How is that need to be met? To show that different societies meet the different ways, Titmuss developed an eightfold typology along a continuum from the paid donor at one extreme to the voluntary community donor at the other. The paid donor is motivated solely by the promise of cash compensation, the voluntary community donor strictly by the altruistic desire to give to strangers regardless of what he or she gets in return. In between are various arrangements with different degrees of compensation to the donor in cash or kind, or the granting of rights and privileges for the receipt of blood to individuals or groups, in return for individual donations. Titmuss concluded that the differences among, say, Britain, the United States, and Russia could not be attributed simply to administrative and organizational structures of blood supply systems and patterns of medical care services. "Different social and political structures and value systems," he argued, "strongly determine" which type of donation is characteristic of a particular society. "Explanations—and admittedly explanations can never be more than partial—have to be sought in the history, the values and the political ideas of each society."²³

This statement exemplifies a more general principle. Social policy presupposes social choices, which presuppose social values. These values must evolve from widely held attitudes rather than be imposed from above by a power elite. Societies, like individuals, must make choices, and in a democracy these choices must be made collectively. Titmuss says, "Social policy models . . . with all their apparent remoteness from reality, can serve a purpose in providing us with an ideological framework which may stimulate us to ask the significant questions and to expose the significant choices."²⁴

The Gift Relationship considered in detail the ease by which blood is obtained under different systems, its purity, its cost per unit, and its wastage (human blood has a "shelf life" of not more than three weeks). It also examined who the donors were, and why they sold, lent, or gave their blood. This led to a study of the social relationships involved in blood donation, the "quality of life" implied on the one and by response to the market and on the other by giving for the general good. In addition to exploring the connection between different systems of blood provision, the book examined the objectives of social policy, altruism in society, and gift relationships—hence the title. Nor was Titmuss wary of prescription. He demonstrated that the national-collectivist blood transfusion system in Britain was far more efficient than the market systems in other societies (such as the United States) on almost any criterion—

availability, cheapness, purity of blood, economy in its use. (The blood debate goes on, however, with some critics charging that the American market system is not nearly so disastrous or the British voluntary system so rosy as Titmuss claimed.²⁵ Because British donors gave blood entirely on a voluntary basis, with only a cup of tea as their reward, Titmuss linked this finding to a broader philosophical principle, the role of altruism in modern society. Altruism, he argued, is present in many different types of social relationships, including those for social provision. Analytic social sciences—such as economics—that fail to identify such social relations have omitted a main motive power in human existence.

A different field of empirical research, the study of poverty, also exemplifies the fusion of moral and philosophical concerns with empirical inquiry. A long British tradition of poverty studies goes back to Henry Mayhew, Charles Booth, and Seebohm Rowntree. In the recent past several notable inquiries have demonstrated the extent of poverty in contemporary Britain and argued for state action to meet the needs of those living on low incomes. The most notable studies are Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend's *The Poor and the Poorest*²⁶ and Townsend's *Poverty in the United Kingdom*.²⁷ The latter makes a considerable theoretical contribution, as do W. G. Runciman's *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*²⁸ (which incorporates an explicit discussion of John Rawls) and Dorothy Wedderburn's symposium on *Poverty, Inequality and Class Structure*.²⁹ These studies will give the American reader the flavor of British Social Administration. But for those who wish to peruse the wide range of empirical studies in the different specialist fields mentioned earlier, a useful bibliographical guide is available.³⁰

Distinguishing Traits

What follows is an attempt to roughly summarize the more distinctive features of academic Social Administration. Because Titmuss was so central in the development of the subject, his work figures prominently. First, Social Administration is a continuation of a strain in academic social science that sees moral criticism as the legitimate concern of the scholar. Distinguished figures such as Thorstein Veblen, R. H. Tawney, Gunnar Myrdal, John Kenneth Galbraith, and C. Wright Mills, though differing in discipline and orientation, all show a marked philosophical bent in their writing. Similarly, in Social Administration fundamental debate about society's purposes and ways of meeting various conditions and circumstances is recognized as a proper part of academic study. In many areas of social policy, radical choices have to be made between competing social values. The realization that ultimately these decisions are made by the executive arm of government and by politicians does not rule out their academic study. Two notable examples of this type of analysis are

Rawl's work on justice, and Tawney's classic *The Acquisitive Society*. Though more sardonic in tone, some of Veblen's writing might fall into the same class. In the last analysis, Titmuss wrote, human welfare is an ethical concept.

Second, in *Social Administration* one of the most important dimensions of choice is the manner in which certain social needs (health care, for example) are to be met: by the individual or by the government? Through individualism or collectivism? Titmuss was originally a Liberal politically, and his belief in collectivism was not a doctrinaire position but arose out of observation of the "enterprise, efficiency and compassion" with which the British central government after Dunkirk and through the blitz met the need for national mobilization.³¹ He came to believe strongly in services that were provided universally rather than selectively; services free of social discrimination; services that involved the pooling of risks and the sharing of national resources. The English National Health Service, for all its imperfections, exemplified many of these features.

It is important to emphasize that this belief in collectivism was no mere whim or value choice, but an integral part of an intellectual enterprise, closely linked to an analysis of the social consequences of industrialism and urbanism for a complex and highly differentiated society. The theme is not unique—Harold L. Wilensky, C. L. Lebaux,³² and Gaston V. Rimlinger,³³ for example, have developed similar ideas. Such a position contrasts sharply with the individualist tenets of certain other social scientists. A leading economist at the University of Chicago and his wife have recently been extolling in the media the virtues of individualism and of the market as mechanisms for resource allocation. Whether in such popularizations or in his more scholarly work, Milton Friedman is one among many who builds value premises into the propositions from which his theory is constructed. Within *Social Administration* there is lively debate between collectivists and individualists, proponents of the state and of the market, of legislative or voluntary solutions to social welfare provision. Titmuss was a staunch collectivist, but the subject as a whole is no longer collectivist in outlook.

Third, *Social Administration* takes as a central theme a concern with citizenship, developing further the seminal ideas of T. H. Marshall.³⁴ Two important questions to ask of modern industrial societies are: who is a member of the society? and what rights do members have? Foreign migrant labor, which now constitutes 12 percent of West Germany's work force and between 2 and 5 percent of the American work force, poses this sort of issue very sharply.³⁵ Thirty years ago the questions related much more to the position of the working class in Britain and to that of blacks in the United States. An important element in Titmuss's belief in collectivism held that common access to social services was a badge of citizenship, the only way of distributing social rights without discrimination and stigma. Hence this tendency to favor universalism, with

positive discrimination to divert resources to the poor, handicapped, and minority groups.³⁶

Fourth, a further characteristic of Social Administration is its solid empirical base. Titmuss's early work focused on population and public health in the British tradition of "political arithmetic" (the compilation of statistical data about a society, particularly demographic and socio-medical data). His later work retained this meticulous factual documentation, meshed with a broad philosophical perspective.

An American Comparison

This very brief and compressed characterization highlights the distinctiveness of the Social Administration approach, which should be of interest to American social scientists and policy-makers. A comparison of American developments with those taking place elsewhere can throw fresh light on the choices open to American social science policy studies at the present time, particularly given the doubts that are being expressed about their general objectives. What can be learned from a comparison with this British tradition?

In the immediate postwar period, America was still markedly individualistic in its approach to welfare provision, with widespread political hostility to extension of government welfare.³⁷ But since 1965 the proportions of the Gross National Product spent on social welfare have narrowed between the United States and Britain, with the American share rising. An English academic commenting on America has to beware of presenting a caricature of America as it was fifteen to twenty years ago, though in the health policy field the differences are still extremely marked. One explanation for the development of American policy studies, evaluation research, and social experimentation is surely this enormous increase, particularly in federal government expenditure on social welfare. The consequent academic growth in America has been in "hard" or "harder" social sciences of this type. In Britain this has not been the case.

It is a truism to say that "government" does not mean the same thing in Britain and in America. Not only do the political systems of the two countries differ markedly, but (more relevant here) they differ in the respect accorded to academic experts in each society, in the position of the social sciences, and in institutional support for social science. The wide public hearing that social science expertise commands in the United States contrasts with greater skepticism within the smaller, close-knit world of the British political elite. The relative position has been summed up by Oxford political scientist L. J. Sharpe, who compares the British social scientist visiting America to the English chef visiting Paris.³⁸

The connections between Social Administration and Fabian activism are particularly revealing of the close relationship between the academic and political

worlds in England. The Fabian Society embraces Labour politicians, academics, and some civil servants. It is allied loosely to the Labour Party, but distinct from it. Titmuss was a committed Fabian, as are his contemporary successors such as Abel-Smith and Townsend. (To a British observer it is puzzling that Daniel Moynihan may move from advising Richard Nixon to become a Democratic Senator. In Britain such a change of sides would likely be political suicide.) An illuminating recent study by Keith Banting has shown how close the political and academic links can be, and what a marked impact British academic intellectuals had on social policies in relation to poverty, housing, and education during the 1960s.³⁹ Whether such close links with policy makers and "political administrators" are good for the health of the social sciences is another matter.

The role of theory in the social sciences also differs sharply between the two countries. It may be only a slight exaggeration to say that in the British social sciences strong theoretical interests and strong applied interests seem antithetical. British sociology is strong on theory, moderate on empirical research, and notably weak on policy applications. By contrast, Social Administration (which historically and departmentally usually branched off from sociology) is strong on application, moderate on empirical research, and extremely weak on theory. The absence of scientific rigor in Social Administration can be seen as much in the realm of theory as methodology. Many of its practitioners conceive of it less as a science than as humanistic *social science* with strong links to history and philosophy and ethics. It is not distinguished by a coherent body of theory, though it does make use of a set of distinctive concepts that include "need," "welfare," and "citizenship."

As one critic has pointed out, the peculiar blend of empirical data and philosophy thrive at the expense of theory—"too much is prescribed, too little is explained." Robert Pinker suggests that "in British social policy and administration we begin with fact-finding and end in moral rhetoric, still lacking those explanatory theories that might show the process as a whole and reveal the relations of the separate problems to one another."⁴⁰ Here British Social Administration diverges most markedly from American social science and policy studies. Men of the caliber of Merriam and Park gave American social science its cutting edge by insisting first and foremost that social science was *science*—not philosophy, not social reform, not history. Whether this goal has been achieved is highly debatable, but several generations of social scientists have acted to a considerable extent as if it has succeeded.

Britain and America differ significantly, too, in the place of empirical data and the role of research methodology in social science. Although British social policy research (both academic and governmental) is highly empirical, the use made of empirical data is still largely "empiricist" in the correct (and pejorative) sense of that term—that is, based on the view that the facts speak for themselves. Such a view verges on the prescientific, in the sense that a data-

collecting activity like the Census, though providing materials for social science, would not in itself be regarded as social science. Here the differences between Britain and America seem to be greatest. This poses a fascinating question: to what extent is there a trade-off between scientific rigor and ethical commitment? Does one tend to drive out the other? To what extent can philosophical and ethical premises be introduced explicitly into general frameworks in social science without fundamentally changing the nature of those frameworks? The undoubted strengths of British Social Administration are its blend of philosophical concerns, historical sense and specificity, and policy focus. But these are achieved at the expense of formal theory and rigorous methodology as those are usually understood, particularly in the United States. Does the former set of characteristics tend to preclude the latter?

Is it possible to integrate formal theory and rigorous methodology with historical and ethical sensitivity? If some American "policy science" reads like arid scholasticism, which does little to illuminate the real world, some British work on social policy reads like moral rhetoric, resisting systematization and methodologically weak. Excessively scientific policy research is equally unattractive, preoccupied with formalization and methodological rigor, without attention to the moral ends of policy or the historical circumstances in which policy is enacted.

Some middle way is surely possible. The overblown claims of "policy science" need to be firmly resisted, and the belief that the social sciences constitute a new "social engineering" exposed for the self-serving cant that it is. The social sciences should provide a general framework within which social processes can be examined—the "enlightenment" model.⁴¹ They need not provide definite predictions about the direction of social change, nor offer technocratic solutions to discrete problems. But the framework must necessarily take account of the ends of social action, and deal with the moral dimension of human affairs.

On the other hand, American social science has demonstrated over the last sixty years that methodological standards matter, and that empirical inquiry needs to be rigorous, systematic, and located within a proper theoretical framework. In these respects, British Social Administration is singularly inadequate, and could greatly strengthen its theoretical and methodological backbone. If the goal of social science is understanding and explanation, much more attention needs to be paid to the structure of the explanations that are being offered. It is possible, for example, for critics to dismiss *The Gift Relationship* as a flawed and polemical moral tract, and there is a slight element of truth in the charge, despite the illustrative empirical material included in it and the overall conviction of the comparative analysis.

Moral concerns do have a place in social policy research, but this place is not preeminent, as Park and Merriam clearly recognized long ago. If moral

concerns are preeminent, as in certain British social policy writing, then the persuasiveness and influence of the writer is significantly weakened, since his work can be dismissed as mere emotional rhetoric. The answer is not to discard a moral dimension altogether, but to combine it with an adequate theoretical and methodological structure. In this respect, Gunnar Myrdal's magisterial survey of American race relations more than a generation ago, *An American Dilemma*,⁴² remains a model of the fusion between ethics and science that is both compelling and methodologically adequate.

Notes

1. Cf. V. K. Dibble, *The Legacy of Albion Small* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); J. Weinberg, *E. A. Ross and the Sociology of Progressivism* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1972).
2. R. N. Soffer, *Ethics and Society in England: The Revolution in the Social Sciences 1870-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).
3. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, *From Max Weber* (London: Routledge, 1948), pp. 129-56.
4. B. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 155.
5. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, Chapter 7.
6. Cf. D. S. Green and E. D. Driver, *W. E. B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
7. Cf. T. F. Pettigrew, "Race, Ethics and the Social Scientist," *Hastings Center Report* 9(October 1979), 15-18.
8. E. W. Burgess, "Social Planning and Race Relations," in J. Masuoka and P. Valien, eds., *Race Relations, Problems and Theories* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 17.
9. F. H. Matthews, *Quest for an American Sociology: Robert E. Park and the Chicago School* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1977).
10. President's Research Committee on Social Trends, *Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933).
11. Donald P. Warwick, *The Teaching of Ethics in the Social Sciences* (Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, 1980).
12. For critical discussions see, for example, Martin Rein, *Social Science & Public Policy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978); C. H. Weiss, "Improving the Linkage between Social Research and Public Policy," in L. E. Lynn, Jr., ed., *Knowledge and Policy: The Uncertain Connection* (Washington: National Academy of Sciences, 1978), pp. 23-81; and C. E. Lindblom and D. J. Cohen, *Usable Knowledge: Social Science and Social Problem-Solving* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
13. D. K. Cohen and M. S. Garet, "Reforming Educational Policy with Applied Social Research," *Harvard Educational Review* 45(1975), 17-43.
14. For representative texts defining the scope of the subject, see T. H. Marshall, *Social Policy in the Twentieth Century* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1975); D. Donnison et al., *Social Policy and Administration Revisited* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1974); and K. Jones et al., *Issues in Social Policy* (Boston: Routledge, 1978).

15. R. M. Titmuss, *Commitment to Welfare* (Boston; Allen & Unwin, 1968), p. 81.
16. Cf. *inter alia* M. Rein, *Social Policy* (New York: Random House, 1972); Rein, *Social Science and Public Policy*, Chapter 1; P. Marris and M. Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edition, 1972).
17. See D. Donnison, "Research for Policy," in Martin Bulmer, ed., *Social Policy Research* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1978) esp. pp. 54–59.
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Sociological Practice Association Ethical Standards of Sociological Practitioners

Preamble

Clinical and applied sociologists respect the dignity and worth of the individual and honor the preservation and protection of fundamental human rights. They are committed to increasing knowledge of human behavior and of peoples' understanding of themselves and others and to the utilization of such knowledge for the promotion of human welfare. While pursuing these endeavors, they make every effort to protect the welfare of those who seek their services or of any human group, or animal(s) that may be the object of study. They use their skills only for purposes consistent with these values and do not knowingly permit their misuse by others. While demanding for themselves freedom of inquiry and communication, clinical and applied sociologists accept the responsibility this freedom requires: competence, objectivity in the application of skills and concern for the best interests of clients, colleagues, and society in general. In the pursuit of these ideals, clinical and applied sociologists subscribe to the following principles: (1) Responsibility, (2) Competence, (3) Moral and Legal Standards, (4) Public Statements, (5) Confidentiality, (6) Welfare of the Student, Client and Research Subject, and (7) Regard for Professionals and Institutions.

Principle 1

Responsibility

In their commitment to the understanding of human behavior, clinical and applied sociologists value objectivity and integrity, and in providing services

The model for this draft is the 1977 APA approved Ethical Standards of Psychologists: adopted September 1982, revised August 1985, revised June 1987.

they maintain the highest standards of their profession. They accept responsibility for the consequences of their work and make every effort to insure that their services are used appropriately. The clinical or applied sociologist is committed to avoid any act or suggestion that would support or advance racism, sexism or ageism.

- a. *As scientists*, clinical and applied sociologists accept the ultimate responsibility for selecting appropriate areas and methods most relevant to these areas. They plan their research in ways to minimize the possibility that their findings will be misleading. They provide thorough discussion of the limitations of their data and alternative explanations, especially where their work touches on social policy or might be construed to the detriment of persons in specific age, sex, ethnic, socioeconomic or other social groups. In publishing reports of their work, they never suppress discomfoming data. Clinical and applied sociologists take credit only for the work they have actually done.

Clinical and applied sociologists clarify in advance with all appropriate persons or agencies the expectations for sharing and utilizing research data. They avoid dual relationships which may limit objectivity, whether political or monetary, so that interference with data, human participants, and milieu is kept to a minimum.

- b. *As employees* of an institution or agency, clinical and applied sociologists have the responsibility of remaining alert to and attempting to moderate institutional pressures that may distort reports of clinical or applied sociological findings or impede their proper use.
- c. *As teachers*, clinical and applied sociologists recognize their primary obligation to help others acquire knowledge and skill. They maintain high standards of scholarship and objectivity by presenting information fully and accurately.
- d. *As practitioners*, clinical and applied sociologists know that they bear a heavy social responsibility because their recommendations and professional actions may alter the lives of others. They are alert to personal, social, organizational, financial, or political situations or pressures that might lead to misuse of their influence.
- e. *As employers or supervisors*, clinical and applied sociologists provide adequate and timely evaluations to employees, trainees, students, and others whose work they supervise.

Principle 2

Competence

The maintenance of high standards of professional competence is a responsibility shared by all clinical and applied sociologists in the interest of the public and the profession as a whole. Clinical and applied sociologists recognize the boundaries of their competence and the limitations of their techniques and only provide services, use techniques, or offer opinions as professionals that meet recognized standards. Clinical and applied sociologists maintain knowledge of current scientific and professional information related to the services they render.

- a. *Teaching.* Clinical and applied sociologists perform their duties on the basis of careful preparation so that their instruction is accurate, current and scholarly.
- b. *Professional Development.* Clinical and applied sociologists recognize the need for continuing education and are open to new procedures and changes in expectations and values over time. They recognize differences among people, such as those that may be associated with age, sex, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds. Where relevant, they obtain training, experience, or counsel to assure competent services or research relating to such persons.
- c. *Professional Effectiveness.* Clinical and applied sociologists recognize that their effectiveness depends in part upon their ability to maintain effective interpersonal relations, and that aberrations on their part may interfere with their abilities. They refrain from undertaking any activity in which their personal problems are likely to lead to inadequate professional services or harm to a client; or, if engaged in such activity when they become aware of their personal problems, they seek competent professional assistance to determine whether they should suspend, terminate or limit the scope of their professional and/or scientific activities.

Principle 3

Moral and Legal Standards

Clinical and applied sociologists' moral, ethical and legal standards of behavior are a personal matter to the same degree as they are for any other citizen, except as these may compromise the fulfillment of their professional responsibilities, or reduce the trust in clinical or applied sociology or clinical

or applied sociologists held by the general public. Regarding their own behavior, clinical and applied sociologists should be aware of the prevailing community standards and of the possible impact upon the quality of professional services provided by their conformity to or deviation from these standards.

- a. *As teachers*, clinical and applied sociologists are aware of the diverse backgrounds of students and, when dealing with topics that may give offense, treat the material objectively and present it in a manner for which the student is prepared.
- b. *As employees*, clinical and applied sociologists refuse to participate in practices inconsistent with legal, moral and ethical standards regarding the treatment of employees or of the public. For example, clinical and applied sociologists will not condone practices that are inhumane or that result in illegal or otherwise unjustifiable discrimination on the basis of race, age, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability in hiring, promotion or training.
- c. *As practitioners*, clinical and applied sociologists avoid any action that will violate or diminish the legal and civil rights of clients or of others who may be affected by their actions.
- d. *Both as practitioners and researchers*, clinical and applied sociologists remain abreast of relevant federal, state, local and agency regulations and Association standards of practice concerning the conduct of their practice or of their research. They are concerned with developing such legal and quasi-legal regulations as best serve the public interest and in changing such existing regulations as are not beneficial to the interest of the public.

Principle 4

Public Statements

Public statements, announcements of services, and promotional activities of clinical and applied sociologists serve the purpose of providing sufficient information to aid the consumer public in making informed judgments and choices. Clinical and applied sociologists represent accurately and completely their professional qualifications, affiliations and functions, as well as those of the institutions or organizations with which they or the statements may be associated. In public statements, providing sociological information or professional opinions or providing information about the availability of sociological products and services, clinical and applied sociologists take full account of the limits and uncertainties of present sociological knowledge and techniques.

- a. *Announcement of Professional Services.* Normally, such announcements are limited to name, academic degrees, credentials, address and telephone number and, at the individual practitioner's discretion, an appropriate brief listing of the types of services offered, and fee information. Such statements are descriptive of services provided but not evaluative. They do not claim uniqueness of skills or methods unless determined by acceptable and public scientific evidence.
- b. In announcing the availability of clinical or applied sociological services or products, clinical or applied sociologists do not display any affiliations with an organization in a manner that falsely implies the sponsorship or certification of that organization. In particular and for example, clinical and applied sociologists do not offer SPA membership as evidence of qualification. They do not name their employer or professional associations unless the services are in fact to be provided by or under the responsible, direct supervision and continuing control of such organizations or agencies.
- c. Announcements of training activities give a clear statement of purpose and the nature of the experiences to be provided. The education, training and experience of the clinical or applied sociologists sponsoring such activities are appropriately specified.
- d. Clinical and applied sociologists associated with the development or promotion of devices, books or other products offered for commercial sale make every effort to insure that announcements and advertisements are presented in a professional, scientifically acceptable, and factually informative manner.
- e. Clinical and applied sociologists do not participate as clinical or applied sociologists for personal gain in commercial announcements recommending to the general public the purchase or use of any proprietary or single-source product or service.
- f. Clinical and applied sociologists who interpret the science of sociology or the services of clinical or applied sociologists to the general public accept the obligation to present the material fairly and accurately avoiding misrepresentation through sensationalism, exaggeration or superficiality. Clinical and applied sociologists are guided by the primary obligation to aid the public in forming their own informed judgments, opinions and choices.
- g. As teachers, clinical and applied sociologists insure that statements in catalogs and course outlines are accurate and sufficient, particularly in terms of subject matter to be covered, bases for evaluating progress, and nature of course experiences. Announcements or brochures describing workshops, seminars, or other educational programs accurately represent intended audience and eligibility requirements, educational

objectives, and nature of the material to be covered, as well as the education, training and experience of the clinical or applied sociologists presenting the programs, and in which clinical services or other professional services are offered as an inducement make clear the nature of the services, as well as the costs and other obligations to be accepted by the human participants in the research.

- h. Clinical and applied sociologists accept the obligation to correct others who represent the clinical and applied sociologist's professional qualifications or associations with products or services in a manner incompatible with these guidelines.

Principle 5

Confidentiality

Safeguarding information about an individual or group that has been obtained by the clinical or applied sociologist in the course of teaching, practice, or research, is a primary obligation of the sociologist. Such information is not communicated to others unless certain important conditions are met.

- a. Information received in confidence is revealed only after most careful deliberation and when there is clear and imminent danger to an individual or to society, and then only to appropriate professional workers or public authorities.
- b. Information obtained in clinical or consulting relationships, or evaluative data concerning children, students, employees, and others are discussed only for professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned with the case. Written and oral reports present only data germane to the purposes of the evaluation and every effort is made to avoid undue invasion of privacy.
- c. Confidential materials may be used in classroom teaching and writing only when the identity of the persons involved is adequately disguised.
- d. The confidentiality of professional communications about individuals is maintained. Only when the originator and other persons involved give their express permission is a confidential professional communication shown to the individual concerned. The clinical or applied sociologist is responsible for informing the client of the limits of the confidentiality.
- e. Where research data are being made public, the clinical or applied sociologist assumes responsibility for protecting the privacy of the subjects involved if confidentiality has been promised or called for by the nature of the research.

Principle 6

Welfare of the Student, Client and Research Participant

Clinical and applied sociologists respect the integrity and protect the welfare of the people and groups with whom they work. When there is a conflict of interest between the client and the clinical or applied sociologist's employing institution, clinical and applied sociologists clarify the nature and direction of their loyalties and responsibilities and keep all parties informed of their commitments. Clinical and applied sociologists inform consumers as to the purpose and nature of evaluation, treatment, educational or training procedures and they freely acknowledge that clients, students or participants in research have freedom of choice with regard to participation.

- a. Clinical and applied sociologists are continually cognizant of their own needs and of their inherently powerful position vis-a-vis clients, students and research participants, in order to avoid exploiting their trust and dependency. Clinical and applied sociologists make every effort to avoid dual relationships with clients and/or relationships which might impair their professional judgment. Examples of such dual relationships include treating employees, supervisors, close friends or relatives. Special care is taken to ensure that clients, students and research participants are not exploited in any manner, e.g., sexually, politically, economically, emotionally or socially.
- b. Where demands of an organization on clinical or applied sociologists go beyond reasonable conditions of employment, clinical and applied sociologists recognize possible conflicts of interest that may arise. When such conflicts occur, clinical and applied sociologists clarify the nature of the conflict and inform all parties of the nature and direction of the loyalties and responsibilities involved.
- c. When acting as a supervisor, trainer, researcher, or employer, clinical and applied sociologists accord informed choice, confidentiality, due process, and protection from physical and mental harm to their subordinates in such relationships.
- d. Financial arrangements in professional practice are in accord with professional standards that safeguard the best interests of the client and that are clearly understood by the client in advance of billing. Clinical and applied sociologists are responsible for assisting clients in finding needed services in those instances where payment of the usual fee would be a hardship. No commission, rebate, or other form of remuneration may be given or received for referral of clients for professional services, whether by an individual or by an agency. Clinical and

applied sociologists willingly contribute a portion of their services to work for which they receive little or no financial return.

- e. The clinical or applied sociologist attempts to terminate a clinical or consulting relationship when it is reasonably clear that the consumer is not benefiting from it. Clinical and applied sociologists who find that their services are being used by employers in a way that is not beneficial to the participants or to employees who may be affected, or to significant others, have the responsibility to make their observations known to the parties involved and to propose modifications or termination of the engagement.

Principle 7

Relationships with Professionals and Institutions

Clinical and applied sociologists act with due regard for the needs, special competencies and obligations of their colleagues in sociology, other professions, and the institutions or organizations with which they are associated. Special care is taken to insure that colleagues are not exploited in any manner, e.g., sexually, politically, economically, emotionally or socially.

- a. Clinical and applied sociologists understand the areas of competence of related professions, and make full use of all the professional, technical, and administrative resources that best serve the interest of consumers. The absence of formal relationships with other professional workers does not relieve clinical or applied sociologists from the responsibility of securing for their clients the best possible professional service, nor does it relieve them from the exercise of foresight, diligence, and tact in obtaining the complimentary or alternative assistance needed by clients.
- b. Clinical and applied sociologists respect other professional groups and cooperate with members of such groups.
- c. Clinical and applied sociologists who employ or supervise other professionals or professionals in training accept the obligation to facilitate their further professional development by providing suitable working conditions, consultation and experience opportunities.
- d. As employees of organizations providing clinical or applied sociological services, or as independent clinical or applied sociologists serving clients in an organizational context, clinical and applied sociologists seek to support the integrity, reputation and proprietary rights of the host organization. When it is judged necessary in a client's interest to question the organization's programs or policies, clinical and applied

sociologists attempt to affect change by constructive action within the organization before disclosing confidential information acquired in their professional roles.

- e. In the pursuit of research, clinical and applied sociologists give sponsoring agencies, host institutions, and publication channels the same respect and opportunity for giving informed consent that they accord to individual research participants. They are aware of their obligation to future research workers and insure that host institutions are given adequate information about the research and proper acknowledgment of their contributions.
- f. Publication credit is assigned to all those who have contributed to a publication in proportion to their contributions. Major contributions of a professional character made by several persons to a common project are recognized by joint authorship, with the researcher or author who made the principle contribution identified and listed first. Minor contributions of a professional character, extensive clerical or similar non-professional assistance, and other minor contributions are acknowledged in footnotes or in an introductory statement. Acknowledgment through specific citations is made for unpublished, as well as published material that has directly influenced the research or writing. A clinical or applied sociologist who compiles and edits material of others for publication publishes the material in the name of the originating group, if any, and with his/her own name appearing as chairperson or editor. All contributions are to be acknowledged and named.

Violations

Procedures Governing Alleged Violations of Ethical Standards

When a clinical or applied sociologist, who is a member of the Sociological Practice Association, violates ethical standards, clinical and applied sociologists who know first-hand of such activities should, if possible, attempt to rectify the situation. Failing an informal solution, clinical and applied sociologists bring such unethical activities to the attention of the Chair of the Ethics Committee. The Ethics Committee will consider the matter and the Chair of the Ethics Committee will forward the recommendation of the Committee to the Executive Board of the Sociological Practice Association for disposition.