

The Role of the Social Scientist in the Community
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I must start by saying that I am somewhat torn between two ways of approaching this problem. On the one hand I would very much like to talk in detail about programmes of community development, the way they can be organised, and their consequences.

On the other hand I would like to review some of the results of several survey investigations in which I have been involved and then go on to talk about ways in which I would like to see this work extended.

Although these two courses of action are largely mutually exclusive as far as this evening's paper is concerned I myself regard them as having a great deal of overlap.

I regard them as having a great deal of overlap because I view the role of the social scientist in the community as:

Firstly, producing accurate information about society and the behaviour of men in society

and Secondly, presenting that information to members of society in such a way that they can make use of it.

This in itself serves to indicate a great deal about the role I see the social scientist playing in the community. I am not to be counted among those who wish to draw conclusions about society or the behaviour of men in society without carrying careful studies of society and the behaviour of men in society.

Nor am I to be counted among those who wish to help people on the basis of rules of thumb.

The position I take may seem innocuous and reasonable enough to some of you, but let me, for the sake of discussion, rapidly alienate the rest of you by emphasising that the role I am taking is by no means innocuous.

This is because the information I have at my disposal enables me, for example, to go to businessmen and present them with facts which enable them to become better businessmen. I have at my disposal techniques which our science has accumulated and which I can use, if requested, to encourage businessmen to pursue their goals more single-mindedly, that is, less hampered by conflicts and doubts concerning the morality of what they are doing.

And when I tell you that I propose to take the same bag of tricks to teachers and start helping them to mould the values and attitudes of their pupils more effectively I should imagine that I must make most of you feel more than a little uncomfortable.

I hope that at this point those of you who have in the past said "what we need if Ireland is to progress is a programme of community development which will change attitudes" are having rapid second thoughts.

Let me now do something to try to relieve some of the discomfort I have generated by saying two things.

Firstly, I have over-stated my case. To date we have not found a way of getting people to want to do that which they do not wish to do.

But any comfort you derive from that statement is likely to be short-lived. Because we do have ways of helping people to do what they want to do more effectively. And we do have ways of getting people to do that which they do not want to do. Our problem is to get people to want to do that which they do not wish to do.

Let me now try to put this rather frightening state of affairs in its context.

For centuries teachers have been moulding the minds of their pupils. And, in many cases, it might be more correct to say that "teachers have been cramping the minds of their pupils".

For centuries social and economic pressures have been brought to bear on those who wished to improve their communities and their way of life, and, in fact, forced them to behave in ways in which they did not wish to behave.

So what's new?

What's new is that the concepts and procedures have now been made more formal and explicit.

What's new is that science has advanced.

What's new is that there is no going back: either we grasp this new knowledge and use it for our own good or we allow others to use it and advance themselves so that we are forced along as laggards. Or, worse still, we can allow others to use this knowledge to our disadvantage.

There are several other points to be made:

Firstly, this advance of social science, if properly used, allows us to extend our freedom: by making use of this knowledge we can do much more to control our own destinies and to ensure that our children really do grow up in a world in which it is fit for them to live. By bringing significant aspects of our social policies out into the open, documenting their consequences, and having a public discussion of the results, one can do much more to promote desirable policies, and avoid the unanticipated, unintended, unwanted consequences of other policies which are pursued, however well intended they may have been at their birth. By bringing such things into the realm of rational discussion we can consider much more effectively the advantages and disadvantages of a variety of different types of

society, ways of life, and different policies, and decide which we want to adopt.

A second point to be stressed is that this new knowledge highlights even more clearly than other developments in science the need for educationalists to stress the importance of developing a sense of personal integrity and responsibility. It seems to me that the operation of a society in which so much scientific knowledge is available - and I include physical knowledge, chemical knowledge, biological knowledge, and social knowledge - as I say it seems to me that the operation of a society in which so much scientific knowledge, which has the potential for massive disruptive of society, is available demands that every individual be prepared to consider the long term consequences of his actions and take a firm individual stand in refusing to undertake tasks with which he does not agree. To my mind it would be quite wrong to try to stop the advance of knowledge, possessing as it does, the potential to be of such value to mankind. It seems to me therefore that it is impossible to legislate for what may or may not be done. What it is important to do is to ensure that individuals are prepared to take a public stand on issues which affect the future of mankind. And if educationalists are to encourage responsibility of this sort they will have to encourage their pupils to practise taking responsibility of this sort of school.

Unfortunately that may produce consequences they do not like.

Their attitude to such students will have to change to being one of respect for the opinions of others, no matter how ill-informed according to their lights, and a willingness to work through the situation with the pupils concerned to find out whether the pupil has a reasoned case to put forward to support his position.

Even a suggestion of this sort involves an intrusion of the social scientist deep into the community. What we are saying when we say things of this sort is that we wish pupils to apply scientific habits of thought to their everyday life. We wish them to analyse the concepts they use, to seek to translate their feelings into testable propositions, and we wish them to seek out such evidence as is available to help them test these propositions. We are further saying that we want them to develop these habits and skills for the good of the community. And we are further saying that the social structure of one aspect of the community is critical in the development of these habits and skills and ought to be changed.

We do this on the basis, not of evidence directly relevant to this particular point, but on the basis of our general knowledge concerning how habits, attitudes and skills, are developed. We are saying that habits and attitudes of personal responsibility and openness to reason are developed in situations where people have an opportunity to practice these habits and where their activities have the support and encouragement of those with whom they come into contact.

Returning now to my main theme it seems to me to follow from what I have said earlier that community goals can now be pursued more effectively. This applies whatever the community goals are, whether they are for economic and social development of the community or the destruction of other communities.

It seems to me to follow that if we wish our communities to develop in a reasonable direction, then social research is no longer a luxury, but rather an essential ingredient in the planning of societies. I have little doubt that if we could obtain the £135 million that is in the process of being spent on the development of one aero-engine, that we could produce a great deal of information which would help us to make great strides towards

developing the sort of society that we want to live in. Furthermore if we do not spend more money on social research of this sort, other societies will, and, in relation to the ^{rest of the} world, we will be in the position of the laggards in rural communities who are forced along against their will by changes that are taking place elsewhere and forced to run faster to stay in the same place without reaping the benefits of change.

It seems to me that much of this research will have to be directed, however embarrassing it may be, at assessing the overall real effects of various policies.

I must emphasise the words overall and real. By emphasising overall I wish to emphasise that there is no point in looking only for the beneficial effects of various policies. For example, there is no point in showing that some educational policy increases performance in mathematics, if we do not at the same time document the fact that it reduces the learner's feelings of self-confidence, so that, in the future he feels less able to tackle new problems on his own without obtaining the aid of a teacher or if at the same time as increasing his performance at mathematics it also deprives him of opportunities to develop skills of relating to other people.

By emphasising real I emphasise that the assessment must be made having due regard only to the aim of scientific objectivity, and paying no attention to ideological commitments and current official, perhaps government, policy. Thus it is essential that the work be done, that it be done by persons of the highest integrity, and be done in an institution which is subject to the minimum pressures to find what segments in the society feel that it should find.

It is quite clear that there are a whole host of government policies which need to be objectively investigated and assessed if one is interested in the future development of Ireland.

In addition to investigating government policies there are a whole host of educational practices which required investigation. In all cases these policies and practices need to be investigated by responsible yet imaginative social scientists able to look for negative as well as positive effects.

It will be clear now that I think the social scientist is becoming the people's guardian. The public often do not know what information to ask for, nor what additional information they need in order to interpret the information they are given. Worse still their lack of knowledge and understanding is made worse by the feelings of "trained incapacity" which have been encouraged by professionalisation.

It seems to me that, as a general rule, the less welcome a social investigation is to the authorities concerned then the more important it is that it is carried out and that the results are brought up for public discussion.

And I mean brought up for public discussion - whatever the results are. The public will have to learn that researchers are not perfect and that the results can be questioned.

But to leave the decision concerning whether to publicise or not in the hands of research institutes which feel that they must produce only authoritative statements which cannot be questioned seems to me to be suicidal - they will wish neither to undertake nor publish reports in the controversial areas that most need them.

Apart altogether from policy issues of this sort it seems to me to be of the utmost importance that social scientists work extensively in the "academic" areas of assessing:

What are the values and attitudes characteristic of different sections of society, and how do their ways of life differ?

In particular what are the attitudes of these groups to each other?

What are the social consequences of different attitudes, values and ways of life?

How did the people concerned come to be the way they are - through what patterns of upbringing and education; as a result of what social pressures?

How can these values and attitudes be changed to get rid of some of the problems?

It seems to me that publicising results of studies of this sort would do a great deal to influence policy, and discussion of the results would do a great deal to help us to clarify what sort of society we want to live in and how to get there. My guess is that the "how to get there" will involve extensive changes in education, both for adults and children, and the utilisation of much of the already existing material on how to influence values, attitudes and ways of life, which I mentioned earlier.

In the course of this research we are bound to find all sorts of things which we don't like. But it seems to me that if is only by adopting a more objective and realistic attitude toward things that we don't like that we are going to be able to advance.

PART II: PROGRAMMES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I must first say something about the general theory of motivation that I follow.

People do what they do as a result of 3 sets of variables:

1. Their internal motivation, that is their pre-occupations, their values and attitudes, what goes on in their head.
2. The task they have in front of them: they may be required to perform routine activities which are well understood and have been laid down in the past, or else their task may be to discover new things in a completely unstructured situation, as is often the case in research.

Clearly different people with different internal motivations select themselves into different sorts of task, but also people with different motivations see the same situation in different ways and define the task in different ways and make different things out of it; thus a highly achievement oriented individual may perceive the job of filing papers (normally a routine activity) as a challenge to produce a better filing system. But note that if we insist that he perform this task in the routine fashion, as we have defined it, our achievement-oriented individual will either leave the job or else we will kill his initiative.

This brings me to the third set of variables influencing what a person does. These are:

3. The social pressures that are brought to bear on him to behave in a particular way. These include the sort of thing I have been discussing and the norms and standards of the community.

Let us now take this very simple theory of motivation seriously and ask if it has any implications for community development.

Notice we want to use it for community development. We have therefore first got to ask ourselves what our task is and then ask

a. How can we influence what goes on in people's heads so that they will spontaneously perform the tasks that are important to them more efficiently. and

b. How can we get people who are not interested in performing these tasks spontaneously, to perform them nevertheless.

In passing we may note that there are essential features of leadership; we have to clarify the goals that are to be achieved and the means to their achievement and then make people feel competent to attain the goals themselves; we have to make explicit what it is that people want to achieve in such a way that they themselves realize how to attain their goals without detailed direction from us. We also have to think about how to get people to perform essential tasks more effectively.

Our first job, then, is to ask ourselves what it is that the community wants to achieve - and here we could feed in the results of a lot of survey data if we had it - communities are rarely clear about what they want and many of their goals often conflict; what is needed is much fuller information about the consequences of pursuing different goals and the relative satisfactions and frustrations of different ways of life and the advantages and disadvantages of living in different types of community. We at ESRI would very much like to be working on the consequences of pursuing different ways of life - if only we could lay our hands on some of that £135 million that Rolls Royce is spending on developing one aero-engine. What we could do with a sum like that to spend on furthering our understanding of the sort of society we want to live in and how to get there!

So we can set ourselves a number of possible goals in community development. We could, for example, pursue:

1. A nice friendly happiness (something like beatnikland). However one might ask such questions as: Who will provide the food and shelter if we all adopt this aim? Is there not a possibility of building a more pluralistic society in

which some of us enjoy working while others enjoy dropping-out. And such questions, of course, again imply that we need more research into the effects of different balances of individuals with different pre-occupations on the development of society and the satisfactions that are to be obtained.

2. A power-oriented society where we are all engaged in competition and prestige is gained by conquest and display (cf Hitler's Germany). Once again we may raise a number of questions, particularly about long term implications: mightn't this type of society lead to a lot of conflict which we might not like?

3. Development of the Social and Economic resources of the community so that all can lead rich, full, lives, choose the life they wish to lead, and avoid squandering their resources on "fruitless" conflict which, it is assumed, people do not like although, of course, the evidence is that they often do.

Long term prediction: Such evidence as we have suggests that economic development is a pre-requisite for a society of this sort: only then can people afford what Cattell calls premsia and to squander time on intellectual pursuits, the development of rich full lives and the use of leisure.

In order to illustrate what can be done in a community which values the third of these I am going to talk about programmes directed toward this goal, although the methodology could equally be directed toward any other goal.

As I have indicated I think there is much that social scientists could do to aid the community in their choice of goal.

How can we go about achieving this community objective?

If our theory of motivation is correct, and we wish to take a leadership role to help people move in the direction in which they wish to go, we have to influence:

a. The values and attitudes of the people in the community: their own feelings of competence; the way they see their lives; the things they consider important; the things on which they choose to spend their time etc.

b. The pressures that the community brings to bear on any one individual; even if he is not concerned to behave in a particular way how can the community get him to do so?

HOW CAN ONE INFLUENCE VALUES AND ATTITUDES?

First we have to know which attitudes and values are important in relation to economic development - which includes social services, education and provision for special interest groups.

Fortunately this has been quite extensively studied and it has been shown that while all sorts of things are not important a certain syndrome of values is important, and this applies to primitive and modern societies and to communist and non-communist societies.

This syndrome of values has been named "the achievement orientation" Note however that it does not always lead to financial success, though it often does, at least in the short run (witness Rolls-Royce).

What is true is that on average people who exhibit this syndrome are more likely to be financially successful, and even when they are not financially successful they make real contributions to society - e.g. railways, aero engines etc. When there are several people in a society who show this syndrome the society progresses in terms of its technological growth, standard of living etc.

People who display the syndrome have the following characteristic thoughts: they:

Want to do new things

Make careful plans to achieve their goals

Consider their own abilities and limitations more explicitly than do low achievers.

Think of ways of measuring the success they are having in reaching their goals.

Anticipate the delight they will experience if they succeed in their activities and the misery they will feel if they fail. By anticipating these things they are, of course, able to release much more energy into what they are doing.

Feelings They:

Take a pride in doing things well

Enjoy their work

Are very much in touch with their feelings, they channel their emotions - both positive and negative - into their jobs

Enjoy introducing innovations and better ways of doing things, instead of thinking that this is wrong or feeling afraid of change

Enjoy seeing their actions have some effect in moving a group of which they are a member towards its goal even if they do not get credit from the group for their activities

Think that a person who does a job well deserves a proportionately greater reward, in comparison with a person who does it averagely, than do most people: in other words the dimension of quality is much nearer the top of their minds.

Behaviour They:

Seek out moderately challenging tasks where the results of their activities can be clearly seen

Seek out opportunities to be of benefit to the community

Make detailed and explicit plans to achieve their goals

Utilize their experience and don't branch out into the entirely unknown

Are self confident and rely on their own ability to master situations in which others would fail

Seek the help of others to achieve their goals

When choosing work partners they choose people who know their jobs rather than friendly people

Enlist the support of others - for example their wives and friends - to help them to achieve their goals

Work hard and for long periods to achieve their goals

Seek evidence of how well they are doing, of the degree to which they are on course for their goal

Refuse to work at tasks which do not interest them and do not help them to reach their goal

Refuse to work hard at a routine task for a financial incentive

Seek to work with others in such a way that both benefit; that is they seek to establish win/win relationships with others rather than relationships in which if one wins the other loses

They seek out tasks that they can control, where they can rely on their own skill and judgement.

If, in addition, the society holds certain values then it is even more likely to develop in a way we would today describe as "economically".

If people trust each other and believe that trustworthiness is an important personal characteristic in themselves it is possible to develop much more elaborate systems of cooperation and trade.

If people take their standards from informed public opinion, as expressed in high quality newspapers, it is much easier for good new procedures to be introduced, and bad ones criticised and discarded, than it is if the standard to be followed is tradition.

If people are willing to give help when asked without the person seeking help having to have recourse to threats such as getting the church or the law to intervene to induce compliance, then society can develop more easily.

The slides will indicate the extent to such relationships.

Now how can these attitudes be influenced?

1. Rational discussion of the consequences: one can go over the research literature with course participants so that they see the implications. One can point out that adoption of these attitudes will make people more happy, rather than less happy; that adoption of them will help them reach their own goals rather than inhibit them and so on.
2. Convince people that they can change, and that this will be beneficial; what we have just said implies that people can change, and it is most important to go over that part of the research literature which indicates how highly achievement-oriented people came to be that way. This indicates that, to reverse a common belief, these important people were made and not born:
3. Strengthen existing feelings of competence and get people to generalize these to areas in which they had previously felt incompetent. Encourage people to relate these new attitudes and values to their old ones; encourage them to go over their past lives and consider what gave them

the greatest sense of satisfaction - this often turns out to be an achievement experience and they can then develop this tendency without doing violence to their existing self image.

4. One can provide them with opportunities in which to feel themselves into a new role and new way of behaving, so that they can try out new ways of behaving - as one does in adolescence - until one finds a way that is right for oneself and works; this can be done by "game" situations which enable people to develop new strategies for dealing with others and see what the consequences are without encountering the disasters which might follow on the trail of a new behaviour style in real life.
5. One can encourage people to role play the thoughts, feelings, and behaviour of highly achievement-oriented individuals. Through practicing these ways of thinking, feeling, and acting they cease to feel that they are strange and incongruous - indeed they come to realise that they have "really" always been like that.
6. One can encourage them to establish a new reference group from whom to take their standards - and particularly from other course participants.
7. One can encourage them to relate what they have learned about the importance of developing realistic but challenging goals which are specific and measurable, and their practice at doing it in "game" situations, to their everyday lives by encouraging them to make plans for their life after the course - plans that are broken down into specific measurable, challenging sub-goals etc. To help to ensure that they take these plans to heart one can encourage them to commit themselves to their achievement.
8. One can encourage them to see themselves as others see them and decide to reform those aspects in which reform is needed: And the same applies to communities, just as one can play back video-tapes of their own behaviour so one can rig situations such that they can see their communities as outsiders see them. This is on the whole better than presenting them with the account of outsiders: these tend to be rejected: if people discover things for themselves they are much more likely to believe that they are true.

We have now discussed ways in which we can assist people personally to do that which they wish to do more effectively. Turning to the other side of our model, one can also do quite a lot to influence the external pressures that are brought to bear on an individual:

One can make sure that achievement-oriented people get into positions of power in a community, and, once there, are not hemmed in by regulations and committees.

One can structure the tasks that are put in front of power-oriented leaders who cannot be removed such that they clearly involve a choice between doing the achievement thing or losing their power.

One can give the people who surround such a leader a course in motivation which helps them to understand the pressures that can be brought to bear on such an individual to cause him to behave in an achievement oriented fashion when he would normally have behaved in a power-oriented fashion. Perhaps all one can do is rig the situation such that the leader only achieves his power goals by behaving in an achievement-oriented manner. But it may be possible to surround him with such a climate of opinion which makes it clear that it is quite unthinkable to behave in other than an achievement fashion; that no one will admire his power not so used (difficult to imagine in many communities, mind you), by putting him in a position in which his motives will publicly be seen to be what they are and so on.

Bear in mind, however, that his intuitive understanding of the power game is probably better than your formal understanding.

To systematise this discussion a bit: How can one formalise this: What are the variables in community climate that are important? Firstly there are community norms: what members of the community expect. This can be influenced by courses of the sort that were mentioned earlier: one can influence peoples' expectations from others, and, as a result, the others

are inclined to live up to the expectations. This can particularly be the case if one can build on what is already there: it is often the case that members of communities all want the same thing, but none is willing to express it.

If one can arrange community discussions in which this state of pluralistic ignorance of community of feeling comes out into the open, and get a decision taken to do something about it, then things will begin to happen.

This in turn involves community-wide involvement - a fact which involves a fairly massive input of time thought, and money on the part of those planning the change.

Then there is the climate which surrounds such achievement - oriented people as there are in the community - at whatever level they are operating.

It is important to encourage those with whom they are working to:

1. Define the task that these individuals have to do to include the exercise of responsibility and initiative.
2. Delegate responsibility to the individual concerned; do not check up on him too much, do not ask him to report back too frequently.
3. Provide positive support for what he does, look for that which is good in what he does in order to commend it rather than look for errors on the basis of which to denigrate what he does.
4. Set, through joint discussion and agreement, realistic but challenging goals for the individuals concerned; goals progress toward which can be clearly detected.
5. Establish a monitoring system to systematically review at predetermined intervals progress toward the goals; do not allow this to be put off owing to pressure of other work. Use this as a joint problem - solving session rather than as a judgmental-threat situation.

6. Surround these individuals with a climate which stresses enthusiasm, dedication, hard work, and pride in the work done.

The next slide illustrates the profiles of a particular firm across some of these variables.

The firm was faced with the problem that the best staff were leaving, that is, in the terminology used in Ireland, with emigration.

What was wrong was not the financial-promotional-reward structure, but the absence of goals, support, pride in the organisation, etc.

It was up to top management to do something about this if the firm was to stay in business. And it was up to the employees to do something both about themselves and about top management if they wanted the firm to stay in business.

As far as communities are concerned it is up to top management to do something. And it is up to the members of a community to do something themselves and to influence top management. People tend to get the top management they deserve; they not only vote, their values and attitudes determine the type of people that go forward for election and are selected by selection committees.

Just to round out the discussion of climate variables the last slide indicates the sort of effect that can be obtained by middle management altering climate variables alone.

If you, as social scientists, wish to use the information we have collected to help communities help themselves there is much that is of use to you.

Your task is to lead.

On the whole your leadership can only be effective if you lead in a direction in which people wish to go.

Your task is to make people feel strong enough to undertake the activities they have to undertake themselves.

Your task is to ensure that their aspirations are realistic but challenging, specific, and measurable, that they have a route to their goal.

Your task is to help them structure their task, with the aid of the information that you have available.

Your task is to think how to get people to work together for the common good; how to bring the doubters and passengers with you and convert them into positive assets.

But let there be no mistake about it; you are in an unenviable position.

Even though you know that you are simply encouraging people to put their best foot forward, and planning to remove some of the shackles which bind them, you will be accused of seeking personal power for yourself.

And again let there be no mistake about it; you will be seeking power and you will be exercising it.

But the power you need is socialised power. Although related to personal power of the form that leads to centralization of decision making and abuse - and often to high levels of conflict - the sort of power you need is different in that it is essentially concerned with encouraging others, not to rely on you, but to feel strong enough, and effective enough, to achieve their own goals.

And once you have done that you can slip quietly away; and if you don't I would suspect that you are primarily concerned with power and not community development. In fact you would have been a failure as far as community development is concerned.