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Written by a best-selling author, *The Origins of Social Work* traces the development of social work from its nineteenth-century roots to the organised professional activity it represents today.

It provides an ambitious analysis both of the changes that social work has undergone and of continuities in its identity, reviewing how cultural and national traditions have changed – and continue to change – our understanding of the social work task. It begins with a broadly chronological account that focuses on the salient milestones in social work's development. In its second half, a number of themes are singled out to illuminate the different faces of social work. In particular it explores:

- Social work's role in tackling social problems and social need
- Its value positions, including its ethics and politics
- Its relationship to the state and to social control
- Professionalisation, education and training, and social work's research and knowledge base.

This is a cogent interpretation and synthesis of historical and international material, encompassing Britain and the US as well as wider global trends. It offers an invaluable account of the background to present-day policies and practices for students at both pre- and post-qualifying levels, policy-makers and practitioners.

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The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change



Malcolm Payne

# The Origins of Social Work

Continuity and Change





## The impact of research

As social work came into existence, social science research was characterised by large-scale surveys, such as Rowntree's work on poverty and more journalistic coverage of social ills such as Booth's pen pictures of lower class London life.

The impact of psychological testing in 1920s' USA led social work to develop its own empirical methods. During the 1930s, the classification of casework treatment emerged as an important research aim. The importance given to assessment in diagnostic theory led to the idea of differential diagnosis, where it became important to identify the precise problems the worker was dealing with, so that treatment could be planned accordingly. Following on from this, attempts were made to classify different forms of treatment. Hollis's (1968) extensive classification was tested in empirical studies by Hollis and others.

During the Second World War, a number of studies in sociology and psychology in the USA raised the possibility of empirical research involving a degree of measurement and experiment in social science. From this time onwards, a series of empirical studies became influential in social work. Orcutt (1990: 151–73) has usefully identified the phases of development in these studies and those influential in the USA. Table 9.1 sets out these phases and gives examples of the studies which have had wider impact, and adds studies from the UK. Usually these studies were published in several forms over a period; I have shown the main period of study, ending in the major summary publication.

The first major studies, such as those of Kogan and Hunt (1954) and Giesmar and Ayres (1960) set out to identify ways of measuring change in clients as treatment progressed. These produced scales for use in treatment. Subsequently, studies of the factors which kept clients in contact with social workers were produced. Ripple et al.'s (1964) important study on why clients did not stay in contact with workers (continuance) was undertaken in Chicago; this is important for the subsequent history of empirical research. Hollis's (1968) classification work, building on previous work in the diagnostic casework tradition, was also completed during this period. Building on the Chicago work on continuance, Reid's work with colleagues (Reid and Shyne, 1969; Reid and Epstein, 1972a, b) emerged in the early 1970s,

Table 9.1 Important research projects in social work

Orcutt's (1990) periodisation	Period of publication; country	Findings and importance	Authors
Case study, case record, analysis of change	1948–53, USA	Follow-up study of the results of social casework – measurement of change in clients	Kogan and Hunt (1954)
		Family functioning scale – study of changes in family functioning	Geismar and Ayres (1960)
Prediction of continuance/discontinuance	1957–64, USA	<i>Motivation, Capacity and Opportunity</i> – what factors kept clients in contact	Ripple et al. (1964)
Classification of treatment/intervention	1956–64, USA	A Typology of Casework Treatment – classified range of treatment interventions	Hollis (1968)
Evaluation of outcome/effectiveness	1965, USA	<i>Girls of Vocational High</i> – influential study of social work effectiveness	Meyer et al. (1965)
	1966, UK	<i>Decision in Child Care</i> – study of effectiveness of social workers' fostering decisions	Parker (1966)
	1970, UK	<i>Helping the Aged</i> – study of effectiveness of social work help for elderly people in local authority welfare departments	Goldberg et al. (1970)
Development of practice models	1969–72, USA, international	<i>Task-centred Practice</i> – brief casework intervention	Reid and Shyne (1969), Reid and Epstein (1972a,b)
Clinical judgement	1960s, USA	Studies of interpersonal process	Tripodi and Miller (1966)
Interpersonal dynamics/strategies	1970s–80s, USA	Family therapy studies	Studies cited by Orcutt (1990)
Survey of service/consumer views	1970, UK	<i>The Client Speaks</i> – first major survey of client opinion	Mayer and Timms (1970)
	1973, UK	<i>Children who Wait</i> – introduced permanency planning for children	Rowe and Lambert (1973)
	1978, UK	<i>Social Services Teams: The Practitioner's View</i> – first broad descriptive study of post-Seebohm SSDs/SWDs	Parsloe and Stevenson (DHSS, 1978)
	1978, USA	<i>Children in Foster Care</i> – led to permanency planning for children in care	Fanshel and Shinn (1978)

cont'd



Table 9.1 cont'd

Orcutt's (1990) periodisation	Period of publication; country	Findings and importance	Authors
Service innovations/ outcomes	1984, UK	Community social work	Hadley and McGrath (1984)
	1986, UK	Case (care) management	Davies and Challis (1986)
	1992, UK 1995-8, UK	Deinstitutionalisation Child protection	Knapp et al. (1992) Department of Health programme (Berridge, 1999)
	1996, UK	Community care	Lewis and Glennerster (1996)

first on whether lengthy interventions were more effective than brief contacts and then to develop a model of practice, task-centred casework, using brief interventions based on behavioural techniques. These had considerable impact both in the USA and UK and more widely, because they focused on brief work at a time of costly expansion in social care. They held out the prospect of being able to define aims and objectives in practice and therefore lent themselves to the stronger emphasis on management beginning to affect the social services at that time (Payne, 1997c).

By the 1960s, a number of studies were being published seeking to test whether social work interventions led to improvements in clients' behaviour. Meyer et al.'s (1965) study, *Girls at Vocational High*, was perhaps the best known internationally; Goldberg's (1970) study had considerable influence in the UK. At the same time, consumer studies began; Mayer and Timms (1970) study in the Family Welfare Association, the former London COS, was particularly influential in both the UK and the USA, partly because it connected theoretical criticism of psychodynamic approaches to social work with consumer views. The clients of this primarily psychodynamic agency were bemused by the psychological focus of their social workers.

All these trends came together in a survey by Fischer (1973, 1976) of empirical studies on the effectiveness of social casework in the USA, which demonstrated that there was little evidence of effectiveness. This was confirmed in Britain in Goldberg's

(1970) study of social work with elders, although Davies and Challis (1986) recalculated the results in the 1980s using more sophisticated techniques and propose that this study showed social work to be effective. Consumer surveys also found that social work was often confusing and unfocused to clients, although they often valued it (Glastonbury, 1979). These studies contributed to the growing question marks about conventional social work practice and a greater consciousness of consumer interests (Chapter 4).

### Service evaluation

This work in the 1970s represents the end of the line of studies primarily concerned with developing casework as the main mode of practice in social work. Subsequent studies focused on evaluations of services and their organisation, often service innovations, or the experiences of service users. Pawson and Tilley (1997: 2-3) argue that this tradition of evaluation derives from the wish to justify the 'great society' developments in American services during the 1960s, and has been extended by the managerialist approach of New Right thinking in the 1980s, which seeks the pragmatic evaluation of practice, rather than using research to develop theory to inform practice.

Following the Seebohm reorganisation, a new structure for government research funding for the personal social services was introduced in Britain as a result of the recommendations of the Rothschild Report (1971). The commissioning model of research contracting made research liaison groups and chief scientific officers in government departments crucial intermediaries (Stevenson, 1983). This permitted interaction between the social work academic community doing research and civil servants. An important early product was the study of the organisation of and practice within the new SSDs/SWDs (DHSS, 1978). This theme of organisation continued in research funded on community social work (Hadley and McGrath, 1984). Research units were established by the DHSS for continuing social work research at the National Institute for Social Work (now at King's College London) and the Dartington Hall Unit attached to the University of Bristol, but individual projects and academics were also commissioned. Social policy research units were also funded, and the Personal Social Services Research



Unit at the University of Kent at Canterbury produced influential research on adult services and financing policy. Examples in the 1980s are the evaluation research on the care in the community programme concerned with deinstitutionalisation of mental hospitals (Knapp et al., 1992) and work on case (later, care) management (Davies and Challis, 1986). These projects influenced the Wagner Report's (1988) recommendations on residential care and the Griffiths Report (1988) on community care, leading to the introduction of care management, a limited implementation of case management. Work on social networks and innovations such as the All Wales Strategy on mental handicap (now called learning disabilities) (McGrath, 1991) had an impact on service developments. Substantial state funding of research, often through consultancy and evaluation work, on innovations in community care also produced important bodies of knowledge (Robbins, 1993).

This was also true of child welfare research in the UK, an example of how service-based research has developed in the late twentieth century. During the 1970s, important individual studies emerged, often related to specific interests. A substantial body of state-funded research appeared in the early 1980s with nine studies, mainly funded by the then DHSS on social work decision-making, which revealed that children were often admitted to care in crisis and their care careers were marked by poor planning, with frequent changes in placement, no development of links with families and no planning for discharge. This research (DHSS, 1985) was a major factor in the pressure leading to reforms in the Children Act 1989. A coherent programme of research funding continued; Berridge (1999) identifies three areas of work:

- on child protection (DH, 1995b), where narrow child protection investigations were disempowering families and not helping families to improve parenting
- on adolescents (DH, 1996b), where practice lacked strategy and flexibility
- on children in care (DH, 1996a), where many were going missing, wider networks and education were missing for children in care, but factors such as planning and flexibility indicating good residential care were identified.

Despite the difficulties of research influencing practice, there is evidence of research affecting practice in the child care field in the UK, and in the Labour government of 1997 onwards, there were projects to promote practitioners' use of research, including summary and interpretative publications, training and collaboration projects. As part of the development of professional regulation (Chapter 8), the government established the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE, 2004) to promote practice and management based on research outcomes and rigorously reviewed and accepted professional practice. While this organisation mirrored a health service organisation (the National Institute for Clinical Excellence), the less-developed state of social work research promoted smaller scale reviews and practice guidelines. Collaborations between agencies and academic institutions, such as Research in Practice (2004), the Centre for Evidence-based Social Services (CEBSS, 2004) and the higher education learning and teaching network covering social work (SWAP, 2004) also disseminated research findings for practice and practice developments. Social work academics campaigned for social work to be recognised by the Economic and Social Research Council, and this led to a seminar series funded by the Council, which reviewed the state of social work research and led to better training opportunities in academic research (TSWR, 2000).

In most Western countries, and in regional organisations such as the EU, similar information resources were developed, increasingly relying on the internet and electronic information. In Nordic countries, for example, the Nordic Council of Ministers promoted comparative research across the Nordic region while individual countries set up research agencies, such as the Finnish STAKES (2004).

### Research movements

During the 1980s and 90s social work research was affected by movements concerned to promote research as an aspect of practice. The Anglo-American tradition of research and knowledge development has been contested throughout by a practice-oriented development of theory, that is, bodies of thought providing 'an organized description and explanation of the purposes and content of social work as both a social phenom-



enon and as an activity' (Payne, 2000a: 332). Three notable movements focused on research-minded practice, practitioner research and evidence-based practice.

The idea of research-minded practice (Everitt et al., 1992) encouraged social workers to be aware of research that might affect their practice, while recognising that the amount and strength of research available meant that often it would not be directly applicable. Workers might interpret and adapt ideas and think rigorously about their work, rather than be able to apply research knowledge directly.

During the 1980s and 90s, the practitioner research movement (Whitaker and Archer, 1989; Broad and Fletcher, 1993; Fuller and Petch, 1995) encouraged 'research-minded' practice through an increase in opportunities for practitioners to do evaluation research on their own practice, and achieve masters qualifications in social work. This led to a substantial amount of research being published. By doing small-scale research themselves, practitioners would be better able to understand how formal research could be used within their own practice. However, the research outcomes of studies such as these are sometimes criticised because using small samples and less powerful methodologies does not advance causal explanation or produce knowledge that may be widely relevant to workers.

Interpreters of empirical work, critical of the achievements of social work during the 1950s and 60s, took a harder line and created a movement for 'evidence-based practice' (EBP) (Thyer and Kazi, 2004). Writers such as Fischer (1976), and Sheldon (1986, 1987) and his colleagues (McDonald and Sheldon, 1992) in the UK began to publish surveys of available research and polemics promoting measured effectiveness as the most appropriate evaluative measure of social work. EBP proposes that social workers should practise using the best available evidence of what actions will be effective to achieve the intended outcomes; they would negotiate with clients. If evidence provides a causal explanation and is generalisable, evidence-based practitioners prefer it. This means that they prefer research designs that suppress subjectivity as far as possible, such as surveys or experiments where statistical and other techniques prevent subjective influence. Random controlled trials of treatment techniques that mimic the tests used to see if medical drugs are effective are ideal. Single-case designs (Kazi,

1998), where workers establish present levels of behaviour and retest after intervention to see what changes have taken place, apply this method to individual cases. Standardised scales are used for assessment.

Using all these techniques together is sometimes referred to as 'empirical practice' or 'empirical clinical practice' in the USA (Witkin, 1991; Faul et al., 2001). Research studies are collected and analysed to accumulate results to increase the generalisability of research to a wider range of circumstances. Single-case evaluations encourage workers to set clear behavioural starting points and test for improvements on the baseline measures (Kazi, 1998). However, this view has been criticised (for example by Gordon, 1954, 1980) as requiring a different kind of social work education, practice and attitude, in which practitioners pursued research studies during their work, creating a cumulative pattern of knowledge drawing on and relating to practice. This contrasted with the existing position, where social work drew on social science knowledge, as a basis for the practical interpretation of events within a policy and administrative framework, but often with little application to practice.

The evidence-based practice movement's focus on effectiveness as defined by 'scientific' measurement was strongly contested from a postmodernist and social construction point of view, and by supporters of a wider range of research methodologies, including interpretive and naturalistic approaches to research (Jokinen et al., 1999; Karvinen et al., 1999; Webb, 2001; Hall et al., 2003). These use less structured interview and other interpersonal methods in often small-scale studies to understand complex social processes and interpretations of behaviour, rather than seeking causal explanations and methods of intervention. The social construction view argues that since social knowledge often depends on the cultural and historical context of social relationships, the evidence-based practice movement's emphasis on causal relationships and practice prescriptions should be displaced by an emphasis on multiple relationships between factors relevant to understanding social situations.

### Journals and dissemination of knowledge

An important aspect of the development of knowledge and education and the professionalisation of social work was the



publication of specialised books and journals to disseminate knowledge. Important journals include:

- the many journals, papers and books published by the COS to promote its views
- the foundation of academic journals, particularly in the USA from the 1920s
- the development of social science publishing as part of the post-war social reconstruction
- influential journals developed by professional associations from the 1950s and 60s
- a range of social work education and other specialised journals during the 1960s and 70s
- journalistic magazines and a wide range of academic and professional journals in many countries, stimulated in the 1990s by increasingly cheap and flexible computer-based publishing technologies.

Important early journals included the *Social Service Review* published in association with the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, still the most prestigious English language journal in the world, and *The Family*, founded in 1921 by Family Service Association of America, the main organisation of elite social work agencies emerging from the COS. This journal's history illustrates professional developments: it became *Social Casework* in 1947 and reverted to *Families in Society* in 1987. An important unifying factor for the (American) National Association of Social Workers when it was founded in 1955 was its journal *Social Work*, now the most widely circulated journal in the world.

Social work was a small market until the 1960s, and most books were published by university presses, pre-eminently Chicago, Columbia (New York) and North Carolina in the USA. However, in the UK, Routledge & Kegan Paul published an influential social science series originating in social reconstruction after 1945, which published many texts of social work. The sign of growing educational markets was demonstrated by the first British paperback social work book, Noel Timms *Social Casework*, in 1966, which was followed by two series published in association with the National Institute for Social Work (Training) by Allen & Unwin from 1965, Routledge from 1968

and, in a second wave, by Macmillan (now Palgrave Macmillan) in association with BASW from 1982. American textbook publishers entered the market, particularly as bachelor courses promised a larger sale with substantial general texts. CSWE, the American association of schools of social work, produced a social work education journal in 1964, now the *Journal of Social Work Education*, and two education journals also appeared in Britain in 1979/80, merging in 2000.

British professional journals are considered in relation to professionalisation in Chapter 9. Many large countries or regions produce national or regional journals, for example the *Indian, Hong Kong and Asia-Pacific Journals of Social Work* and the *Journal of Social Development in Africa*.

Nordic countries are typical of the position in many smaller countries. Each country has its own magazine, associated with the professional association, supported by job advertising, and there is a shared academic journal, *Nordisk Socialt Arbeid*, and some also have academic journals, often with a broader social policy, social welfare or social science remit, such as the Finnish *Janus*. A sign of increasing commercialisation was the foundation in 1990 of the *Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare*, with an empirical focus and an emphasis on social policy, from a Danish publisher, financially supported by the Swedish Academy of Science. However, in 1998, this became the *International Journal of Social Welfare*, published by a British-based international group and jointly edited from Sweden and the USA, being unable to sustain influential impact from the Nordic base.

## Conclusion

Since the outset, social work has sought a knowledge base in support of its professionalisation. It has moved from trying to draw its knowledge from its own internal resources to an increasing incorporation of its knowledge development as part of the wider social sciences, in the impact of social science research on social work, the development of a commercial market in publications and journals and the way in which debates about appropriate forms of social science have been drawn into the social work debate.

The growth of knowledge development and academisation of a specialist area of social science suggests the establishment of a



professional group. However, the constant concern to debate theory and practice links suggests an ambiguous relationship between the profession and its knowledge industry. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the distinction between theory about the nature of social work as a focus of German social science and the Anglo-American focus on creating practice prescriptions from research. It may also be seen in debates about the academisation of social work education, discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 10

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# Education and Training

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### Education: the internationalist issue

Social work education emerged from the early social work agencies, and has developed as part of the education systems of the countries in which social work operates. Education therefore occurs in different organisations and became established in different ways in different countries.

Thinking about education raises the relationship between theory and practice and academic and practice institutions as stakeholders of the nature of social work as it develops. Academisation may go alongside professionalisation. At different times, academisation has been resisted, for example in the early attempts of COS workers to resist a university base for training courses. Different countries arrive at different emphases in this debate. For example, Finland's reform of social work education in the 1970s, building on a small base of social work education, aimed to professionalise the discipline, which was producing little research. This involved raising the qualification to masters level and providing it within the context of the broader social sciences, particularly social policy education. This emphasised research and social science roles (Satka and Karvinen, 1999), and ignored the earlier discussion of the role of practice-based casework in the 1950s (Chapter 3). Matthies (cited in Satka and Karvinen, 1999: 121) argued that this move had gender implications, a female-dominated view associated with female practitioners being rejected in favour of an assumption that status could only be conferred by a scientific paradigm where male-dominated social science disciplines were more influential. Satka and Karvinen (1999) suggest that as Finland became more involved in globalisation after the dominating presence of the USSR was removed by the collapse



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