Chapter 3

Social Policy and Social Services: Some Problems of Policy Formation, Program Implementation, and Impact Evaluation

*Franz-Xaver Kaufmann**

A SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF SOCIAL POLICY

The term social policy has been accepted in the Anglo-Saxon world only since World War II. It had its origin in the middle of the last century in Germany. There, it designated a set of measures aimed at influencing the relationship of state and civil society in a rather broad sense (Panoke 1970). After the enactment of the Social Security laws in the 1880s, the term encompassed all political measures designed to ameliorate the conditions of the industrial workers in order to integrate the working classes into the German Empire. With the progressive extension of labor legislation and Social Security programs to all dependent workers (except civil servants) and the inclusion of social work and other social services in the concept of social policy, the term has been adopted at the international level. Nevertheless, substantial differences in the use of the term in different countries may be detected on closer inspection.

For theoretical purposes it seems reasonable to take a rather broad notion of social policy as our starting point, as was the case at the beginning of the German debate. Social policy in this sense means

*Department of Sociology, University of Bielefeld, Federal Republic of Germany.

action of the state aimed at the amelioration or improvement regarding the living conditions of those members of the Hegelian "civil society" who are considered as disadvantaged (Hegel 1821). This general notion is of course open for criticism from different points of view; I refer only to the Marxian critique of the ideology of "civil society." Nevertheless, it seems that it was the historical process of establishing social policy, with its unanticipated consequences, that transformed not only the civil society, but also the relationship of state and civil society, in a rather differentiated manner (Heimann 1929; Schumpeter 1942). This process is called the emergence of the welfare state (cf. Titmuss 1958; Sleeman 1973; Robson 1976; for empirical evidence Flora, Alber, and Kohl 1977).

During recent years, increasing criticism regarding the concept of the welfare state may be noted. I shall not open this debate here, but I would like to mention two main points of criticism concerning the welfare state. The first objection points out that the welfare state is not able to provide social welfare to those who are especially in need of it. The second objection starts from the assumption that the period of rapid economic growth of Western societies will be followed by a period of moderate growth or even stagnation that may lead to a "Fiscal Crisis of the State" (O'Connor 1973). As a consequence of waning economic growth, the state will be confronted with growing demands from all parts of society. At the same time, the state will no longer be able to support its programs and measures by increasing taxes. Therefore, some writers predict "The Waning of the Welfare State" (Scharpf 1977) as a consequence both of the lack of resources and of the inability of the state to meet the needs of those who are in need. Insofar as the "welfare state" was an ideological concept for gaining the political loyalty of the masses (Offe 1972), based on an almost religious belief in a better world made possible by political action, the "Waning of the Welfare State" means nothing but a new step to the understanding of the toilsome venture of living together without the veil of false hopes, a task suited to social scientists from their beginning.

The presumed waning of the welfare state constitutes then the situation where social scientists are offered for the first time a real chance to gain the interest of practitioners in the field of social policy, a chance similar to that economists had in the period of the Great Depression. But shall we have our John Maynard Keynes?

The case is at least comparable in one respect: Keynes was a theorist who formulated for the first time an economic theory that made political action possible—that is, he explained why a full employment policy was necessary and how it could be carried out.

He and his scholars were able to reformulate the body of neoclassical economics so that explanations for the operating of the economy became linked with devices in the domain of political action to influence economic operations. I argue that sociological theory ought to perform the same function for social policy in the service field (see Gans 1971; Coleman 1972; Herlth, Kaufmann, and Strohmeier 1976).

Social policy is conceived in this study as actions of the state designed to improve the everyday life situation of certain groups of the population considered as disadvantaged in certain respects. The aim of sociology is to explain how these actions take place and to what extent political action is able to lead to the desired improvement.

How can this be done? Our starting point is to consider the difficulties in relating theory and practice in the field of social services. Whereas we have a rather clear conception of the factors influencing the distribution of income and of the measures taken in order to influence the distribution patterns—and thus a theoretical background for the "income strategy" of social policy (see below), we lack comparable conceptions for the "service strategy" (Williams 1971). We have, of course, a lot of reasoning concerning the practical problems in the field—such as budgeting problems, social administration, social work, and so forth—but this reasoning is not being incorporated in a common perspective that embraces the different steps of political, administrative, and social action.

If we want to improve social services—for instance their responsiveness to the needs of their clients—we need, in a certain sense, the practical experience of many people—politicians, board members of welfare agencies, budget controllers, and other members of public administration concerned with financing, regulating, or delivering social services. They all participate in one or another way in the process that determines the kind and the performance of the services. Nevertheless, we do not need much imagination to predict the outcome of a direct confrontation of all this practical experience: it would end either in confusion or in mutual reproaches. The perspective of the practitioners is necessarily restricted to the issues pertaining to their own practice. Nobody can expect from them so much role taking that they forget their own position in the institutional structure with its division of labor. But unfortunately, much theorizing of social scientists remains on a level of abstraction that does not allow them to grasp practical problems at the same time.

If we want to overcome both the insufficiencies of incongruent practical experiences and the deficiencies of theorizing and fact-finding unrelated to practical needs, we need some organizing principle

that allows both the consideration of practical experience and an argumentation on a generalized—that is, theoretical—level. What we need is a theory that takes into consideration the different positions of practical experience, in relating them to each other. If we consider the different concrete perspectives as belonging to the same system of practice—that is, the same institutional structure—and if we try to reconstruct this system of practice in terms of its institutional structure, of the processes determined by its functions, and of the states of mind, related to the different positions—that is, the motives, interests, and definitions of the situation of the actors in the institutional structure and its environment—we can arrive at a theory that is related both to academic problems and to practical issues (Kaufmann 1977a). Such a theory would be able to relate the actions and the consequences of the actions of different actors on different levels to each other. And this is what we need if we want to explain social policy in terms of political, administrative, and social action and also in terms of the impact of these actions upon the life situation of the members of our societies.

There are, of course, many restrictions and hindrances to an effective social policy. These restrictions operate at different levels, and we also have to incorporate them into a theory on the operation of social policy. Moreover, what seems to be an obstacle to effective political action may appear in another perspective as conditional for self-regulating processes in the field of the same political action. Social policy is indeed the action of the state on social processes that are not constituted by this action but only influenced by it. The impact of political actions depends to a large degree on the properties of the fields of political or administrative intervention.

We need a theory of the operation of social policies on different levels, including the properties of the intervention field or of the target group. Only if we can explain the difficulties and the possibilities of political action and if we are able to identify devices and limits of political action on the basis of grounded theory both of political and administrative intervention, as well as of the impact on the intervention field, shall we become able to bridge the gap between sociology and social policy.

OBJECT AREAS OF A THEORY OF SOCIAL POLICY: POLICY FORMATION, PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION, AND IMPACT EVALUATION

This assertion does not mean that we need only one theory with the properties mentioned. In fact, our previous considerations

have given some hints concerning the type of theories we need and that have to be formulated with respect to different fields of social policy and different stages of the sociopolitical administrative process. To begin with the latter, we borrow from the theory of political processes the distinction between the processes of policy formation, program implementation, and impact evaluation. These are primarily analytically distinguished perspectives of the political process, but they correspond roughly to the processes of policy input, policy throughput, and policy output, as considered by a systems analysis of political life (cf. Easton 1965; Raskoff and Schaefer 1970; Mayntz 1977).

By policy formation I mean the processes of emerging political issues, of political choice between alternative issues, and of program formulation—in the continental law system, mainly the legislative process. It is the domain of politics and political power seems to be the focal restriction at this stage of the political process. At the same time, patterns of cognitive selectivity and their institutional background also play an important part at this level; insofar as social policy is concerned with the socially most disadvantaged groups, we can even conclude that the chance of their interests and needs being considered depends almost completely on the problem sensitivity of the political system and its parts, given the fact that the political power of these groups tends to be zero.

Whereas it seems rather difficult to modify the everyday theories of administrations in the realm of their own activity, there seems to be a lack of generalized definitions of the situation in the political field. We can observe the way each political actor tries to define a situation in terms of his or her own interests, but it is rather clear that this cannot lead to a common definition of a situation. Here, I see a fair chance for social scientists: they may contribute to the definition of political issues by reinforcing or discarding or even reinterpreting the existing definition attempts made by political actors. This contribution seems particularly promising in three respects:

1. In defining social problems as potential issues of social policy;
2. In identifying the interconnections of different levels of political and administrative action—namely, by a reconstruction of the operation of social policy in terms of implementation as shown before; and
3. In discussing the possible outcomes of alternative strategies in terms of impact and side effects.

By the term program implementation I point to the processes of realization of a certain policy. Once a new law has been enacted or a

new program has been set up, it will not operate until a set of identifiable conditions are fulfilled: these conditions depend, as I shall argue later, to a large degree on the type of intervention under consideration. Program implementation consists therefore in the production of the conditions for a policy output (Kaufmann and Schaefer 1977). These conditions can be classified first in terms of structures and resources and encompass norms, organizations, finances, and so forth. The focal restriction at this level may consist in the structure of organizations and their interests that distort the aim of the political action.

If we take social policy seriously, we are right to assume that it is designed to have a certain impact upon the life situation of those who are destined to be the beneficiaries of political action—namely, the target groups. It may be questionable if politicians always really want the effects that they declare to be the aim of any policy to come about; often they may be much more interested in a "symbolic use of politics" (Edelman 1964)—that is, in giving the impression that something has been done concerning a problem, but without provoking a real change in the situation. This seems to be particularly probable in the case of the underprivileged groups.

If we want to overcome a merely symbolic use of politics, we have to question the current dissociation of policy input and policy output in the political debate, and we have to place emphasis on the interrelations of policy input, policy throughput, and policy output. But it is not sufficient to be concerned merely by policy output as measured for instance by the amount of expenditure, the number of social services, or even the number of cases treated by such services. At this level, we still maintain the political or administrative perspective, and we discard the perspective of the official beneficiary—namely, the consequences of the output for the target group. Whereas it would be rather utopian to orient our standards of evaluation only at the so-called needs of the population or of any target group, we have to maintain that social policy standards have to be defined for evaluation purposes in terms of desired outcomes and impacts (see Levy, Meltsner, and Wildavsky 1974) if evaluation is expected to contribute to the greater effectiveness of a policy (Kaufmann et al. 1978).

The aim of a sociological theory of social policy is thus the reconstruction of existing policies in terms of policy formation, program implementation, and impact evaluation. Each of these perspectives needs a different theoretical and methodological approach, and this explains why considerations linking the three levels of analysis are usually lacking. Nevertheless, only the linking of these three perspectives can lead to a type of theory that allows us to understand the whole process of delivering social services and thus to

widen the practitioner's perspective of his or her own problems in such a way that he or she becomes able to situate his or her own activity in its relationship to the whole delivering process and the conditions of its effectiveness (Kaufmann 1977a).

Of course, a sociological reconstruction of social policy as a whole would not lead to an elucidation of practical issues. Social policy consists in a more or less encompassing set of programs (laws), administrations, services, and the like whose systemic properties can only be determined by the concrete analysis of a given case. In this chapter we can only point out some general properties of a social policy by examining social services.

FORMS OF POLITICAL INTERVENTION IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

To prevent misunderstanding, we now have to deal briefly with the term "social services." It seems to be used in the German context with regard to a more restricted class of institutions than in the French and Anglo-Saxon context. In the United States the term social services designates the five main domains of welfare institutions—namely, education, health, income maintenance (or income security), housing, and employment (or manpower). In the English classifications, the last domain seems to be regularly excluded (cf. Hall 1965; Kameran and Kahn 1976; Madison 1970; Parker 1970; Wickenden 1976; Sainsbury 1977).

If we conceive the term in this broad sense, it covers almost the whole field of social policy. I think that such an approach is not very appropriate for analytic purposes, because the operation of social policy shows considerable variations depending upon the form of political intervention. Let me remind you that in the early 1960s we already had an international discussion about the relationship between social security and social services (see M. Kaufmann 1965, Merriam 1963). It was admitted then that despite some confusion in the institutional mix of the two forms of social intervention, fairly clear functional differences exist between them.

The function of social security is to provide social benefits based upon precisely defined and generalized preconditions. The delivering systems operate in a schematic, anonymous, and egalitarian way, regulated by law. Hence, their benefits consist regularly of money, and the security of income is based here on the previsibility of the benefit for those who are entitled to it (Kaufmann 1970). In view of the fact that the right to these benefits is settled by law and that the characteristics of the individual situation need not be taken into

account, a centralized administration seems to be possible and even more effective than a decentralized one (Hentschel 1978).

In contrast to social security, the social services provide benefits with respect to the individual circumstances and needs of the beneficiary; they may be in money or in kind; and their effectiveness depends upon the sensitivity of the providers to the local or even individual situation and upon the motivations and the degrees of freedom that are given to providers to meet individual needs. This function cannot be performed on the basis of specified rules of law and a centralized administration of the services. Therefore a high degree of decentralization both of agencies and of the services themselves seems to suit best the performance of this function.

In the German debate on sociology and social policy that began only a few years ago, we find a similar but not identical distinction: there is a fairly general agreement to distinguish between benefits in money and in kind (Ferber and Kaufmann 1977; Sozialbericht 1976); on the other hand, there is a distinction between two strategies of social policy that we can term following Rainwater (1967) and Romanyshyn (1971) as "income strategy" and "service strategy" (cf. Gross and Badura 1977; Herlth, Kaufmann, and Strohmeier 1976). Following American and English authors, Badura and Gross (1976) have emphasized the particular character of personal services that form the core of the service strategy. Personal services are benefits that are *uno actu* produced and consumed and whose effectiveness relies essentially upon the success of the interaction of the provider and the beneficiary or—in terms of organizational theory—of the basic boundary personnel and the client. The physical presence of the beneficiary and his or her willingness to cooperate represents thus an essential prerequisite for the success of the delivering action.[a]

With respect to my basic problem of how to construct theories that relate the perspective of sociopolitical action and its operation to the perspective of the social field and its target population, I propose a similar but somewhat more encompassing distinction between three forms of political intervention in the social field. As nearly all public actions are grounded on law and need money, I want to emphasize that the following, more selective, distinction is oriented

[a]It seems questionable if the term "person-centred services" (*personenbezogene Dienstleistungen*) of Badura and Gross is comparable to the English term "personal social services" (cf. Sainsbury 1977). For Badura and Gross (and also for myself) the distinction is analytical and not institutional: personal social services are not identical with "social work," but also include services in the domain of health or education, for example.

toward the outcome of the political process or toward the desired impact upon the social field (see Kaufmann et al. 1978).

1. *Intervention by law*, instituting specific rights for the target population in relation to third parties exerting an influence on essential elements of their life situation (e.g., worker versus employer, lessee versus lessor). This form of intervention has its bottleneck at the policy formation level. It needs (in principle) the least administrative structure and extremely few public funds to become effective, because action devolves not on public authorities but on private persons or bodies. Consequently, this form of intervention is particularly susceptible to political pressures intervening already on the legislative level: there is little chance to obtain specific rights for powerless groups. The implementation problem thus consists in bringing about the effectiveness of the instituted rights. This means that those entitled have to claim their rights and those obliged have to respect them. The implementation problem consists in spreading knowledge about these laws, in forming public consciousness of these rights embodied in the law, and in instituting an effective administration of justice and, perhaps, of controlling agencies (e.g., for security measures in factories). The impact of this form of intervention depends upon the ability and willingness of the beneficiaries of law to defend their interests.

2. *Intervention by money* refers to income redistribution by taxes, by social security, or by relief. The aim pursued by this kind of intervention consists of influencing the net income of the beneficiaries in order to enable them to buy goods and services they need in the market. Policy formation is difficult here insofar as the effective distribution pattern depends upon the combination of a set of different measures that are also enacted for other political purposes—for example, fiscal policy and economic policy. The implementation of measures requires general regulations and an efficient administration to lower the costs of the redistribution process. The problems of delivering the benefits are rather simple in comparison with those appearing in the personal service sector. Taking into account the strong interferences of income distribution and economic policy, we consider the effectiveness of this form of intervention as depending essentially upon the ability of the state to control unemployment and inflation. Moreover, the impact depends upon the premises of the market economy—that all which is needed can be bought at market prices, that everybody knows his or her own needs best, and that demand will provoke an appropriate offer of goods and services.

3. *Intervention by social services* concerns the premises (1) that individuals are fully able to defend their own interests and (2) that

all that is needed can (and will) be bought in the markets of goods and services. These premises tend to turn out to be untrue for a growing part of the needs of socially disadvantaged groups. Thus, public intervention takes place to organize the supply of goods and services below market prices, thus influencing the distribution patterns of these goods, and to improve the capacity of self-reliance of socially disadvantaged groups. It is typical of social services that they are concerned both with the substitution of the market economy and with improving capacities of self-reliance. The rationality of the service strategy relies thus on the assumption that people need some services they would not or could not buy on the basis of market prices. As we know, since the time of the beginning of the factory system, there is no evidence that people buy on their own initiative all that they or their children need. The establishment of a system of public instruction constituted then a first grade measure of social policy. Its function was not only to instruct the children but also to deter their parents and the employers from using them for factory work. If we try to discover a perspective that, with respect to social services, allows us to link the perspective of political action and that of the target population, we can find two such perspectives.

Most importantly, an adequate distribution pattern of the services must exist. As social services require the presence of a beneficiary, they lack the mobility of goods as presumed in the theory of market economy. Moreover, services tend to become more and more expensive in relation to other goods, and with respect to publicly funded services there seems to be an agreement that they are needed without regard to the purchasing power and perhaps even to the individual preference for them. Therefore, public intervention has to take place in order to organize the offer of these services below market prices and in the appropriate neighborhood of those in need.

A deeper problem is revealed on closer inspection of the causes that lead to public intervention in the service sector. The economic theory of so-called "merit goods" (Musgrave 1959) presupposes that services are not utilized to an appropriate degree because individual preferences do not correspond to the public preferences, but that an individual need for the services still exists. If the services are offered free of charge and within reach of those in need, they will be used to an appropriate degree. This presupposition has waned under the evidence that the so-called underprivileged groups tend to be underrepresented among the clients of social services, even when the latter are in reach and free of charge. Therefore a noneconomic explanation of the underutilization of social services by lower class people

and perhaps also of the overutilization by other social groups is needed (see McKinlay 1970a; Andersen and Newman 1973; Greenley and Kirk 1973; Blum 1975; Skarpelis-Sperk 1978; Wirth 1978).

RESEARCH ON IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS IN SOCIAL POLICY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Most social services have developed out of voluntary social actions and/or out of services on the basis of market prices. The origin of the services lies thus on a local or even neighborhood level, and this proximity seems to be an elementary condition of their effectiveness. Moreover, the use of social services constitutes typically not a unique act, but a sequence of interactions taking place over a certain period of time. Thus, the performance of the service depends not only on the professional skills of its personnel but also on the capacity and willingness of its public to cooperate in the process of service delivery. There is consequently a problem of motivating both staff and public to cooperate in such a way that the aim of the service can be attained (Badura and Gross 1976; Grunow 1978). But this is not the whole problem. As the demand for social services frequently exceeds their supply, a problem exists concerning the selectivity systematically applied by the service staff to the "cases" on the basis of their own definitions of "expected successful treatment" and other standards set up according to the interests of their organization (Greenley and Kirk 1973; Grunow 1977). Finally, we have to admit that the demand for a social service is itself the result of a sometimes complex process of decision making on the side of the potential clients or target group members (Wirth 1978), and the likelihood that the great majority of those who are in need are not demanding the appropriate services seems to be rather high.

We can assume that the output of most social services was originally provided within family households. At the beginning of their separate provision, most of these services, then organized on a voluntary or market basis, did not attain the standards of provision within a functioning household. If there has been any increase in their quality at all, this may be attributed to the professionalization of the services.

In contrast to the interventions by law or by money that are typically original innovations of the state, social services have been, in many cases, pre-existent to political intervention. This is by no

means accidental: social services are not suited to the forms of policy formation and program implementation that are characteristic of the modern state with its centralized forms of political decision-making and the complex, multilevel bureaucratic structure of its administration. The typical tools of state action—legal and administrative norms, budgeting and subsidies, administrative and judicial control—are little apt to influence the quality and the selectivity of service delivery and are even less appropriate for motivating the most needy members of target groups. This is, in my opinion, the gist of the problem of a service strategy in social policy. Whereas we find some allusions to it in the literature, the thesis is not yet fully developed. Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing tendency in all industrialized countries to expand the state's intervention in the service sector. This is normally legitimated with the aim of improving the service system in quantity and quality (Dahl and Lindblom 1953; Kaufmann et al. 1971; Offe 1974; Widmaier 1976; Hegner 1978; Kaufmann 1977b).

How does the state operate to achieve a higher standard of social services and to secure their influence? The provisional findings of research groups at Bielefeld (cf. Bohnsack, Schliehe, and Schneider 1977; Grunow, Hegner and Lempert 1979; Domscheit and Kaufmann 1977) show the different strategies pursued in the Federal Republic of Germany. The most far-reaching (and best established) is the professionalization of the services staff personnel. By establishing new professions and by creating new curricula under the auspices of public authorities, the field of social services becomes more formalized and thus more influenced by legal and administrative actions. Another possible strategy would be nationalization, but with exception of the school system, this strategy has been used very reluctantly in Germany—apart from the Third Reich. It is the recollection of that time and also the division of Germany that make any discussion about extensive nationalization impossible.

Nevertheless, social services have not been left in their primary state of mutual help or of a market good: under the auspices of social legislation and with a growing tendency by the state to subsidize the services, there has been a historical trend of forming associations (*Verbandlichung*) in German social policy. This is true for social security (Tennstedt 1976, 1977) as well as for different forms of social services. In this context, a system of ideologically oriented associations has emerged where Catholic (*Caritas*) and Protestant (*Diakonisches Werk*) bodies prevail. These voluntary associations in the field of social service delivery have developed into rather highly organized systems of services with a multilevel hierarchical structure. Thus, the state deals primarily with these associations and tries to influence the services indirectly by sharing

its own domains with them. This sharing of areas of competence—that is, the establishment of participation—takes many shapes and operates officially in the implementation process. But our studies also show substantial influences and informal participation in the policy formation process; or perhaps one should say that in the domain of social services, policy formation and program implementation are less separated than in other domains of politics. This means that regulation by law in this field is not very sharply defined and cannot be said to form a program for policy. The decisions—or rather the "agreements"—on the measures to be taken in the field are achieved in partly formalized (e.g., the planning of hospitals), partly informal structures. We should try to find out how effective the regulatory power of these structures is.

But what does effectiveness mean in this context? In contrast to intervention by law or by money, the desired outcome of intervention by services is not easy to define. On the political level, there regularly exist some great words describing the purpose of a program or law—for example, Health, Security, Education, Welfare, or Justice—that often have the function of "precarious values" (see Chapter 11). Sometimes the legislator gives a more precise definition of the subjective rights to social services—for example, the 1975 Code of Social Rights in the FRG. But also in this case the rights have to be specified; they do not become effective until subsequent regulations are set up. Implementation means here not only the realization of the goals fixed by law, but the transformation of the rather general purposes into operative devices. This means that the definition of the population's needs to be met does not take place on the political level, but in the shared implementation process as sketched above. This explains why the responsiveness of social services to clients' needs is a crucial issue of the service strategy.

The aim of the social services is usually not the delivering act itself (its output) but some change in the client's life situation or in his capacities (its impact). This rather obvious fact—that for instance health services ought to be healthy for their clients or that public education has to be measured by the fostering of certain capacities in its pupils—is strangely obscured in the administrative perspective. It is oriented primarily toward efficiency—the relation of costs and outputs—but not toward effectiveness—the relation of desired outcomes and impact (Kaufmann et al. 1978).

THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPACT RESEARCH

It has always been an established matter of political thinking that politics and policies actually affect what they have in view.

This conception of the political process tends to overemphasize the level of politics and to neglect problems of implementation and impact. As we have shown, these are particularly relevant and difficult in the field of social services. None of our established forms of social regulation seems to be suited to improving the responsiveness and effectiveness of social services. Neither the market mechanism nor the established forms of democratic policy formation and bureaucratic policy implementation are sensitive to the needs of persons and of social groups that cannot be generalized in terms of rights and money.

There is also reason to doubt whether the pluralistic or mixed structure of the implementation field—as shown in the example of the FRG—will lead to a better result. In comparison with a nationalized and centralized system it may lead to some opportunities for innovation, but also to a particularly marked predominance of organizational (e.g., domain) considerations on the regulatory level of the delivery system. The only device that may result in an improvement of the service's quality seems to be professionalization, but this mechanism is also open to criticisms insofar as the responsiveness and the effectiveness of the services are concerned (Badura and Gross 1976; Hegner 1979). Or to put it more precisely, I assume that by the combination of professional and bureaucratic patterns of regulation, the tendency for discarding the problems of client's needs is particularly reinforced: professional authority tends to disguise the weaknesses of the bureaucratic structure.

If we want to overcome the dominant administrative perspective at the policy level, it seems necessary to concentrate research on outcomes and impacts of different social services (perhaps in comparison with alternative solutions of the same problem). Evaluation and impact research are promising fields of applied social research, though there are still many problems to solve (Hellstern and Wollman 1977). The main issues are how the desired outcomes can be determined without a subjective bias and how we can move from observed correlations to causal influences.

From the perspective of the ideas exposed in this chapter we can gain a new approach to impact research: we have to consider the impact of a social policy measure as an element of public intervention in an already established social field. The intervention constitutes a multistep process, and the impact also constitutes a multistep process. To evaluate a certain policy from the aspect of its impact, we have to consider the whole process as a chain of interrelated effects that form in the last instance the impact of some social policy measure (Kaufmann and Schäfer 1977; Kaufmann

et al. 1978). Moreover, we have to take into consideration that each step of the process is determined not only by the intervention itself, but by a number of additional factors in the field in which the intervention takes place.

In this context, impact research means controlling the effects of the action of a certain actor upon a "reacting field." Thus, desired outcomes have to be discussed from the aspect of both the actor and the participants in the field, and possible impacts must include not only the desired, but also possibly undesired outcomes. Finally, the potential impact has to be explained not only in terms of the focal action, but also in terms of other features of the reacting field: for instance, if we find a correlation between the participation of parents in the kindergarten and their educational behavior at home, we can conclude that an impact of the kindergarten's parents program on their educational skills exists only insofar as other social factors that may explain differences in parental behavior (e.g. education, profession, social networks) have been controlled (Kaufmann et al. 1978, 1979).

Impact research can take place at different levels of the delivery process: we can study for instance the impact of different legal regulations on administration, the impact of administrative measures on delivery systems, the impact of different organizational patterns on social interaction in the delivering act, and finally, the impact of different treatments on the situation or capacities of people in the target population. Impact research is a necessary tool for testing a theory of the operating of social policy, which in itself may be conceived at different levels of abstraction. However, if such a theory is not to disintegrate in the complexity of a general interdependence, some standards of selectivity have to be held constant. These definitions concern (1) a certain complex of political measures, (2) a target population, and (3) a set of legitimations for the defined political measures. Such legitimations may be only "precarious values," but they nevertheless limit the realm of desired outcomes that have to be taken into account.

Insofar as this admittedly ambitious program could be realized, there would be a fair chance for sociology to develop grounded theories for social policy, especially in the social service sector. This would not, of course, discard the influence of existing power structures, but it would explain their operation and contribute to their control.