The Policy Orientation

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The continuing crisis of national security in which we live calls for the most efficient use of the manpower, facilities, and resources of the American people. Highly trained talent is always scarce and costly. Hence the crisis poses the problem of utilizing our intellectual resources with the wisest economy. If our policy needs are to be served, what topics of research are most worthy of pursuit? What manpower and facilities should be allocated to official agencies and to private institutions for the prosecution of research? What are the most promising methods of gathering facts and interpreting their significance for policy? How can facts and interpretations be made effective in the decision-making process itself?

Although the importance of these questions is emphasized by the urgency of national defense, they are in no sense new. For years there has been a lively concern in intellectual circles for the problem of overcoming the divisive tendencies of modern life and of bringing into existence a more thorough integration of the goals and methods of public and private action. The pace of specialization in philosophy, natural science, biology, and the social sciences has been so rapid that colleagues on the faculty of a single university, or even members of a single department, often complain that they cannot understand one another. The unity of the intellectual life and the harmonizing of science and practice have been undermined by these "centrifugal" forces.

For several years new trends toward integration have been gaining strength in America. In liberal arts colleges the elective system has been giving way to a more rigid curriculum, and survey courses have been devised to introduce the student to broad fields of knowledge and to prepare the way for a vision of the whole. At the level of research, mixed teams of specialists have been assembled to work on common problems in the hope of countering the deteriorating effects of an excessive atomization of knowledge. In the realm of policy, more attention has been given to planning, and to improving the information on which staff and operational decisions are based. We have become more aware of the policy process as a suitable object of study in its own right, primarily in the hope of improving the rationality of the flow of decision.

A policy orientation has been developing that cuts across the existing specializations. The orientation is twofold. In part it is directed toward the policy process, and in part toward the intelligence needs of policy. The first task, which is the development of a science of policy formation and execution, combines the methods of social and psychological inquiry. The second task, which is the improving of the concrete content of the information and the interpretations available to policy-makers, typically goes outside the boundaries of social science and psychology.

In so far, therefore, as the policy orientation is focused upon the scientific study of policy, it is narrower than the psychological and social sciences which have many other objects of investigation. However, where the needs of policy intelligence are uppermost, any item of knowledge, within or without the limits of the social disciplines, may be relevant. We may need to know the
The most influential answer was this: effective methods were the ones that rose the disciplines which possessed quantitatively most rapidly in influence. Consider from this point of view the case of economics. Economists were extensively utilized to estimate the facilities, manpower, and resources necessary to produce the munitions required by the armed forces and to supply men and matériel when needed. The economic scientists who made the greatest direct contribution employed mathematics and statistics. They had method. And they were quantitative. They could manipulate data in the light of the general postulates, laws, and hypotheses.

Consider the psychologists. The most successful group used 'intelligence tests' as a quick means of selecting personnel for various operations. Immediately after World War I, the results gained enormous publicity when articles appeared in which the remarkable assertion was made that most of the American army was too stupid for 'intelligence.' It took many years to straighten out the misconceptions in the sensational reports originally made. Obviously the word 'average' had entirely different meaning in the field of science, leading public and for the psychometricians who created and applied the tests. However, the publicity given to testing and psychology greatly strengthened and lay interest in the subject. Once again the success of the discipline appeared to depend upon the use of quantitative methods. Intelligence tests were evolved and applied with the aid of statistical procedures.

The rise of economists and psychometricians seemed to indicate that the closer the social scientist came to the methods of physical science, the more important his methods could be of acceptance. This point of view was emphasized by the scholar who took the most important part in remolding the social disciplines, Charles E. Merriam, profes-
or of political science at the University of Chicago. Professor Merriam took the initiative in organizing the Social Science Research Council, which is a deliberate body of scholarly associations in political science, economics, sociology, psychology, and other social sciences. Merriam stressed the importance of breaking down the barriers that separate scholars from one another, and of leveling-up methodological competence everywhere. In a typical statement, made in 1925, he wrote in the preface to his New Aspects of Politics: "It is the purpose of this study... to suggest certain possibilities of approach to a method, in the hope that others may take up the task and through reflection and experiment eventually introduce more intelligent and scientific technique into the study and practice of government, and into popular attitudes toward the governing process."

At the same time that steps were being taken at the national level to organize the Social Science Research Council, leading universities were working out agencies for interdisciplinary research. At the University of Chicago, for example, field studies of the city of Chicago were made by the Local Community Research Committee (later called the Social Science Research Committee). These programs were developed at Columbia University and Harvard University. An Institute of Human Relations was established at Yale.

The programs just referred to were financed in large part by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund, another Rockefeller benefaction. One of the most body-conscious and aggressive factors in the program was Beardum Ruml, who at various times was administratively active on both foundations. Ruml, it is worth noting, was a Ph.D. in psychology, well-versed in statistics, who had a share during World War I in the testing program of the Army. The outlook of Merriam and his fellow leaders of the postwar generation is made explicit in many publications which appeared during the interwar twenties. The interdisciplinary theme is prominent in A History of Political Theories: Recent Times, a volume edited by Merriam and Professor Harry Elmer Barnes, published in New York in 1924. In addition to the political scientists who contributed to the symposium there were lawyers (E. M. Borchard and Caleb Perry Patterson), an economist (Paul H. Douglas), a historian (Cyril J. H. Hayes), a philosopher (Herbert W. Schneider), sociologists (Barnes, and Frank H. Hankins), a social psychologist (Charles Elmer Gerace), an anthropologist (Alexander A. Goldenweiser), and a social geographer (Franklin Thomas).

An evidence of the stress on method was the Committee on Scientific Method which was appointed by the Social Science Research Council and in 1931 brought out Methods in Social Science: A Casebook, edited by Stuart A. Rice. The book was composed of fifty-two methodological analyses of contributions to the social sciences. The analysts included such authorities from many fields as Robert E. Park and William F. Ogburn (sociology); A. L. Kroeber and Edward Sapir (anthropology); John Maurice Clark and Frank H. Knight (economics); W. Y. Elliott and George E. C. Catlin (political science); Heinrich Klüver and Robert S. Wood (psychology); Floyd Allport and Kimball Young (social psychology); Philip Klein (social work); Raoul Blanchard and K. C. McMurry (social geography); and Henri Pierron and Simon A. Fay (history).

Another means of stimulating interest in method was the post-doctoral fel-
lowship program of the Social Science Research Council. The program was designed to encourage young scholars to improve their scientific equipment by adding a new technique to their primary specialization.

The Consequences of Depression and War

It is against the background of stress on improving the sciences of man by sharpening the tools of research that subsequent developments need to be set. No one seriously doubts that the level of technical science of American social science rose between World War I and World War II despite the Depression. When the second of the wars came, new disciplines were well enough evolved to join the older specialties in making themselves felt.

Economics continued to make great contributions in the mobilization of the American economy for World War II. It is generally agreed that the courageous forecasts and plans of a key group of economists on the War Production Board had a decisive impact on the timely availability of equipment for this country. I refer particularly to the work of Stacy May, Simon Kuznets, Robert Nathan, and their associates. (Kuznets was one of Professor Wesley C. Mitchell's most productive associates in the study of business cycles at the National Bureau of Economic Research.)

Psychologists were far more numerous and effective in World War II than in the previous one. Besides developments in intelligence testing, there had been between the wars great advances in measuring attitudes and personality structure. Sociologists and social psychologists came more prominently into the picture than in the first war. Professor Samuel A. Stouffer and his associates made continuous and systematic studies of the attitudes prevailing among military personnel, utilizing and de-

veloping the quantitative procedures evolved between the wars by Professor L. L. Thurstone and others.

In the light of the successes achieved, there is no reason to doubt that the stress put upon quantitative methods is amply vindicated. It will continue to inspire ambitious young scholars in the field of human relations. There are, however, grounds for fearing a somewhat different emphasis among social scientists in the coming years. The battle for method is won. It is likely that social and psychological scientists will be able to turn themselves to take method for granted and to put the emphasis on the choice of significant problems on which to apply and evolve method. This is the point at which considerations of policy come into the picture.

Knowledge for What?

Although the importance of quantitative method was the dominant theme in interwar social science, there were many indications of rising preoccupation with policy. A vigorous and early exponent of the thinking of the day was Professor Robert S. Lynd of Columbia University, joint author of certain classical community studies and long the secretary of the Social Science Research Council. Professor Lynd gave a series of lectures at Princeton University in 1939 under the title "Knowledge for What?" in which he insisted upon the importance of utilizing the available means of acquiring knowledge in order to cope with the gigantic crises of our time.

The policy approach is not to be confused with the superficial idea that social scientists ought to desert science and engage full time in practical politics. Nor should it be confused with the suggestion that social scientists ought to spend most of their time influencing policy-makers on immediate questions.

* Charles E. Merriam, New Aspects of Politics (1925) n. s.
Although it may be wise for scholars to devote more time to active affairs, the most fruitful policy science idea is different. The point is that all the resources of our expanding social science need to be directed toward the basic conflicts in our civilization which are so vividly disclosed by the application of scientific method to the study of personality and culture. A fundamental picture of American culture and personality has been drawn by the accumulating results of modern research—by sociologists, anthropologists, psychiatrists, and psychologists.

CHOOSING FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS

The basic emphasis of the policy approach, therefore, is upon the fundamental problems of man in society, rather than upon the topical issues of the moment. The combined efforts of modern research workers have disclosed sources of tension within our civilization of which we were previously unaware. The difficulties which we face in operating economic and political institutions are obvious to all. What has eluded scientific and policy attention is a large number of the human factors which prevent the resolution of these difficulties by rational means. Building on the work of Freud and other psychiatrists, Harry Stack Sullivan and other psychiatrists traced in detail the fundamental importance of self-esteem for the healthy evolution of human personality. Unless the infant and the child are able to love themselves, they are incapable of loving others. Interferences with the growth of a healthy conception of the self lead to the warping of personality into destructiveness. Sullivan and his associates discovered that the true field of the psychiatrist is not the isolated individual organism but the context of interpersonal relations in which the individual lives. By studying the psychotic, neurotic, and psychopathic manifestations of distorted development, these psychiatrists discovered the way in which specific patterns of culture warp the growth of congenial and productive interpersonal relations. Once discovered and exposed, the context of human destructiveness can be changed.

The basis is laid for a profound reconstruction of culture by continual study and emendation, and not by (or certainly not alone by) the traditional methods of political agitation.

At an early date in his work, Dr. Sullivan and certain colleagues reached out for co-operation with social scientists. This book (Science, Technology, and Social Change) Social scientists, child psychologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists have cast a brilliant light on the impact of culture on personality formation. Among anthropologists, for example, the contributions of Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Ralph Linton, and Clyde Kluckhohn are representative of the best.

THE USE OF MODELS

There is scarcely a corner of human society that has not been seen in new perspective as a result of modern psychiatry. One significant feature of this development is that while use is made of careful observation, measurement, and record making, quantification is relegated to a relatively secondary position. The richness of the context in the study of interpersonal relations is such that it can be expressed only in part in quantitative terms. Convincing results can be obtained by studies which are but partially summarized in numbers. An excellent example of this type of work is best read in the pages of Psychiatry, the journal published by the William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, Washington, D.C., with which Sullivan was connected for the last fifteen years of his life. The late Dr. Edward S. Snow, professor of anthropology at Columbia at the time this book (1938) was written, also made an influential book, Patterns of Culture (1958). Margaret Mead (1901–1978) and other anthropologists have made the context of interpersonal relations a focus for the study of human behavior.
is the mistreatment of Negroes and other colored peoples. The Carnegie Foundation supported a comprehensive survey of trends in ethnic relations in the United States. The purpose was to discover the true state of affairs, to discover the confusing factors, and to stimulate policies against discrimination. An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, edited by Gunnar Myrdal in 1944, was the outcome.

The initiative for problem-oriented inquiries has been taken not only by private foundations but also by private associations of businessmen. Perhaps the most successful Committee for Economic Development which was organized early in World War II in order to develop policies which would avoid or mitigate a postwar depression. In the United States. The research program was carried out by a staff of eminent economists headed by Professor Theodore O. Yntema of the University of Chicago. On the basis of studies which were published, the businessmen made policy suggestions to the government and to private organizations and individuals. Since the war the Committee for Economic Development has continued to foster the development of long-range researches and recommendations for the maintenance of a free-market economy. (The figure most prominently associated with the Committee is its initiator and first head, Paul C. Hoffman.)

The Awareness of Time

The policy orientation carries with it a sharpened sense of time. An American Dilemma is a good illustration. The project resulting in that book was chosen because ethnic relations in the United States were recognized to be of great importance to the future security of the country, as well as to the realization of democratic aspirations. As a scientist becomes value-oriented, he accepts or rejects opportunities for research according to their relevance to all of his goals, values, or he initiates research which contributes to these goals.

It is not necessary for the scientist to sacrifice objectivity in the execution of a project. The place for nonobjectivity is in deciding what ultimate goals are to be implemented. Once this choice is made, the scholar proceeds with maximum objectivity and uses all available methods. Further, it is unnecessary to give up the idea of improving method. All of the foregoing points are exemplified in the Myrdal inquiry, since the data were gathered and interpreted in a critical spirit, and methods were improved during the investigation. For example, the methodological appendix which was prepared by Myrdal has been useful in spreading certain important patterns of thinking among American social scientists.

Emphasis on time is not exhausted in the selection of a policy-oriented project. No sooner do you become interested in future goals than you look sharply into the present and the past in order to discover the degree in which trends approximate values. Trends are extrapolated into the future, and the plausibility of the extrapolation is estimated in the light of all available knowledge of trends and factors. Alternative lines of policy are estimated in the same way.

Space Includes the Globe

The perspective of a policy-oriented scholar is world-wide, since the peoples of the world constitute a community. They affect one another’s destiny. Hence the future of basic objectives depends upon world developments as a whole.

It is possible to examine world affairs from the point of view of the invention, diffusion, and restriction of total task of clarifying goals, noting trends, and estimating future possibilities.

It is not within the scope of this
chapter to present in detail developmental hypotheses about the world revolution of our time. In passing, however, it is tempting to remark that a distinction needs to be drawn between the pattern of the eruptive center of a world revolutionary movement and the pattern of the world revolution of an epoch. Those who seized power in Paris in 1789 (and immediately thereafter) were unmistakably the elite of the eruptive center of that period. But the pattern prevailing at that time and place was not identical with the revolutionary pattern of the historical epoch as a whole, although common elements were present. It is apparent that the elite of 1917 in Moscow can be called the elite of the eruptive center of our time, but it is very doubtful whether the pattern then prevailing in Moscow has many elements identical with the world revolutionary pattern of our epoch. Indeed, one of the major tasks of the policy sciences today is to follow in detail the processes of social invention, diffusion, and restriction throughout the globe for the sake of estimating the significance of specific events.

THE BUILDING OF INSTITUTIONS

The policy scientist is far more interested in evaluating and reconstructing the practices of society than in his private ratiocination about the higher abstractions from which his values are derived. This characteristic sets it apart from the descriptive emphasis of much of the traditional baggage of metaphysics and theology. An example of what may be expected is the work of John Dewey1 and other American philosophers of pragmatism who quickly moved to the consideration of social institutions. (Dewey, for instance, launched an experimental school movement.) This inclination of the policy scientist has been explicated by the logical positivism of Rudolf Carnap and his associates, although Carnap has not personally drawn the implications. However, some implications are reasonably evident. If terms are intended to designate events, they do not have stable reference until "operational indexes" are specified. Indexes are operational when they can be applied by an observer with descriptive instructions, competence, and equipment, who occupies an observational standpoint in relation to a field of events to be described. The observational standpoint and procedure used in entering the situation for data-gathering ("pro-tocoll-making") purposes.

* Rudolf Carnap and his school, Alfred Korzybski has been widely read. See his Science and Sanity 2

The key terms which are used in the policy sciences refer to meanings, and contexts of meaning are changeable. The significance of this is that operational indexes are used for key words in the social sciences are less stable than the indexes usually employed by physical scientists to describe the events with which they are concerned. Hence we speak of "the instability" of terms in the policy sciences.

Since operational indexes are unstable, it is necessary to provide for continuous surveys in order to keep operational indexes properly calibrated. The observable characteristics of certain class groups shift through time, for example, and it is therefore necessary to respectify the characteristics which are essential to the identification for descriptive purposes of a given class member.

The technical considerations which have just been outlined reinforce other institutional factors which induce social and psychological scientists to improve institutions for the self-observation of man in society. One of the most creative suggestions which has been made by and to UNESCO, for instance, is the setting up of a continuing survey of international tension. Activities of this kind are essential if we are to clarify the goals, trends, factors, and attributes appropriate to the policy sciences of democracy.

The international polling operations which are now in existence are important steps toward providing more significant information than we have had in the past about the thoughts and feelings of mankind. Closely connected with the setting-up of comprehensive institutions of self-observation is the use of pretesting procedures to assist in the evaluation of policy alternatives. In the world of business, pretesting has been carried to a high level of technical perfection. Minor variations in the ingredients of new products or changes in packaging are tested in a few places which provide samples (in the statistical sense) of potential consumer reactions. Personnel policies are sometimes pretested in a few plants before they are extended to all the plants controlled by a corporation. Systematic pretesting can be extended from the market to many other situations in society.

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS ARE NOT THE SOLE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE POLICY SCIENCES

One outcome of the policy science conception which has begun to manifest itself in the United States is a more explicit awareness of the fact that social scientists are not the only contributors to the policy sciences. It is true that specialists in social and psychological theory will improve the basic analysis of the policy-forming process itself. But there is some reason to think that the fact that men of experience in active policy-making can make greater contributions to basic analysis than the academic experts have admitted. Men of affairs often watch the behavior of others in business, government, and similar institutions with great intellectual curiosity and objectivity. Some of these active participants have theories of the processes with a careful critical in the light not only of expert opinion but also of factual inquiry. Usually the men of action lack the incentives to write technical books or articles in which the existing data are systematically and confronted by available data. But it is enormously fruitful for the academic specialist to take some of these ideas and give them the necessary systematization and evaluation.

1Chenin Bernard is an exception to this statement. While an active business executive he published the well-received The Functions of the Executive (1928), Bernard is now president of the Rockefeller Foundation. The Analysis of Public Administration Cases (Social Science Research Council) has built up its programs of policy formation by examining written records, and also by interviewing the participants.
In order to bring the academicians and the active policy-maker into fruitful association, new institutions are needed (or rather, modifications are needed in existing institutions). The seminar is already utilized for this purpose in many institutions of higher learning, as in the Graduate School of Business and the Littauer School (devoted to government) at Harvard. Many national organizations of public administrators maintain headquarters close to the University of Chicago, an arrangement that fosters contact between the faculty of the University and the staff members of the organizations. Because of the rapid growth of public administration as a learned profession in the United States, the interplay of university-trained intellectuals and public officials (and leaders) is made easy. Until recently the law schools of the United States were wholly given over to the narrowest imaginable conception of professional training. The curriculum consisted in the memorizing and discussion of the decisions (and supporting opinions) of the appellate courts. In recent times there has been a broadening of the curriculum to include factual information about the social consequences of legal doctrines and procedures. The Yale Law School has been a pioneer in this change, even to the extent of appointing social scientists to the faculty.

The policy-science approach has the further implication that it includes, in addition to knowledge about the policy-making process itself, the assembling and evaluating of knowledge—from whatever source—which appears to have an important bearing upon the major policy problems of the time. Today, for example, the knowledge of atomic and other forms of energy which is in the possession of the physicists and other natural scientists has great and obvious relevance to world security. Creative interchange is needed between the physicists, the social scientists, and the men of action. The cultivation of the technique of bringing about easy co-operation among "interdisciplinary teams" is one of the principal tasks of an evolving policy science.

SUMMARY

Between the two world wars, American social and psychological sciences emphasized the improvement of method, especially quantitative method. There resulted a general raising of the level of competence in the making of primary observations and in the processing of data. Recently there is a tendency to take method more for granted and to put the accent upon applying method to problems that promise to make a contribution to policy. We can think of the policy sciences as the disciplines concerned with explaining the policy-making and policy-executing process, and with locating data and providing interpretations which are relevant to the policy problems of a given period. The policy approach does not imply that energy is to be dissipated on a miscellany of merely topical issues, but rather that fundamental and often neglected problems which arise in the adjustment of man in society are to be dealt with. The policy approach does not mean that the scientist abandons objectivity in gathering or interpreting data, or ceases to perfect his tools of inquiry. The policy emphasis calls for the choice of problems which will contribute to the goal values of the scientist, and the use of scrupulous objectivity and maximum technical ingenuity in executing the projects undertaken. The policy frame of reference makes it necessary to take into account the entire context of significant events (past, present, and prospective) in which the scientist is living. This calls

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*Successes and failures along this line are often noted in The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, published in Chicago.