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THE EXPANDING ARRAY OF HUMAN
SERVICE PERSONNEL

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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the impact upon social work and the social
welfare services of the various types of personnel being produced by the
expanding human service education programs that have recently appeared
in colleges and universities throughout the country. It also considers
some possible responses by the social work profession, by social work
education, and by the social welfare field to these developments.

Many new kinds of human service education programs are being
developed at the community college, baccalaureate, and graduate levels.[*]
The titles of the new programs are quite diverse and include community
psychology, applied behavioral sciences, family therapy, and social
services. The graduates of these programs are moving into human service
agencies in increasing numbers where they are playing a variety of
roles. Since they are relatively new phenomena, the nature and purposes
of these programs are not widely known or understood. However, their
graduates appear to share some common purposes and characteristics with
social workers while, at the same time, the potential for competition or
conflict exists.
    The purpose of this paper is to examine the potential impact of the
graduates of the emerging human service programs on social work and the
social services and to consider some possible responses by social work
to these developments.

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[*] For more detailed descriptions of these programs and discussion of
their particular significance for social work education, see the
author's previous works (Brawley, 1981a; 1981b).

Definitions of Human Services:

     Human services is a term that gained fairly wide currency during the 1970's. However, it has many meanings. It is used by some writers as a synonym for social welfare services, broadly defined (Morris, 1974, p. 520). Other writers imply a scope of concern and activity that goes beyond what are usually regarded as social welfare services.

> Human service organizations have permeated the major
> social institutions of education, health, employment,
> religion, government, justice, recreation, and the
> family. Their generation in the 1960s resulted from
> the inability of those institutions to meet human needs
> and the demands by black citizens, students, the organized
> poor, and civil libertarians for new and better responses
> to those needs. The multiple demands for services and the
> jobs that go with them led to the development of many
> different service entities staffed with personnel widely
> disparate in education and training. (Alexander, 1977,
> p. 844)

In some instances, activities that lie well outside conventional definitions of social welfare or even public service, such as hotel and restaurant services, are included (Burns, 1971). This type of definition is unusual, however.

     In other writings, the term human services takes on a normative as well as descriptive tone, implying desirable new patterns of people-serving or people-processing organizations, usually involving some commitment to coordination of services.

> ...Society and its caregivers have begun to
> emphasize the common rather than the unique
> needs motivating persons and the measures
> necessary for their fulfillment. Thus, the
> increasing tendency to designate a community's
> variety of educational, health, and social
> welfare interventions as human services reflects
> both a discontent with existing practice and a
> recognition of the common elements underlying
> the helping actions of diverse professional
> caregivers. As a result, the long-adhered-to
> distinctions between the problems germane to a
> psychiatric clinic and to a family service agency

and the traditional distinctions between the
functions of different mental health professionals
have become increasingly artificial. (Demone and
Schulberg, 1975, p. 269)

Some examples of this normative approach are explicitly ideological and
refer to a "human services movement" which is viewed in some
relationship to other recent movements like community mental health, new
careers, community participation, and services integration (Chenault and
Burnford, 1978, p. 3).

Referring to the confusion of definitions, implicit definitions,
and connotations that surround the term human services in the
professional literature across professional fields, Chenault and
Burnford (1978) observe that:

At the community, state, and federal levels of human
service delivery, the term human services is used to
refer to such systems as health, mental health, child
and family services, corrections, public aid, and the
like. Field practitioners consider the term to apply
to a combination of helping systems, whereas in the
university, those who use the term generally are re-
ferring to a single department or field--the field
of their own expertise. Thus, the faculty of a school
of social work generally consider human services to be
their field of expertise; while at the same university,
the faculty of a psychology department, a criminal
justice institute, or an urban studies department often
have the same impression that human services is their
field. (p. 46)

This tendency to assume that the human services constitute the area
of concern of one's own profession can readily be identified within
social work. Two simple examples will serve to illustrate this
thinking. The 1979 Annual Conference of the National Federation of
Student Social Workers carried the title, "Human Services: Tactics for
Action" and the 3rd Annual Social Workers in Politics Conference,
sponsored by NASW in 1980, was concerned with "Politics and Human
Services: Strategies for Change."

Social Work and the Human Services

Not too long ago, in a special issue of Social Work devoted to the

future of the social work profession, Briar (1974) wondered what role social work would play in the future development of the human services. He concluded that the answer would depend on the degree to which social work was willing to expand its definition of its role "to incorporate more of what is subsumed in human services, and then to support a broadened definition with training, practice research, and professional recognition." (p. 516) He cited a significant current trend in this direction.

Briar (1974) noted that, in the meantime, "separate training programs for a human service profession outside social work are springing up" and he expressed the opinion that "the time for social work to make a strong move in this area may be running short, if it is deemed desirable that we play a central role." (p. 516)

This tendency of social workers to view the broad field of human services as providing an opportunity for expansion of its activities is reflected in an article by Vigilante (1974) in the same issue of Social Work. Vigilante noted that, because of their typically generalized functions, social workers have always tended to develop new practice roles in new settings, most recently in such settings as community legal services, drug treatment programs, private industry, and new types of health care facilities. He observed that, while social workers will be competing with other professionals for positions in these new settings, "if the profession maintains a posture of flexibility in response to the newly opened opportunities in the human services, much room will exist for MSWs, BSWs, and paraprofessionals." (p. 644)

While this rather sanguine view of the employment opportunities represented by the broad human services field may be questioned, it nevertheless represents a point of view shared by many professions and disciplines besides social work. As Chenault (1978) has observed "... each of the helping professions and fields is naturally responding to the contemporary human services movement by broadening its training perspective and scope of interest into other professional roles and fields related to its own." (p. 213)

This phenomenon is quite noticeable within colleges and universities where, in addition to the emergence of new programs in such areas as gerontology, criminal justice, and family therapy, "there has been refocusing of many departmental and college curriculum offerings with emphasis on preparation for service roles." (Hokenstad, 1977, p. 54)

What we are seeing is, in some instances, interpenetration of professional domains and, in others, competition for new territory. Various professions and disciplines are expanding their areas of concern and new professions or occupational groups are emerging. Not surprisingly, "As the separate professional fields expand their professional interests in order to adapt to the changing human services movement, they will inevitably bump into one another within the larger community." (Chenault, 1978, p. 213) The nature and consequences of this collision, whether gentle or forceful, constitute the major focus of this paper.

The Nature of Human Service Education Programs

The great majority of human service education programs are housed in two-year community or junior colleges. However, others are being developed by four-year colleges or universities and a few by organizations that are not traditional higher education institutions, for example, the College of Human Services in New York and the California School fo Professional Psychology.

Since community college programs in the human services have been around since the mid-sixties, a reasonable amount of information is available about them (Council on Social Work Education, 1970; Swift, 1971; Brawley and Schindler, 1972). Furthermore, sufficient time has passed since their emergence to permit some consideration in the literature of their significance (e.g., Brawley, 1975). The same cannot be said for either baccalaureate or graduate level human service education programs which are much newer phenomena. It should be borne in mind, however, that many of the issues that have emerged in relation to community college programs are relevant to human service education programs at all levels.

It is difficult to determine exactly how many community college human service programs there are since available listings tend to be incomplete. However, based on an analysis of available data, the total is probably close to the 400 estimated by the Southern Regional Education Board (Jacobs, 1979).

Several surveys have been made of these programs in recent years, all with fairly consistent findings (Schindler, 1972; True and Young, 1974; Claxton and McPheeters, 1976; Brawley, 1981a). For example, as one would expect, preparation for employment is the primary goal of almost all programs, with preparation for transfer to four-year college or university second, and career advancement for employed human service

workers third in importance. The job titles of program graduates are very diverse, including such examples as Drug and Alcohol Counselor, Day Care Assistant, Psychiatric Counselor, Group Leader, and Social Service Aide. In general, they seem to be clustered in the social service, mental health and child care fields at the aide, assistant or technician levels. Supervisors of community college program graduates give high ratings to their work performance (True and Young, 1974; Hirayama, 1975).

As is the case with the human service paraprofessional group as a whole (Austin, 1977, p. 187), a majority of the students in community college human service programs identify strongly with social work and, among those (a significant proportion) who choose to continue their education at the baccalaureate level, the greatest number seem to opt for undergraduate social work programs (Brawley, 1981a).

It has been fairly clearly demonstrated by now that the paraprofessional (aide or associate degree technician) can make a valuable contribution to the social services (Sobey, 1970; Gartner, 1971; Grosser, Henry and Kelly, 1969; Hirayama, 1975; Austin, 1977). The very high proportion of minority and low-income persons among the paraprofessional ranks provides social work with a prime opportunity to involve these groups in social service roles and, subsequently, to welcome many into full professional membership.

The movement of large numbers of graduates of community college programs in mental health, social service, child care, and the like into four-year colleges and universities is one of several reasons for the emergence of new bachelor's degree programs that emphasize preparation for employment in the human services (True and Young, 1974).

Very little is known about the number, the nature, and the purposes of these programs since they are so new. In fact, it is quite difficult to locate them since, as Chenault and Burnford (1978) remark in relation to graduate-level human service programs, there are no national registries or membership organizations (p. 43). However, this is likely to change with the emergence of the newly-created Council for Standards in Human Service Education.

A recent survey of a sample of these programs found that most programs are quite small with some having as few as five, eight or eleven students, although one program had a student enrollment of 600 (Brawley, 1980, pp. 47-65). As was the case in community college programs, females outnumber males by a sizable margin (p. 52).

Most program purposes are stated in rather general terms, for example, to prepare undergraduate generalists for employment in the human services. Those programs that use terms other than human service refer to such fields of service or helping activities as Community Psychology, Mental Health, Public Health, Counseling or Special Education. In general, there is a great deal of overlap between the reported job titles of baccalaureate and community college human service program graduates (Brawley, 1980, p. 54).

Despite the apparent prevalence of psychologists among the faculty of baccalaureate human service programs and the reportedly strong identification of students with psychology, social work is reported to be the area chosen by the majority of those students who pursue graduate study (Brawley, 1980, p. 55).

Burnford and Chenault (1978) carried out a survey in 1977 of 130 graduate level programs that identified themselves as human service programs. The diversity of programs that they identified (social work, public health, public administration, educational leadership, community psychology, urban and regional planning, among others) made it exceedingly difficult to offer many general statements with confidence. Burnford and Chenault (1978) concluded that it was probably unrealistic to cluster such a diverse group of programs within a common classification (human services) and expect to be able to identify common characteristics in anything but the most impressionistic way.

What did emerge is that graduate level programs that identify themselves with the human services are generally rooted in some established profession or discipline. Most programs tend not to be entirely new but instead are modifications of existing programs, with new titles and perhaps one or two new courses. Where new programs are created, this is usually accomplished by the reassignment of available faculty, usually within departments.

One trend that the survey revealed in terms of program purposes was the broadening of focus of a great many programs, probably reflecting similar trends within their own practice communities. For example, programs are shifting from a focus on mental retardation to the broader developmental disabilities; adult education is becoming lifelong learning; drug and alcohol abuse programs are becoming substance abuse programs.

Burnford and Chenault (1978) note that this trend reflects similar movements toward integration of the human services occurring at the

Federal level and within certain states and within the professional literature of such fields as mental health, social work and public administration. To some degree, the emergence of these trends toward a human service perspective seems to have provoked some corresponding changes in some segments of graduate education.

Issues and Implications

Briggs' (1973a) prediction that "professional social workers will find themselves working alongside a wide variety of individuals representing differing backgrounds, levels of achievement, and professional orientations in the provision of services" (p. 28) seems accurate. Many of these new human service workers can be expected to possess considerable skill and knowledge that will enable them to make a significant contribution to meeting human needs. At the same time, they will compete with trained social workers for a wide range of jobs and, if we believe that social workers have more to offer in some settings or for certain types of jobs, we will simply have to demonstrate this. Having to compete for certain types of jobs is not entirely new to social work, of course. In certain settings, social workers have been competing on an equal footing with other professionals for some time. For example, in some mental health services, social workers compete with clinical psychologists and a variety of persons with counseling backgrounds for essentially the same jobs.

Of course, it would be naive to assume that job requirements will be established solely on the basis of demonstrated competence or objective matching of education and job functions. Such decisions may be taken into the political arena, particularly if human service programs or specialized clusters of them establish a clear identity or community of interest. In such cases, social work must be prepared to deal with the issue in these terms. However, a necessary (though not always sufficient) part of the ammunition needed for political battles is convincing evidence in support of one's cause.

It is probably not realistic for social work to take on all of the competing human service workers in an all-out battle for exclusive rights to certain areas of practice. Such an all-or-nothing approach is unlikely to be successful for social work, particularly in those areas of practice deemed appropriate for the undergraduate social worker.

What is probably more realistic as well as more constructive, is for social work to commit itself to an approach that seeks an appropriate and demonstrable matching of worker competence to job

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requirements. Adopting a total system perspective which recognizes the existence of other participants in the human service enterprise, many with valuable contributions to make, the profession would be well advised to develop partnerships with those other groups that are willing to commit themselves to the same responsible approach to the specification of job requirements.

Collaboration between social work and such groups has much more likelihood of achieving the goal that both share--assurance that appropriate educational preparation is required for human service jobs. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the various groups need not be competing for the same jobs in a properly differentiated model of staff deployment. Both groups lose when failure to fill jobs differentially with persons who have the necessary preparation includes filling skilled jobs with the totally unprepared. We need to continue our efforts to refine our conception of the team model of social service delivery and take the steps necessary to implement this model on a wider basis. The degree to which we can exercise leadership in the task of structuring the social services to make sense out of the present array of personnel, with the purpose of providing more efficient and effective services, we will enhance our ability to influence future developments.

Social work can be the center that holds in a basically chaotic situation. It can be an integrating and organizing force. It can play a critical role in making sense out of the currently confusing mix of personnel in the human services. If not social work, who should be responsible for developing systems for deploying the range of available personnel? Rather than narrow-minded turf protection and self-serving expansionism, making a constructive contribution to the clarification of the situation and working toward better ways of meeting people's needs are more worthy activities for social work. As Briar (1974) has observed, to the degree that social work's responses to issues of role definition in the human services are guided by either conservative or expansive self-interest, "they will be less credible than if based on a perspective of social work's mission that addresses human need and public interest" (p. 516).

This leadership role could also be manifested in our willingness to share our knowledge, skills and perspectives with our human service colleagues. If, as we believe, we have something valuable to offer, this surely is worth sharing with others who are engaged with us in meeting people's needs.

Much has been done in this regard under Title XX and other training programs. Regardless of the future of Title XX training, social workers should act out their enabling philosophy and their commitment to improved services for clients by doing what they can to assist their human service colleagues (who are not going to go away) to achieve as high a level of proficiency as possible. On the other hand, if the relationship between social workers and other human service workers is an adversary one, there are likely to be few winners and our clients are unlikely to be among them.

Graduate level social workers have typically moved quite quickly into supervisory and other administrative roles in the social services and have had to work with a wide range of persons with diverse educational backgrounds. However, they have lacked specific preparation for these roles. The developments outlined in this paper confirm earlier conclusions that steps need to be taken by schools of social work to prepare graduate students for administrative, supervisory and training roles in settings where teams of diverse personnel are likely to be engaged in the provision of social services (Purvine, 1973).

Briggs (1973b) has noted that, in the practice field, it is not the absence of adequately tested models of staff differentiation that has delayed their introduction in the social services but the attitudes of social workers that have blocked change (p. 6). Similarly, within social work education, Sobey (1973) has asserted that faculty resistance to teaching new models of practice has been a major barrier to preparation of students for new practice models (p. 61).

Several years ago, CSWE published the findings of a study that concluded that CSWE and schools of social work should give more attention to the preparation of graduate level students for work with other types of social welfare personnel. It was also recommended that the schools should deal more adequately with differential use of social work manpower (Purvine, 1973).

There is very little evidence that these recommendations have had much impact yet. A recent CSWE study of education for social work administration noted that there remains a "marked discrepancy between the number of social workers employed in administrative positions (50%) or performing administrative functions (91%) and the number of students enrolled in administrative specialization in schools of social work (4%)" (Dumpson, Mullen and First, 1978, p. 35). When asked what efforts were being made to attract students to the administration

specialization, 70 percent of the responding schools stated that they made no such effort (pp. 22-23).

Gummer (1979) has recently warned us about the consequences of our failure to take more seriously the needs fo the public social services, including the need for better prepared supervisory and administrative personnel. He notes that, among the consequences of social work's disregard for the needs of the public agencies, many supervisory, administrative, support and executive positions within state systems "that formerly required an MSW have been declassified" and, at the federal level, "professional social workers have been significantly 'reorganized' out of key policy and decision-making roles during the last decade" (p. 14).

The failure of graduate social work education to deal with the fact that the great majority of graduate social workers, but especially those being specifically prepared for administrative roles, will be involved with a wide variety of personnel is illustrated by a fairly recent bibliography for social work administration, compiled by a respected social work scholar and published by CSWE (Patti, 1976). It includes scarcely any works that deal with the nature and deployment of different kinds of social service personnel. That this is probably not a deliberate omission but an oversight is no less alarming. It seems to reflect the prevailing mind-set within social work and indicates that we have some way to go if we are to learn to work effectively with the range of colleagues we are likely to find in the human services fields.

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