

Notes on a conceptual scheme derived from experimental
data for understanding the relationships between
society and individual human behavior. 1940.

831
1947

MR. M. L. PUTNAM
American Telephone and Telegraph Company
195 Broadway, New York

Dear Put:

I am enclosing a rough draft of our attempts to elaborate on the outline of the research which you sent us recently. The more we thought about the outline you sent us, the more we began to feel that to be meaningful to a group of people unacquainted with our work, the outline should be descriptive and more or less follow the book.

Some of the statements in the outline obviously need to be reworded but I thought that you would be more interested in the general ideas than in the detail of how it is stated.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL FILED IN
Mr. A. LITTON

WJD:F

Enc.

NOTES ON A CONCEPTUAL SCHEME

For some time now there has been a gradual development of certain concepts regarding society and human behavior. The concepts have grown out of various researches in a number of different fields, principally psychiatry, social anthropology, semantics and industrial relations. Furthermore, there have developed various applications of these concepts to specific problems, especially in the work here at Hawthorne. This development has now reached the point where it can be presented as an organized system of interpretation or conceptual scheme.

This system is based upon certain axioms which have been derived from experimental evidence. They are as follows:

1. All society and every organization or group within it has a structure consisting of relationships between individuals and between groups.
2. Each element in the structure is functionally related so that changes in one to some extent affect all others.
3. The relationships which compose the structure are dynamic not static. There are continual gradual processes of change taking place so that a detailed description must always be dated.
4. In spite of the processes of change, the general structure is stable. Minor details may change without altering the general framework. Major changes proceed slowly.
5. The social structure is basically a matter of the behavior of people. The structure has no existence apart from the individuals within it.
6. Each individual can be considered as having a place in the structure and his behavior and orientation are to a considerable extent determined by his position.
7. Changes in structure are accompanied by changes in the orientation of the individuals involved.

2.

8. The reaction of an individual in a given situation is the resultant of his orientation.
9. Statements must be interpreted in terms of the orientation of the individual to a situation rather than as statements of objective facts.

Starting with these postulates it appears possible to interpret all social behavior and all aspects of our society in terms of one unified system. If the data shows that these assumptions are inadequate or otherwise contradictory to the facts, then further axioms or modifications can be introduced.

BEG:MB

9/6/59