



March 1978

## The Operation of Professional Journals in Social Work

Duncan Lindsey  
*Washington University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

### Recommended Citation

Lindsey, Duncan (1978) "The Operation of Professional Journals in Social Work," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 2 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol5/iss2/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).



## THE OPERATION OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS IN SOCIAL WORK

Duncan Lindsey

The George Warren Brown School of Social Work  
Washington University

and

Social Analyses of Science Systems  
Cornell University

### ABSTRACT

The concern of this paper is a systematic examination of one of the major social structures developed to foster the growth and regulation of the knowledge construction enterprise in social work-the professional journal. The foci of the analyses are: 1) the normative criteria of editorial board members, 2) the characteristics of the editorial judges, and 3) the factors which influence editorial decision making.

The achievements of science are etched on the pages of the professional journals. To execute the activities required for publication the professional journals have organized editorial boards. From their origin editorial boards have been responsible for defending the scientific literature from charlatans and the like, through the screening out of inadequate or improper contributions. However, with the accelerating demands on limited publication space, especially for the social sciences, editorial boards have come to shoulder a more difficult assignment. In addition to maintaining legitimacy, editorial boards are now responsible for determining standards for the levels of excellence required for publication. The quality of judgement of editorial board members fashion the aesthetic character and methodological precision of the scientific literature (Garvey and Griffith, 1971).

In this discussion I will examine three interrelated components of the journal publication enterprise in social work, psychology and sociology. The primary focus will be on the social work journals, with the other journals serving as a comparative backdrop. The first part of the discussion examines the criteria used by editorial board members in determining which articles are to be allowed to appear in their journal. The second part of the discussion involves an examination of the distinctive qualities of the editorial board members who serve as the panel of judges for the journal. What characteristics give these individuals the "right to sit in judgement"? The last issue requires extending the second part of the discussion and asking what factors determine the influence of those who serve. What are the determinants of power in the halls of editorial review in social work?

The field of social work has less than ten national professional journals. These few journals shoulder the vital function of selecting out the best 15 to 20 per cent of submitted manuscripts for publication. Through publication the social work journals provide two additional functions to the growth of the profession. First, the journals disseminate the most important contributions to the professional audience. Second, the accumulated journal literature becomes the archive for the professional knowledge base.

The performance of the social work journals in providing these functions has not been subject to critical empirical examination. There are several reasons for this paucity of investigation. Perhaps most important is the immense power journal editorial boards are able to exercise. Critical discussion of those in authority could lead to deleterious consequences for the critic. There are other reasons of a less political nature.

### The Selection of Manuscripts

Professional journals are governed by editorial boards. The journal editorial boards serve as a filtration system for both the dissemination of ideas and the construction of knowledge. The first concern of this study is to examine how effectively the filtration system functions. The answer to this question has important consequences for the progress of science. Cole and Cole (1973) indicate that the success of the scientific community is greatly determined, both in terms of the quality and productivity of discoveries, by the effective functioning of the stratification system of science. Since

the dominant structure monitoring movement within the stratification system of science is the organization of editorial boards, the effective functioning of the scientific enterprise is, in large measure, determined by the performance of journal editorial boards.

#### Research Values: Elements of the Normative Criteria

... there does appear to be a relatively high level of consensus as to what constitutes outstanding work, what are important problems to be addressed, and what are acceptable empirical techniques for testing scientific theories. (Cole and Cole, 1973:77)

The weight of available data indicate that the normative criteria of science is the set of factors which most critically influences editorial decision making (Wolff, 1970; Bowen, et al., 1972; Wolff, 1973; Gustin, 1975). My interest in this section is to examine the elements and structure of these normative criteria.

#### The Research

Among journal editors there exists a spectrum of values concerning scientific craftsmanship. To examine the elements and structure of this spectrum I conducted a self report survey of journal editorial board members' emphases when reviewing a manuscript (Lindsey and Lindsey, 1977).

The data revealed wide differences in emphasis on each of the component values among the board members. The distribution of items preference by the editors is displayed in Table 1. The data indicate a wide divergence in emphasis among the elements of the normative criteria (examine the standard deviations). Clearly, there is a limited consensus on the importance of the core normative criteria.

TABLE 1.  
 JOURNAL EDITORS' RANKING OF THE NORMATIVE CRITERIA  
 FOR SCIENTIFIC CRAFTSMANSHIP

Criterion*	Mean	Standard Deviation
The value of the author's findings to the advancement of the field.	5.817	1.353
The grasp of the author's research design on the question investigated.	5.560	1.362
The theoretical relevance of the question investigated.	5.418	1.443
The scholarship demonstrated in the article.	5.392	1.524
The creativity of ideas in the article.	5.185	1.469
The presence of original empirical evidence.	4.957	1.588
The sophistication of the author's research methodology and data analysis.	4.342	1.678
The relevance of the article to the journal's focus.	4.249	1.689
The ethical sense demonstrated by the author.	4.140	2.064
The value of the article's findings to the affairs of everyday social life.	2.889	1.878
The entertainment quality of the essay.	1.510	1.068
The background and reputation of the author.**	1.332	.864
		(N=265)

\*Criteria are displayed in rank order.

\*\*The policy of anonymous review employed by the majority of journals may be responsible for much of this rating.

Approaches to Knowledge Building Across the Disciplines

To examine the methodological emphasis of journal editorial board members across disciplines the editors responses to the methodological preference question were cross tabulated with the separate disciplines. The results are displayed in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
THE METHODOLOGICAL PREFERENCES OF JOURNAL EDITORS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Place a Greater Emphasis on Qualitative Methodology.		FIELD of JOURNAL		
		<u>Sociology</u>	<u>Social Work</u>	<u>Psychology</u>
RESPONSE	Strongly agree	4(5.0%)	23(30.0%)	9(11.5%)
	Agree	9(11.3%)	25(32.5%)	19(24.4%)
	Unsure	16(20.0%)	8(10.4%)	14(17.9%)
	Disagree	37(46.3%)	15(19.5%)	19(24.4%)
	Strongly disagree	14(17.5%)	6(7.8%)	17(21.8%)
		<u>80</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>78</u>
				N = 235
Chi-square = 43.094				
Significance under .001 with 8 df				

The data indicate a significant difference in methodological preference across disciplines. The major difference is the stronger qualitative emphasis among social work editorial board members. Social work professional journal editors express a predominantly qualitative emphasis. The opposite is the case for both sociology and psychology journals.

The difference in methodological preferences among the disciplines may primarily derive from the nature of their subject matter. More specifically, the significant difference among the disciplines here may be the result of the status of research in the social work profession (Germain, 1971). Aaron Rosenblatt (1968) examined the utilization of research among social workers in agencies and found research findings were eschewed by practitioners. When confronted with a difficult case, social workers look to research as the least useful preparation for their actual job performance (Rosenblatt, 1968: 56; Kirk et al., 1976). Aaron Rosen (1969) has indicated that the relation between editors and readers is reciprocal. In this sense, by not publishing empirical research social work editors may have been instrumental in creating an audience unreceptive to empirical research. In addition, Rosen points out that editors withdraw a primary reward for motivating empirical research, i.e., publication, and by so doing create a social climate which is not conducive to research. Social work journal editors may be responding to the proclivities of their professional audience by orienting their publication decisions to the desires of their readers.

There is evidence to suggest that recognition of simple statistics even among social work researchers is marginal, if not critically inadequate (Weed and Greenwald, 1973). The problematic talent in simple statistics among the specialized group of social work researchers studied by Weed and Greenwald suggests either an inadequate preparation in research or an unsympathetic posture toward quantitative methodology. Several authors have lamented these influences on the current status of research in social work (Khan, 1973; Rosenblatt, 1968; Germain, 1971; Loeb, 1960).

#### Limitations of the Data

Knowing the criteria editorial board members utilize in the review process doesn't tell us very much. This is because it is in the application of the criteria where the greatest variation emerges (Bowen, Perloff, and Jacoby, 1972; McReynolds, 1972; Scott, 1974). There is a wide divergence in judgement that results from the applica-

tion of consensually agreed upon criteria. In brief, knowing the criteria for judging manuscripts will not tell us all that much about how manuscripts are accepted or rejected.

The identification of the normative criteria represents a necessary first step for this study of the operation of professional journals. In the next section the focus shifts to the criteria for the selection of the editorial board members or manuscript judges.

#### EMINENCE AND EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Previous discussion has suggested that editors are characterized by the distinction of their own work and by their expertise in the area under review (Zuckerman and Merton, 1971; Cole and Cole, 1973; Gustin, 1975; Lindsey, 1976). If editors are so characterized we would expect to find evidence of this by examining the accomplishments of a sample of editorial board members.

#### Determination of Quality

In the process of assessing the quality of a submitted manuscript the editorial referee employs the normative criteria of scientific craftsmanship. There is common agreement among reviewers regarding the normative criteria against which to judge a manuscript submitted for publication. However, there is little known on exactly how these criteria are applied in the review process. Studies on interrater reliability in this judgement process have been discouraging.

The role requirements of editorial board membership necessitate that member selection criteria include as a basic requirement a record of proven ability to execute high quality scientific work or scholarly inquiry. The editors of the journals included in the earlier mentioned cluster sample were surveyed to determine the criteria their journal employs in the selection of board members. All but 3 of the editors responded. The most frequently and consistently mentioned criteria referred to the expertise and record of high quality performance of the candidate.

#### Research Design

I conducted an investigation of the accomplishments of the editorial board members from the cluster sample of journals used in the previously mentioned study. The effort of this investigation was di-



rected toward collecting data on each individual board member concerning:

- 1) the number of books, articles and monographs produced,
- 2) the number of citations these works had received,
- 3) the type of current professional assignment and
- 4) the highest degree the individual had attained. The analysis of this unobtrusive data should prove useful in examining the composition of editorial boards and their function in the knowledge construction enterprise.

### Findings

The data in Table 3 present the major findings of the survey of the archival data sources. The most obvious findings is that the social work journal editorial boards are consistently composed of individuals who, in comparison to the editors in sociology and psychology, are not distinguished by the excellence or volume of their own contribution to the knowledge base of the field. This presents a problem only to the extent that the editorial board members "sit at the control panel" of the scientific enterprise in social work. The background assumption (as stated earlier) is that social work's knowledge base is scientific. At the bed rock of this assumption is the question of how knowledge is to be validated in the profession. I believe the methodology for building, examining and validating knowledge in social work has to be scientific. The effort of the following analysis begins from this fundamental assumption.

TABLE 3  
 MEDIAN MEASURES OF PRODUCTION AND QUALITY OF CONTRIBUTION  
 TO KNOWLEDGE FOR JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS IN  
 PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIOLOGY

	N	Total Article	Product. Index	Total Citation	Doctoral Degree	Corrected Quality Ratio
<b>PSYCHOLOGY</b>						
J. of Abnormal Psych.	20	5.0	14.6	39.5	100	70.8
J. of Applied Psych.	21	6.1	13.8	68.5	100	88.5
J. of Counseling Psy.	26	6.6	13.1	10.8	100	14.3
J. of Educ. Psychology	15	10.7	16.3	41.0	100	83.7
J. of Pers. & Soc. Psy	19	10.3	16.7	59.5	100	105.4
Overall	101	8.5	15.0	39.3	100	64.6
<b>SOCIAL WORK</b>						
Child Welfare <sup>1</sup>	10	.1	.1	.1	20	.06
Clinical Soc. Work J.	17	2.1	4.5	3.3	41	2.65
J. of Ed. for S. Work	19	1.1	2.0	.9	74	.47
Social Casework	14	.9	1.0	.8	36	.68
Social Work	26	2.7	3.5	2.0	57	1.00
Social Service Review	7	6.0	7.5	6.0	100	8.49
Urban & Soc. Change R.	15	.1	.1	.1	53	.04
Overall	108	1.0	1.5	1.0	54	.64
<b>SOCIOLOGY</b>						
American Sociologist	10	4.3	10.5	24.8	100	32.3
American Soc. Rev.	26	6.6	12.3	42.5	100	67.6
J. of Health & Soc. B.	23	6.0	12.8	15.0	100	19.1
Sociology of Education	20	5.7	8.9	18.7	100	29.7
Social Forces	11	4.0	10.5	27.2	100	47.2
Social Problems	24	5.5	11.1	32.9	100	72.8
Overall	114	5.5	11.5	26.0	100	37.0

Note. Total article= a summation of all of the board members' articles, each divided by the number of authors for the period 1965-1974; production index= a weighted measure of total production, including articles, books, edited books and monographs; corrected quality ratio= a measure of combined quality of performance of the editorial board members in terms of citations to production. (See Lindsey [1976] for further explanation of the measures.)

<sup>1</sup>The Editor of *Child Welfare* reports that, "Child Welfare has no editorial board." Thus, the figures here represent the members of a Publications Advisory Committee.

There are a number of qualifications and careful interpretations which need to be made to fully explicate these findings. In the remainder of this section the findings are elaborated taking into account the differing nature of the social work profession as a practice profession and the problems of comparing it with the more academically oriented fields of sociology and psychology.

Production

Three of the social work journals record median article counts of less than 1. For these journals the majority of the members on the editorial board have never published an article which was abstracted by the major abstracting services. Most of the editorial board members of the journals report involvement in the review process (see Table 4). Consequently, the problematic issue here is the qualifications for judgement which these editorial board members bring to their crucial decision-making task.

TABLE 4  
NUMBER OF ARTICLES REVIEWED DURING THE YEAR BY  
JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

NUMBER REVIEWED	FREQUENCY			
	Psychology	Social Work	Sociology	Total
0	1	11	0	12
1 - 10	10	24	15	49
11 - 15	22	10	14	46
16 - 20	15	7	24	46
21 - 25	12	8	9	29
26 - 40	12	10	8	30
41 - 50	9	6	6	21
51 +	0	3	3	6
	81	79	79	239*
Median = 17				

\*The journal editors were excluded from this sample since they all were responsible for at least a brief review of all articles.

### Quality of Production

Citation counts reveal a low relative showing among social work editorial boards. Citation counts have been used by a number of investigators as a rough measure of the quality of an author's published works. The argument is that if an author's work is of high quality it will be used by others.

Citation measures are also a useful indicator of the cumulative nature of knowledge. If the work occurring in a given field is leading to a cumulative body of knowledge then reference trails between the work of the contributors will be left in the form of citations to that ongoing work. Concern with the knowledge base in social work, as well as in other fields, has often focused on the cumulative nature of knowledge in the field. The low citation count among social work editorial board members is disturbing in this regard for it suggests that among those board members who have published scientific work, the social work contributions have resulted in less cumulative knowledge.

To examine the quality of research produced, a corrected ratio measure of citations to production was constructed. This measure provides an indication of the ratio of citations to published work corrected for volume of production. On this measure social work editorial boards record the lowest scores.

On all of the measures used here, the social work editorial boards consistently record low relative scores. The explanation of this can be attributed to a variety of causes. One of the major explanations is found in the structural arrangements of the editorial boards in the field. The editorial boards in sociology and psychology are dominated by university based professionals. Only the editorial boards in social work contain large numbers of non-university professionals (see Table 5).

Most of the non-university professionals on the social work editorial boards hold administrative positions (see Table 6). Further, these administrative personnel record a surprisingly low performance on all the measures of quality and quantity of scholarly and research effort (see Table 7).

TABLE 5  
 TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT SETTING OF JOURNAL  
 EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

	University	Government	Private
Psychology	86	6	7
Social Work	59	18	23
Sociology	104	4	3
N = 310*			

\*This information could not be located for 13 board members.

TABLE 6  
 TITLE OF POSITION EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS HOLD IN  
 THEIR EMPLOYMENT SETTINGS

	Title of Position					
	Assn't Prof	Assoc Prof	Full* Prof	Admini- strator	Researcher	Direct Service
Sociology	7	24	67	0	6	0
Social Work	12	12	29	34	0	5
Psychology	2	11	76	1	12	2
N = 300	21	47	172	35	18	7

Several of the Full Professors held concurrent positions as Deans or department Chairpersons which are administrative positions. The categorization utilized here was selected in the interest of maintaining the university/non-university break while elaborating by positions held.

TABLE 7

---

MEAN ADJUSTED TOTAL CITATION  
COUNT BY TITLE OF POSITITION

---

Title of Position	Citations*
Assistant Professor	8.33
Associate Professor	23.35
Full Professor	57.19
Administrator	2.29
Researcher	20.37
Direct Service	4.27

N = 300

---

Another unique feature of the social work editorial boards are the presence of non-doctorate professionals. None of the board members in the sociology and psychology journals was without a doctorate. Inspection of Table 3 reveals, however, that the percentage of doctorates on an editorial board does not record a consistent impact. Even though the Clinical Social Work Journal had one of the lowest percentages of doctorates on its editorial board, it achieved one of the highest scores on citation and production measures. The same inconsistent pattern is reflected on several of the other boards.

To retrace, the data reviewed here consistently indicate that the individuals selected for editorial board membership in social work have not achieved the scientific distinction required for board membership in other fields. This finding is important for the knowledge construction enterprise in social work because the editorial board members craft the decisions on what contributions should be added to the knowledge base. The decision is even more critical in the competitive situation which exists in the social work field.

The editorial board members of social work journals are involved in the demanding task of reviewing the large number of submitted manuscripts to select out the best for publication. The consequences of the editorial board members' publication decisions are critical to the validation and construction of a knowledge base in social work. As

indicated earlier, the knowledge base in social work is primarily located in the journal literature. The editorial review boards select what is to be included. The quality and power of judgement necessitated by the role responsibilities of editorial board membership requires the appointment of individuals characterized by their contribution and record of performance. The data reported in this section indicate that the journal editorial boards in social work are not staffed by the quality of distinction which is characteristic of board membership in other fields.

#### DETERMINANTS OF EDITORIAL INFLUENCE IN SOCIAL WORK JOURNALS

How are the publication judgements of editorial boards constructed? Several studies have examined the possible intrusion of non-scientific criteria into the review process (Crane, 1965; Wanderer, 1966). Their findings have been inconclusive. It is difficult to examine the editorial review process primarily because it consists of the combined subjective and confidential review of prominent social scientists. Objective measures of the activities of the closed editorial review board, especially as these measures might indicate the application of particularistic standards have not been accessible. In this section I will take a unique line of inquiry on the question with several indices derived for the most part from publicly available data.

It would be impossible to map out, isolate and control the wide variety of influences on editorial decision making (Bowen, et al., 1972; Whitley, 1970). Unable to examine these factors directly, I will approach the question indirectly and from a somewhat different angle.

Examination of archival data have indicated that on measures of production and quality of contribution to knowledge editorial board members at least from the fields of psychology and sociology are characterized by their scientific achievement. According to the self reports of editors, board members are primarily appointed on the basis of expertise and distinction (Lindsey and Lindsey, 1977; Benedek, 1976). Nevertheless, there is a variation of influence on the review process among editorial board members. Not all board members review the same number of manuscripts, positively recommended on the same percentage of those reviewed, or have the same percentage of journal concurrence with their recommendations (see Table 4). Since board members are appointed primarily on the basis of their achievement, it would be expected that variations in editorial influence would be reflective of variations in distinction and achievement.

The above proposition lends itself to empirical examination. To test this proposition I construct a measure of editorial power to use as a dependent variable and then perform a regression analysis to determine the factors which account for variations in editorial board members. To further explicate the analysis I will construct a path diagram to trace how the effects of the independent variables are transmitted.

### Editorial Power

Editorial power is composed of the number of manuscripts an editorial board member reviews taking into account the frequency with which she/he recommends positively and the number of times his/her editorial board concur with the recommendation. In the Spring of 1975 journal board members were asked several questions to determine their editorial power.

1. About how many articles did you review last year?
2. Approximately what percentage of the articles you reviewed did you finally recommend for publication?
3. About what percentage of your suggestions for publication were followed by the journal?

With the results of these questions, a combined measure of editorial power was constructed. By multiplying each of these components together, an index of the number of articles a reviewer was able to assist toward publication, termed editorial power, is assessed.

$$\text{editorial power} = (N) * (R) * (C)$$

where N represents the number of articles reviewed during the year, R represents the percentage of manuscripts recommended for publication, and C represents the percentage of times the journal concurred with the reviewer's recommendation.

Before proceeding with the analysis several comments about this measure of editorial power are in order. To begin with, it might be objected that since this index multiplies the number of manuscripts reviewed by the percentage positively recommended, it would inflate the score of easy reviewers and deflate the score of the more rigorous reviewers. This criticism rests on the normative assumption that more rigorous reviewers should not have their measured influence deflated by their lower percentage of positive recommendations. The validity of the editorial power index, as it is meant here, does not rest on this normative assumption. The editorial power measure



is a composite empirical index of an editorial board member's ability to assist manuscripts toward publication (see Lindsey, 1977 for further discussion).

The organizational apparatus which should correct for this possible inflation or deflation of editorial power is the office of the editor. Since most of these board members have had extensive review experience and are well known by their editors, the inflated or deflated rate of positive recommendations should be corrected by the rate of journal concurrence (both rates, by the way, are included in the editorial power index).

#### FINDINGS

Normative theory in the field of the sociology of science proposes that a scientist's work ought to be judged primarily for its scientific merit by universalistic standards as it moves through the screening apparatus of the social stratification system of science (Merton, 1957: 550-561; Parsons, 1951: 335). The concern here is to examine data which provide an indirect empirical test of the normative theory as it applies to the scientific enterprise in social work. Within this large theoretical concern, the specific task of this analysis is to identify and assess those factors which best predict the degree of influence an editorial board member exercises in the manuscript review process. To assess that influence a regression analysis on the editorial power index was performed.

The independent variables in the analysis included the several measures discussed earlier (i.e., production, citations, doctorate, etc.). Three of the independent variables were categorical. However, each of these categorical variables broke into natural dichotomies thus permitting their introduction into the regression analysis as dummy variables. In addition, a factor score of "qualitative orientation" was included as an independent variable (Lindsey and Lindsey, 1976, pp. 11-17). To control for curvilinearity, two of the independent variables (production and citations) and the dependent variable were log (base 10) transformed (Edwards, 1976; Blau, 1973, p. 40).

#### THE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Initially data from the fields of psychology, social work and sociology journals were examined together. However, subsequent analysis of the fields independently found large differences. Conse-

TABLE 8  
DETERMINANTS OF EDITORIAL POWER  
FOR SOCIAL WORK JOURNALS

---

	Beta Weight	Simple Correlation
Administrator	.201	-.323
University Based	.453	.458
Doctorate	-.040	.313
Production Index	.319	.394
Citations	.064	.297
Qualitative Orientation	.368	.415
$R^2 = .39$		

---

quently, only the data from social work will be examined here. Table 8 displays the beta coefficients which resulted from the regression analysis. The zero-order coefficients are displayed along with the beta weights in order to permit an exploration of casual explanations.

The standardized beta weights from the regression analysis are inconsistent with the proposition from the normative theory of science that measures of the volume and quality of scientific work should determine the degree of influence an editorial board member will exercise in the review process. The most influential variable in the analysis is university base affiliation. This suggests that controlling all other variables, the factor of university affiliation exerts a very powerful independent influence. Although there is a moderate zero order correlation between editorial power and the possession of an earned doctorate, when other variables are controlled this influence is diminished.

The second most influential variable was the "qualitative orientation" of the individual board member. This is consistent with the finding that editors in social work express a greater qualitative emphasis than in other disciplines. The fact that qualitative orientation exerts such a strong independent influence suggests perhaps unwarrented bias. The production index which indicates quantity of published work controlling for quality, exerts a moderate positive influence. Thus publication production, irregardless of qual-

ity, results in greater influence in the editorial review proceedings. Administrative status exhibits a reversal of influence when all other variables are controlled. That is, although it records a moderate negative influence as a simple correlation, when other variables are controlled it records a small positive influence. Here it appears that administrative status exerts a strong independent influence. The shift in influence between the beta weights and zero order correlations for administrative status, possession of doctorate, and citations highlights the need to more carefully examine the network of influence among the independent and dependent variables.

In order to more carefully explore the network of influence of the independent variables on editorial power, a path analysis was computed (Blalock, 1971, pp. 73-151; Kerlinger and Pedhazur, 1973, pp. 305-331; Leik, 1976). The path analysis allows for tracing out the paths through which the independent variables exert their influence on the dependent variable. In addition, one problem with the regression analysis is the use of a composite index to measure the dependent variable. Following the suggestion of both Otis Duncan (1966) and Warren Solomon (1976), the dependent variable was decomposed. The path diagram calculated for the social work editors is seen in Figure 1. The decomposition of the dependent variable is found in Figure 2. (see path diagram next page)

The path diagram conforms to much of the earlier regression analysis. Production exerts a small direct influence on both the number of articles reviewed and the suggest for publication rate. However, production exerts its strongest direct influence on the recommendations accepted rate. In contrast, citations only has a small negative impact on the recommendations accepted rate. This would suggest that the journals as a whole are responsive to visible evidence of production (number of publications) but not to the quality of that production (the frequency of citations).

The influence of an administrative position is transmitted through the higher rate of suggesting favorably for publication. Likewise, university affiliation registers its influence directly on the rate of favorable suggestions. This suggests that controlling the other factors associated with university affiliation (i.e., production and quality of scientific work), there is a large direct influence toward higher rates of favorable recommendations.

The qualitative orientation factor score transmits its influence through moderately positive paths to both suggest for publication rate

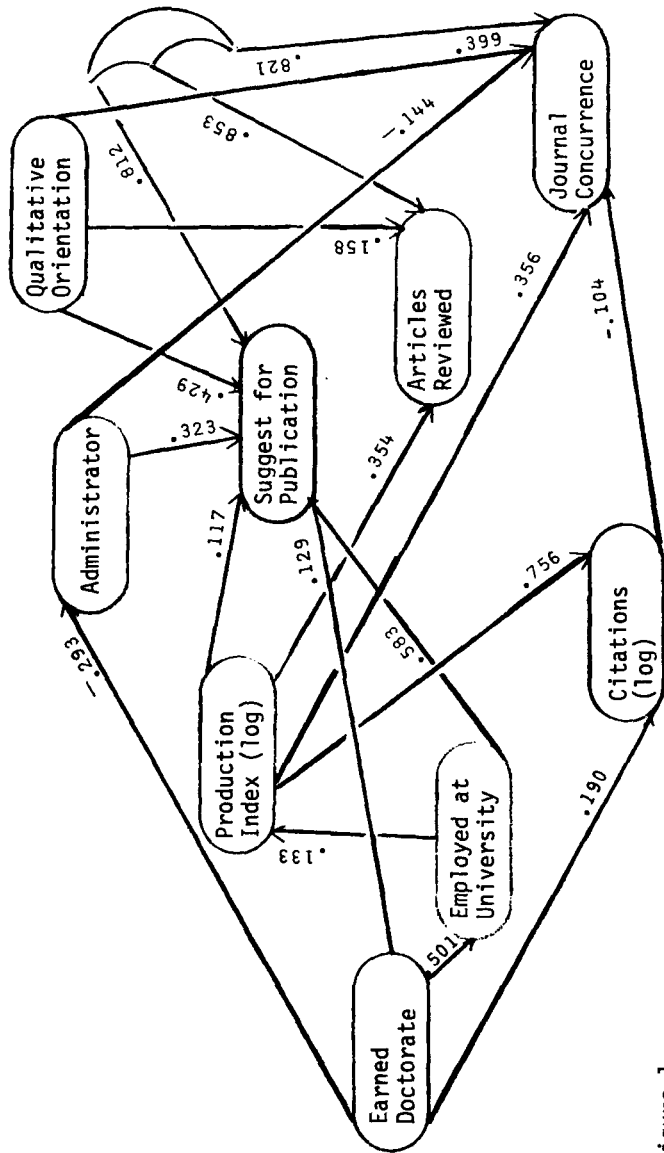


Figure 1.  
 Path diagram of determinants  
 of editorial power in social work.

and recommendations accepted rate. This would indicate that the qualitative bias of social work editorial boards doesn't emerge until the second stage of the review process. Further, there is a small positive influence of qualitative orientation on the number of articles reviewed.

---

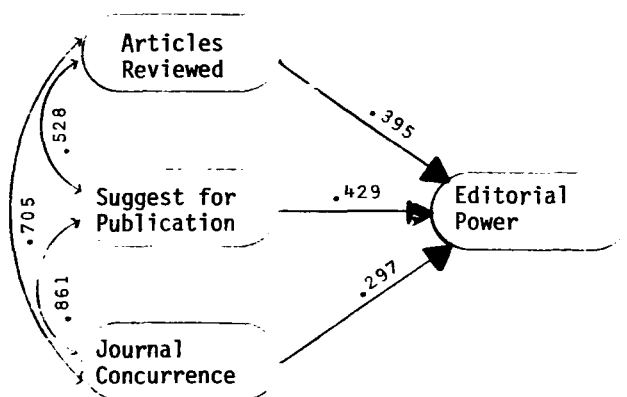


Figure 2.

Decomposition of log editorial power into its components social work journals.

Note: Editorial power is multiplicative composite index of three components. To assess the additive contribution of each component to the composite index, all components and the composite index were log (base 10) transformed. The path coefficients between the separate components and the composite index were then computed according to the formula presented by Duncan (1966, pp. 124-125).

The data indicate the limited utility of normative theory in accurately predicting the operations of editorial boards in this field. Citations which should, according to theory, be of primary influence has only a small positive influence. Instead of universalistic criteria being primary, it appears that a strong qualitative bias prevails.

The positive influence of production on the components of editorial power would suggest that when editorial power is taken into account, there should be an increase on the measures of scientific contribution for editorial boards. To determine if in fact there is a difference on the measures of production and quality of scientific work among board members when influence in the editorial review process is taken into account, weighted values of the measures in Table 7 were calculated. The revised measures reported in Table 7 represent the median scores on these measures when the cases are weighted by the editorial power score. The results indicate that the social work editorial boards as a whole make use of the best talent available to them. That is, when editorial influence is taken into consideration the production and citations measures consistently increase for the journals as a whole.

---

TABLE 9  
MEDIAN MEASURES OF PRODUCTION AND QUALITY OF CONTRIBUTION  
TO KNOWLEDGE ADJUSTED FOR EDITORIAL POWER FOR BOARD  
MEMBERS IN SOCIAL WORK.

---

	Total Article	Product Index	Total Citation	Corrected Quality Ratio
Child Welfare	0	0	.2	.00
Clinical Social Work Journal	2.3	6.9	3.4	2.71
C. of Educ. for Social Work	.8	1.5	.2	.01
Social Casework	1.3	1.3	1.3	2.00
Social Work	6.3	6.9	6.2	5.90
Social Service Review	5.2	3.4	5.3	4.33
Urban & Social Change Review	.1	.1	.2	.14
Overall	3.0	4.3	2.1	2.19

N = 79

---

When the journals are examined individually the data indicate that several of the boards make the best use of available talent. Social Work for example, increases by almost three fold its score on the measures of production and citations when editorial power is taken into account. In contrast, Journal of Education for Social Work and Social Service Review both record reductions. It appears that most of the overall increase on these measures came about as a result of the journal Social Work. Since Social Work appoints a number of board members to achieve regional, sexual, racial and religious balance, it might be questioned as to whether such appointments result in different review decisions for the journal.

#### Final Remarks

In 1915 Abraham Flexner wrote:

"A profession must find a dignified and critical means of expressing itself in the form of a periodical which shall describe in careful terms whatever work is in progress; and it must from time to time register its more impressive performances in a literature of growing solidity and variety. To some extent the evolution of social work towards the professional status can be measured by the quality of publication put forth in its name."

(Abraham Flexner, 1915;590)

With this analysis I have examined the publication review process among the major journals in social work. The data indicate a strong bias in favor of qualitative methods of building knowledge. This bias partly reflects the powerful humanistic current which runs throughout the social work profession. However, the qualitative bias can at times be antithetical to the quantitative spirit of science. Several studies have found a major resistance to empirical research in the practice settings of social service. This resistance is reflected among the editorial boards examined in this study.

In addition, social work has emerged with editorial boards controlling the major professional journals with a view toward remedial education, entertainment, and reaching the widest circulation. The scientific obligation carried by professional journals in the other social sciences has been left stranded except for one or two journals in social work. The staff of the editorial boards in social work are not comparable to those who staff the editorial boards in other fields. Even though several of the journals seem aware of this fact and over

utilize their scholarly and scientific members, this is a limited compensatory approach. What is needed is a policy on the appointment of review board members to these critical positions which takes into consideration the scientific knowledge building function of the professional journals.

---

A number of individuals have provided critical comments on an earlier version of this paper. I would like to thank Martin Bloom, Floyd Bolitho, William Butterfield, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, Joel Fischer, Edwin Fleishman, Tom Gabe, William E. Gordon, Jacqueline J. Jackson, Alfred J. Kahn, David Katz, Shanti Khinduka, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Leslie Leighninger, Deborah McDaniel-Lindsey, John Morris, Martha N. Ozawa, Robert A. Porter, Aaron Rosen, William Short, LeRoy Schultz, Paul Stuart, and Morris Zelditch, Jr. for their comments and suggestions. I have not been able to incorporate all the diverse suggestions nor to heed all the critical comments received. The limitations and errors within this paper are, therefore, my own.

---

#### REFERENCES

- Benedik, Elissa P.  
1976 "Editorial Practices of Psychiatric and Related Journals: Implications for Women," American Journal of Psychiatry 133: 89-92.
- Blalock, Hubert M., Jr.  
1971 Casual Models in the Social Sciences. (ed.) Chicago: Aldine.
- Blau, Peter M.  
1973 The organization of Academic Work. New York: Wiley
- Bowen, Donald D., Robert Perloff and Jacob Jacoby  
1972 "Improving Manuscript Evaluation Procedures," American Psychologist 27(3): 221-225.
- Cole, Jonathan and Stephan Cole  
1973 Social Stratification in Science. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Crane, Diana  
1965 "Scientists of Major Universities," American Sociological Review 30 (October): 699-714.
- Duncan, Otis Dudley  
1966 "Path Analysis: Sociological Examples," American Journal of Sociology 72:1-16.



- Edwards, Allen L.  
 1976 An Introduction to Linear Regression and Correlation. San Francisco, Calif: W.H. Freeman.
- Flexner, Abraham  
 1915 "Is Social Work a Profession?" Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, Forty-Second Annual Session (May 12-19\_\_, Baltimore, Maryland. pp. 576-590.
- Garvey, W.D. and B.C. Griffith  
 1971 "Scientific Communication: Its Role in the Conduct of Research and Creation of Knowledge," American Psychologist 26:349-362.
- Germain, Carel B.  
 1971 "Casework and Science: A Study in the Sociology of Knowledge," (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University).
- Gustin, Bernard H.  
 1973 "Charisma, Recognition and the Motivation of Scientists," American Journal of Sociology 78: 1119-1134.
- Kahn, Alfred, J. (ed.)  
 1973 Shaping the New Social Work. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kerlinger, Fred N. and Elazur J. Padhazur  
 1973 Multiple Regression in Behavioral Research. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Kirk, Stuart A., Michael J. Osmalov, and Joel Fischer  
 1976 "Social Workers' Involvement in Research," Social Work 21(2): 121-124.
- Leik, Robert K.  
 1976 "Casual Models with Nominal and Ordinal Data: Retrospective," in D.R. Heise (ed), Sociological Methodology. pp. 271-275. San Francisco: Jossey Baas.
- Lindsey, Duncan  
 1976 "Distinction, Achievement, and Editorial Board Membership." American Psychologist 33 (11):799-804.

- Lindsey, Duncan
- 1977a "Participation and Influence in Publication Review Proceedings: A Reply." American Psychologist 30(7):579-586.
  - 1977b "The Processing of Self Criticism by Social Work Journals." American Psychologist 30.
- Lindsey, Duncan and Thomas W. Lindsey
- 1977 "The Outlook of Journal Editors and Referees on the Normative Criteria of Scientific Craftsmanship: Viewpoints from Psychology, Social Work and Sociology. Quality and Quantity: European-American Journal of Methodology 11, forthcoming.
- Leob, Martin B.
- 1960 "The Backdrop for Social Research: Theory Making and Model Building," in Leonard Kogan (ed.), Social Science Theory and Social Work Research. Proceedings of an Institute held by the Social Work Research Section of the National Association of Social Workers, June 8-12, 1959. New York: National Association of Social Workers.
- McReynolds, P.
- 1971 "Reliability of Ratings of Research Papers," American Psychologist, 26: 400-401.
- Merton, Robert K.
- 1957 Social Theory and Social Structure. New York: Free Press: 550-561.
- Parsons, Talcott
- 1951 The Social System. New York: Free Press. (pp. 335)
- Rosen, Aaron
- 1969 "Doctorial Education, Professional Culture and Development of Social Work Knowledge," Applied Social Studies 1: 151-159.
- Rosenblatt, Aaron
- 1968 "The Practitioner's Use and Evaluation of Research," Social Work, 13(January): 53-59.

- Scott, William A.  
 1974 "Interreferee Agreement on Some Characteristics of Manuscripts Submitted to the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology," American Psychologist, 29(9): 698-702.
- Solomon, Warren E. and Allan Walters  
 1975 "The Relationship Between Productivity and Prestige of Graduate Sociology Departments: Fact or Artifact," The American Sociologist 10:229-236.
- 1976 Letter of February 17.
- Wabderer, Jules  
 1966 "Academic Origins of Contributors to the American Sociological Review, 1955-1965," The American Sociologist 1 (November): 241-243.
- Weed, Patricia and Shayna Greenwald  
 1973 "The Myth of Statistics," Social Work, 18(2): 113-115.
- Whitley, Richard  
 1970a "The Formal Communications System of Science: A Study of the Organization of British Social Journals," Sociological Review, 16: 163-179.
- 1970b "The Operation of Science Journals: Two Case Studies in British Social Science," Sociological Review, 18(2): 241-258.
- Wolff, Wirt M.  
 1973 "Publication Problems in Psychology and Explicit Evaluation Schema for Manuscripts," American Psychologist, 28(3): 257-261.
- Zuckerman, Harriet and Robert K. Merton  
 1971 "Patterns of Evaluation in Science: Institutionalism, Structure, and Functions of the Referee System," Minerva, 9(1): 66-100.

Carol O'Connell is twenty-one years old. She is an undergraduate student majoring in Sociology and Social Welfare at Rhode Island College. She is dying of leukemia. This is a final paper, written for a course in Human Development and Social Structure. Carol explained that she made it an opportunity to sort out those feelings and processes which she wanted to understand more fully. Having done this, she felt it was important to inform faculty and students in the department about her impending death. She spent the better part of a day at the end of last semester talking and helping us to cope with our own grief and rage. She has consented to share her experience with you as professional colleagues.

Eunice Shatz  
Professor of Social Welfare  
and Sociology