

Applied Social Psychology Annual 3

LEONARD BICKMAN, EDITOR

**Applied
Social Psychology
Annual**

Volume

3

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**INTRODUCTION:
APPLIED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
AND HEALTH**

This third volume of the *Applied Social Psychology Annual*, like the previous two volumes, contains ten original essays representing the state of the art in this field. The annual is divided into three sections. The first section considers significant issues in applied social psychology. The first two chapters focus on training and the third on ethical issues. The second section is concerned with methodology. The two chapters in this section deal with conducting research with minority groups and combining a field experiment with a longitudinal survey. The last section, composed of five papers, describes studies with social psychology and health.

ISSUES IN APPLIED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

In his chapter on the professional practice of applied social psychology, Ronald Fisher sees modern applied social psychology to be a rejuvenation of the Lewinian version of theory, research, and practice. Each of these factors is important for the proper balance and direction of the field. While most social psychologists will be familiar with theory and research, it is the practice aspect that Fisher emphasizes in his chapter. Fisher differentiates the clinical practice approach exemplified by the work of Zimbardo, and the technological approach recommended by Varela. One major practice aspect of applied social psychology involves dealing with social issues and human relations while operating as organizational and process consultants. The lack of attention to this may be the biggest gap in our training as social psychologists.

As noted in earlier volumes of this annual, the definition of applied social psychology is an evolving one. Fisher's definition includes seven foci that he relates to the major roles and core competencies that applied social psychol-

ogists need. These roles include applied researcher, research consultant, program evaluator, program development consultant, and group organizational consultant. The diversity and nature of the work in these areas leads Fisher to focus most of his chapter on the training of applied social psychologists. Fisher further describes how to integrate the core elements of theory, research, and practice in order to provide real-world involvement in an interdisciplinary setting. Fisher provides examples of a number of graduate training programs and uses these programs to raise certain issues concerning training. For example, how should field placements operate in a training program? When should these field placements occur? How should they be supervised? Fisher notes that the demands of an applied social psychology are broad and deep. From my personal experience in developing a curriculum for a graduate program, it is clear that if all the aspects that should be required were covered, a trainee would be very effectively trained but very, very old when he or she finished. Nine-year training programs are not very realistic. Fisher presents some perspectives on how to resolve this problem.

As the field has developed, it has become clear that pressures for certification and accreditation will increase. Fisher notes the pros and cons of both of these and describes the conditions under which such certification would be advantageous. As more training programs are developed, professional issues will become more salient. Fisher is optimistic about the future of applied social psychology in its ability both to solve real problems and to remain within the framework of traditional social psychology.

The next chapter, written by Clara Mayo shortly before her untimely death, takes a somewhat different perspective on both the role and training of applied social psychologists. Mayo takes the position that applied social psychology probably is and will remain marginal not only to the core of social psychology as a discipline but in the areas of application as well. In the discipline, Mayo foresees that applied social psychologists will be employed in different settings, many of them nonacademic. Moreover, these individuals may not belong to the same professional organizations as academic social psychologists nor will they read the same research literature. In this sense, these individuals may become marginal to the discipline of social psychology. In a similar vein, social psychologists in various problem-oriented fields (e.g., health, criminal justice) may be seen as marginal persons in those fields, operating primarily as advisers or consultants with little or no direct power.

While some will see this marginal role as having negative aspects, and there are some, Mayo sees the marginal role as having a positive impact. She points out that the marginal person could be more open-minded about ideas and organizations and possibly be more productive than persons who are

more orthodox in their approaches. What is of critical concern is the orientation the individual has toward this marginal role. If the person sees himself or herself in a negative light because of this marginality, then the positive advantages of marginality will not accrue. This leads Mayo to recommend certain aspects of graduate training that would prepare students to assume this role in a positive fashion.

Mayo feels that positive orientation toward marginality can be best developed by training students to approach traditional psychology in a critical and questioning manner. She feels that this approach is not taken frequently enough in current training and that it would better prepare students to see alternative viewpoints. She also feels there must be some balance between advocacy and objectivity. While some traditional programs stress the objectivity aspect of training, more experience is needed in the advocate's role. Finally, students need to become more committed to the field and to their own research while maintaining this level of criticism. Mayo feels that there is not enough sense of commitment or ownership from the students for their own work.

Mayo points out some other difficulties in training that are similar to those noted by Fisher. For example, the role of the mentor in training is seen to be more critical in the applied area because of the marginal role that Mayo indicates. She feels there are few traditionally trained social psychologists who can provide such role models. She points out that senior faculty, who are most likely to be mentors, have little personal experience with managing a marginal professional position. Moreover, their own background and training responded to demands different from current ones being placed on new social psychologists attempting to work in an applied area. She further notes that providing a mentoring experience is not an easy task for a professor to fulfill. However, in this field it is possible for mentors to be found outside of academia.

Like Fisher, Mayo stresses the importance of communication in the role of an applied social psychologist. She points out, that the only communicating that gets any attention in graduate training is the writing of scholarly journal articles. This style of writing is clearly not the most appropriate for many of the reports that applied social psychologists will be writing. Not only does the applied social psychologist need to master traditional journal writing, but he or she must also be able to communicate to other professionals and nontechnical persons not only in writing, but verbally as well. Mayo points how the social psychological literature itself can be helpful in communicating to others.

Both Mayo and Fisher emphasize similar training needs. Both stress the need for communication skills; both stress interdisciplinary perspectives;

and both emphasize technical-quantitative skills. While Fisher recognizes the importance of apprenticeship and socialization to the applied field, Mayo stresses the more intangible aspects of this socialization. She notes the very personal nature of the relationship between mentor and student and places the future of applied social psychology in this context.

I personally am saddened by the loss of Clara Mayo's wisdom, insight, and experience. As one of the major figures in helping to create an applied social psychology, her leadership in this area will be missed. I feel honored that her last paper appears in this volume.

We turn from the issue of training to the question of ethics in a chapter by Thomas Murray. Murray, an associate for social behavioral studies at the Hastings Center in New York, raises a number of issues concerning ethics and applied social psychology. Murray was trained as an experimental social psychologist and is thus very familiar with the background of most social psychological research. He points out that applied social psychologists face the conflicts of the basic researcher as well as those of the applied researcher. There are basic moral questions that concern all research on human beings regardless of whether the research is basic or applied.

In describing various ethical systems, Murray discusses the three major ethical problems faced by most researchers. In his discussion, he raises a number of controversial points that many readers will not agree with. For example, Murray sees informed consent as a right, which all subjects have, that should never be violated. Murray dismisses a cost-benefit perspective as a means of deciding if informed consent could be violated. In other words, according to the ethical system developed by Murray, one should never violate informed consent for a so-called greater good. However, he does indicate that if an individual, for example, has a reasonable expectation of being observed (e.g., reading a newspaper on a subway), then no informed consent is necessary. However, if there is no reasonable expectation of being observed (e.g., monitoring a conversation on a subway), then informed consent would be necessary.

Murray raises a number of points with regard to privacy and confidentiality. These sections should be read closely since they pose not only ethical problems but legal problems as well. Murray insightfully points out a number of ways in which privacy and confidentiality can be maintained.

Finally, on dealing with human subjects, Murray notes that the concept of justice should apply. Principles such as keeping promises and maintaining personal autonomy are key to the justice concept. Murray discusses the Tuskegee syphilis experiment done in the 1930s as an example of the violation of justice. In this study, poor black males who were known to have syphilis were not treated with a then-recognized cure. The so-called scientific purpose of the study was to determine long-term effects of syphilis.

While such traumatic examples of violations of human rights are not found in social psychology, we still must be sensitive to the possibility of injustices being committed.

In the discussion of applications, the ethical issues are even more cloudy and ambiguous. It is not clear that all social problems indeed have value-free solutions. Many problems are actually more often social conflicts than social problems. For example, what is the ethics of intervening, with adults, to reduce the incidence of smoking? Do individuals first have to agree that they want to stop smoking before they are subject to various social-psychological techniques? Clearly, advertisers of cigarettes are not hindered by such ethical considerations. Another example is racism. Do psychologists or others have the right to change racist attitudes? Some would feel it is an obligation—but does the individual holding these attitudes have to wish to want to change them?

I am currently involved in planning some research with hospitals on patient satisfaction that exemplifies some of these conflicts as well as the conflict that Murray calls the "double-agent dilemma." This conflict occurs when the psychologist is asked by one group to devise an intervention for another group. Responsibility toward the client or toward the subject is at stake in this conflict. For example, in the hospital case we are concerned with patient satisfaction with hospital care. The importance of satisfaction is indicated by literature that shows that satisfaction is related to the number of days spent in the hospital and compliance with medical measures. The most forthright and least ethically conflictual way to affect patient satisfaction is to try to change the things in the hospital that create dissatisfaction. Clearly this could be an expensive undertaking. On the other hand, it may be possible to convince patients that they are satisfied without changing any of the external environment. Clearly the hospital would be happy, at least in the short run, with this illusion. It may even appear to the patients that their own sense of well-being is improved. However, there is the moral conflict of convincing people to feel one way when in reality nothing has changed but their perceptions.

I would anticipate that ethical issues will form a central concern of applied social psychologists as more intervention research takes place. In the past few years, laboratory researchers have been shaken out of their complacency concerning the ethics of conducting behavioral research. However, this concern is clearly a double-edged sword. Some of the points raised by Murray could be utilized by opponents of research to prevent many applied studies from being conducted. Clearly what is needed is not only a more detailed ethical analysis of research, but empirical research to examine the ramifications of certain techniques. We must move the question of ethics into the world of empirical research.

METHODS

The next two chapters in the annual deal with methodological concerns. The chapter by Marín and Marín offers the applied psychologist a perspective on conducting research with minorities. It is hoped that this chapter will increase the level of sensitivity and awareness of researchers considering research with minority groups.

The Maríns use a particularly interesting presentation of information concerning methodological pitfalls to avoid when conducting research with minorities. First, they point out that the proportion of minorities in the United States is increasing. In 1980, almost 17% of the U.S. population was composed of minorities. Moreover, Hispanics are becoming the most populous minority group in this country. It is likely that in any applied research project the investigator will come in contact with a minority group member. Moreover, the focus of a great deal of applied social psychology is social problems, and these problems affect minority group members more often than others. Thus, the well-prepared researcher will be sensitive to the special requirements needed to conduct research with these groups. The Maríns take an interesting tack in presenting the problems of conducting research with minority group members. They list eight fallacies that they feel are frequently believed by nonminority researchers, especially in dealing with Hispanic populations. For example, they note it is often difficult to determine the minority identity of an individual. Moreover, one Hispanic is not equivalent to another since the population is extremely heterogeneous. They point out that while it is not difficult to conduct research with Hispanics, there are some techniques that can increase the probability that such research will be successful. The helpful suggestions provided by the Maríns should provide a starting point for researchers who wish to conduct research in this area. Clearly, we all must become more sensitive to the particular needs and perceptions of the various groups of individuals that take part in our research.

The chapter by Van Harrison, Kaplan, French, and Wellons provides an excellent transition from the section dealing with methodology to the section dealing with social psychology and health. These authors conducted a study on social-psychological aspects of adherence to antihypertensive regimens. They were interested in examining a model of social support that would induce patients to more fully follow the treatment prescribed by their physicians. What makes this study methodologically interesting is its use of the combination of a field experiment and a longitudinal survey.

The authors manipulated social support by having the patient bring a friend to one of the sessions. The authors examined the effect this manipula-

tion had on a number of cognitive and behavioral variables. Even though it was a field setting, the investigators were successful in implementing this study as a randomized experiment. As experimental social psychologists, the design and analysis should be familiar. However, the added twist of seeing this study as a longitudinal survey provides an interesting addition.

The survey approach provided a back-up in case the experiment failed to produce the desired social support. In addition, the survey allowed the investigators to examine parallel effects of social support that might occur in a patient population independent of the experimental manipulation. Finally, the survey allowed these researchers to study the effects of independent variables that might not be altered as part of the social support experimental conditions.

Data were collected from 236 patients in four waves. As noted by the authors in a footnote, the longitudinal study design is similar to a quasi-experiment with one observation before the intervention and three following. However, in this time series design, the usual data collected are mean levels of a dependent variable. In this study, correlations between variables are the critical factors. The authors present an interesting model of the expected effects of both the intervention and the relationship between the variables. After examining the data from an experimental perspective, they then present this survey perspective. This section is the most valuable to applied social psychologists for it presents an interesting way of looking at longitudinal data in a nonexperimental setting. The authors present models of change that allow them to make specific predictions about the relationship between variables. The data analysis then becomes a mechanism to confirm specific patterns of results. The survey results provide insight into the processes involving the major variables of social support and adherence to the medical regimen. The survey also provided information concerning the feedback loops, which are difficult to ascertain from a purely experimental perspective. The authors were able to develop a model to take into account the more complex relationships found through this survey approach. They present a good case for recommending a combined field experiment and longitudinal survey as a general strategy for applied social psychology.

APPLICATIONS TO HEALTH

Probably one of the most vital and expanding applied fields of psychology is health and health care. There has been a rapid growth of interest in health psychology as evidenced by a new American Psychological Association (APA) division on health and by the large number of journals in the area.

Social psychologists have played a key role in development of this field. For example, two of the authors in this annual are past presidents of that APA division (Rodin and Singer).

Social psychologists have particular theoretical and methodological backgrounds that help explain their visibility in the health field. Many aspects of health deal with or are of an interpersonal nature and thus come under the rubric of many social psychological theories. Moreover, social psychology's recent emphasis on field research methods has provided researchers with methodological tools relevant to health-related research.

The diversity of research in this field is well represented within this volume. Topics covered include:

- child health education,
- environmental stress,
- drug abuse,
- family medicine,
- patient compliance, and
- control and coping among the aged.

These papers demonstrate the application of social psychology in health and medical contexts. This use of social psychology has the potential of reducing medical costs, increasing health through sound prevention programs, and generally bringing a new perspective to the health field.

The chapter by Rodin, Bohm, and Wack presents an excellent description of their research program dealing with control, coping, and aging. The authors start with the description of the relationship of control to old age. They point out that low control is related to anxiety, helplessness, and psychological reactance, and that these often have more negative effects among the elderly. They then present the reader with a model of research development that leads toward realistic intervention into the problems of stress and coping among elderly. This model includes as its first stage the development of an instrument that identifies sources of stress. The authors describe how they developed an item pool, pilot tested these items, refined them, and retested them.

To many traditionally oriented social psychologists, the time and effort spent on instrument development may appear excessive. However, as I have noted in Volume 2 of the annual, the use of self-report instruments is probably more frequent in applied areas than in traditional laboratory-oriented social psychology. Because of the heavy emphasis on self-report data, researchers require reliable and valid instrumentation. This means that a

rather extensive effort must be undertaken to develop these instruments. Standardized instruments do not usually exist, and thus it is up to the individual researcher to develop these tools. In the case of Rodin and her colleagues, the instrument development phase was necessary for further research. I would suggest that students and others who are seriously considering an applied research orientation develop competencies in instrument development.

Having developed instruments that measure the problems of life, they then move on to measure ways in which people cope with these hassles or problems. This required more instrument development. Satisfied with these instruments, the authors then relate the findings of hassles and coping strategies. For example, they found that individuals' coping strategies often depend on the perceived cause of the hassle rather than on its frequency or severity. Moreover, the number of strategies that people have in their repertoire of coping skills is often more important than particular types of strategies.

The authors describe how the instrumentation was used in an institutional setting for the elderly. They point out the problems of applied research in such a setting as well as the rewards. The last stage of their research is one dealing with interventions, and they explicitly indicate the institutional barriers to such research. They perceptively point out the conflict between the applied social psychologist as a researcher with academic interests and the applied social psychologist as a problem solver. In the former, the search for causes and the understanding of relationships take precedence over dealing with specific problems raised by others. Thus, the freedom to conduct theory-oriented research in applied settings is often inhibited by the individuals who control the settings. In the case described by Rodin and her colleagues, the management of the nursing home wished solutions to problems as they defined them and it did not initially take kindly to the suggestion by the researchers that other problems were more important. This conflict is one that will face many academically oriented applied social psychologists. As the authors point out, researchers should creatively devise means to piggy-back their more theoretically oriented research on the more problem-centered applied type of research.

The next chapter, by Wingard, Huba, and Bentler, provides an interesting contrast to most of the research produced by traditional social psychologists. As noted earlier, many applied projects deal with survey data. This is an excellent example of such a study in the health area. The authors were concerned with the relationship between psychosomatic symptoms and drug use in adult women. The authors review data on the prevalence of psychosomatic symptoms and drug use among women and suggest a theoretical

linkage between the two. What is particularly useful in this chapter is how the development of a model is examined through the use of latent-variable structural models. The authors were asked by me to explain the rationale and application of this analytic technique. They do so in a clear and informative manner.

Wingard and his colleagues utilize a causal modeling technique that takes into account not only the relationship between variables but also sources of error such as those found in self-report questionnaires. Thus measurement error is explicitly dealt with in this structural model. The causal modeling technique attempts to test a proposed model against observed data and to develop other models that adequately explain the data. Thus, both the fit of competing models and that of the model initially developed by the researchers can be assessed. The data are typically analyzed on a computer program (LISREL IV) to obtain maximum likelihood estimates and goodness-of-fit test statistics. The authors show how to use the model and test it with their data.

One of the major points made by this chapter is the availability of powerful analytical techniques that can be used in applied research. The implication of the availability of these techniques is that applied social psychologists, if they are going to be as sophisticated as researchers in other disciplines, must become familiar if not necessarily competent in the use of these techniques. Applied social psychological research can no longer depend on the analysis of variance model as the only analytic procedure to be utilized. While causal modeling techniques are often utilized by psychologists, there are additional analytical techniques that are more frequently used by economists and sociologists. I would strongly suggest that researchers in applied social psychology become conversant in these techniques. As the authors point out in their concluding remarks, causal modeling is becoming the "in thing" among many researchers. A further note, however, is that caution must be used in applying this technique. Such caution requires detailed knowledge.

As noted in the chapter by Rodin and her colleagues, stress and coping is one of the more important and popular areas of research in health psychology. One of the major sources of current stress is the quality of our environment. The chapter by Baum, Fleming, and Singer examines stress produced by an environmental catastrophe known as the Three Mile Island incident. Studying stress responses to an accident such as Three Mile Island had no precedent in the literature. The authors discuss how they got involved in the project, indicating the problems they had as well as the products. The primary focus of the chapter is on how the Three Mile Island situation provides an example of applying social psychology and on what they have