

Preface

In the mid sixties I directed an ambitious research project dedicated to the understanding of variation in program innovation in voluntary agencies. The results were reported in a duplicated report that had limited distribution. Certain of the findings were summarized in a pamphlet published by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and in an article in the *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*. However, the full report was never published. Recently a number of my colleagues had occasion to revisit the report and argued that it should be published since the findings represented a true contribution to the field and the issues with which the study dealt remain important unresolved concerns for both social scientists and practitioners. After satisfying myself that this was indeed the case, I agreed to publish the original report with a new introduction by Marshall Scott Poole that placed the study in the context of the contemporary literature.

This volume, then, reports the results of a three-year research project which investigates the factors associated with the implementation of program change in community welfare organizations. The financial support for this project was provided by a grant from the Ford Foundation. The basic aim of the research—the identification of factors associated with the implementation of program change—evolved in part from the experiences of the Community Council of Houston and Harris County with regard to the interest of that body in the needs of the aged population.

The Community Council had been actively concerned with the problems of the aged population for many years, and conducted its first community-wide study on the needs of the aging more than ten years prior to the study reported herein. An appreciation of the need to consider the total needs of the aging population resulted, during 1956, in the establishment of a Committee on Aging directly responsible to the Board of Directors. This committee was provided with the services of one of the professional Council staff as a consultant. In January, 1961, the Council Board of Directors received a report from a special Study Committee on Problems of the Aging and Aged. The study resulted in 67 specific recommendations concerning the welfare needs of the aged population in Houston and Harris County. The Board accepted the report and, in turn, referred it to the Council's Committee on Aging with a request that the Committee determine the priority of Community Council action for the many recommendations. The Committee on Aging held several meetings between March and June, 1961. They submitted a report to the Board

in which it listed 52 recommendations by various categories: those calling for expansion and improvement of current programs; those calling for creation of new programs, services, and facilities; solutions requiring legislative action; etc. Within each category, the Committee also: established an order of priority for Council action; indicated the community action called for; and, suggested an appropriate role for the Council in facilitating the implementation of the recommendation.

The Community Council was successful in the implementation of certain of these suggestions and somewhat less successful in the initiation of other programs. In general, this experience reinforced the belief of Council personnel, and those of other community planning bodies, that a greater understanding of the implementation process must be achieved if the needs of the aged population were to be adequately met. Apparently, factors other than the existence of a "need" frequently determine what action is taken to *implement* recommendations once they have been formulated. Since the basic objective of all "priority" statements is to blueprint needed programs, the effects of these "other factors" upon the variable *implementation* of these changes must be understood and the knowledge of these effects utilized, if planning organizations are to fulfill effectively their responsibilities to the community. The opportunity to study the implementation process was provided by a grant from the Ford Foundation to investigate factors associated with the formulation and implementation of priority recommendations for the aged.

In this community, as in others, community welfare agencies represent significant forces for the activation of welfare programs for the aged population. Of the organizations holding membership in the United Fund of Houston and Harris County, three welfare agencies are organized to directly meet the needs of the aged. Several other agencies could also conceivably be involved in implementing recommendations for the aged. For this reason, we decided to focus upon community welfare agencies in our investigation of the processes by which priority recommendations for the aged are implemented.

The final stage in the evolution of our research problem followed from the explicit recognition that those agencies which serve the aged are very like those agencies which serve other client populations in many aspects of their structure and functioning. Furthermore, these agencies all share a common environment and are subject to similar influences. We assumed, therefore, that the identification of factors which would affect the implementation of program change in community agencies, regardless of the target population, would at the same time serve to increase our understanding of the factors which affect the implementation of priority recommendations for the aged in particular. To

this end the major goal of the project was formulated as: *the identification and description of the factors associated with the variable implementation of the program changes a group of forty-two United Fund Agencies in Houston and Harris County.*

The study did not attempt to derive standards for the formulation of priority recommendations; nor did it attempt to evaluate the *quality* of program changes. Rather, the purpose of the study was to delineate the variables that are associated with the *ultimate implementation of program changes* regardless of the nature and quality of the program changes. The criteria for priority determination are interpreted as but one set of variables which affect the formulation and implementation of suggestions for program change.

By a statistical criterion, we achieved a good deal of success in fulfilling our basic aim. The chapters that follow will report the delineation of several factors which are highly correlated with the variable implementation of program change in community agencies. The pragmatic value of these findings can only be judged in the light of any future attempts to implement suggestions for program changes which take these factors into account.

This undertaking would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of a great many groups and individuals. The Ford Foundation provided both moral and financial support without which the Community Council would not have been able to undertake this special research project. The School of Applied Social Sciences of Western Reserve University provided continuing guidance and interest especially during the developmental period of the research design, and facilitated inter-community exchanges of ideas regarding priorities—implementation research.

Within our own community I wish to express my gratitude to the staff and volunteer leaders of the individual United Fund agencies for their participation in the interviewing process which provided the major portion of the research data. The staff of the Community Council of the Houston and Harris County at that time provided basic data as well as constant advice and encouragement during the course of this undertaking. I especially acknowledge the efforts of: Joseph L. Zarefsky, Executive Secretary; Myles MacDonald, then Director of Planning Activities; Miss Helen M. Mason, Miss Alice K. Laine, Raymond A. Thomson, and David H. Friesen, all dedicated Community Planning Associates.

I also acknowledge the efforts of A. Russell Lokkeberg, then Director of the Research Bureau of the Community Council of Houston and Harris County,

and to his very able staff for their untiring efforts in the collection, collation, and analysis of the research data, and in the preparation of this final report.

I have reserved until last the following acknowledgement for the purpose of emphasis. I am greatly in debt to Holly Groves and Sandra McLean for their untiring efforts and unwavering dedication in readying this manuscript for publication

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Organizational Innovation

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