



The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 15
Issue 2 June

Article 10

May 1988

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Recommended Citation

Dressel, Paula; Waters, Michelle; Sweat, Mike; Clayton, Obie Jr.; and Chandler-Clayton, Amy (1988) "Deprofessionalization, Proletarianization, and Social Welfare Work," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 15 : Iss. 2 , Article 10.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol15/iss2/10>

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Deprofessionalization, Proletarianization,
and
Social Welfare Work*

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In this paper we explore the personnel transformations which have occurred in social welfare work. Specifically, we examine the tensions between the dynamics of professionalization and deprofessionalization and how these trends have impacted upon those who work in the social welfare enterprise. Another concern of the paper is the effect of the proletarianization of social welfare work in the face of increasing efforts of some to create professional standards and to solidify the position of professionals in agencies. These struggles are examined in terms of their ability to affect the likelihood of both worker unionization and worker-client political coalitions.

In 1983 the Georgia State Senate honored, as social worker of the year, a former maid, cook, babysitter, and laundry worker who is presently director of a shelter for the homeless. Prior to this accolade, the 49-year-old Black woman had been presented

*An earlier draft of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, Washington, D.C., August, 1985. All authors contributed equally to the manuscript. Thanks to Gerri Moreland for her assistance on the project.

the highest award for professional service from the Georgia Conference on Social Welfare. In an interview the honoree remarked, "The only difference between us [service providers] and them [service recipients] is we've got a job, and they don't" (Graham 1983, p. 2-F).

Her comment was meant to highlight similarities in peoples' character, whatever their social position. However, both her remark and her personal history open up a larger question in social welfare theory and practice: just how similar are contemporary social welfare workers and their clients? Its answer holds significant implications for understanding the occupational dynamics of the social work profession and relationships between workers and their clients.

Welfare workers in the U. S. have not always been typified by the aforementioned honoree. In the mid-to-late 1800's the woman who performed charity work—White, Black or Jewish—frequently came from a better off, if not wealthy, family. She was labeled, somewhat perjoratively, a Lady Bountiful, "the charitable lady of wealth and social position" whose task was to offer moral guidance to the worthy poor (Becker, 1964, p. 59). She almost surely had never been a maid herself, and she may even have employed one to perform her own domestic chores.

Certainly, not all contemporary social welfare workers fit the honoree's profile, either. But the type of people recruited to welfare work has shifted in the past century. So, too, have the auspices of many social welfare undertakings, typically from private charity organizations to government-funded agencies. Concurrently welfare work has been transformed from a largely volunteer effort by charitable women of social status to paid employment by individuals whose wages represent their livelihood. How have these changes come about, and what implications do they have for the contemporary social welfare enterprise? This article is an attempt to chronicle how personnel transformations have occurred in social welfare work in the twentieth century. In order to understand that phenomenon in its complexity, it is also necessary to describe transformations in the nature of social welfare work that have both preceded and accompanied shifts in the personnel who staff the welfare enterprise.

In the late 1800s, the activities of social welfare were increasingly believed to require greater rationalization. The shift in thinking gave rise to a new ideology termed “scientific philanthropy” (Bremner, 1956). This ideology implied a quest for particular skills and techniques of efficient case management and other social welfare endeavors. The changes which took place during this time paved the way for the professionalization of social welfare practitioners (Lubove, 1977). Gradually volunteer workers were displaced in philanthropic ventures by paid employees. This shift occurred because it was increasingly believed that those involved with the work should be specially trained. Consequently, welfare work was transformed from an avocation into an occupation. Throughout this century, trained social welfare workers, and especially those holding social work degrees, have sought professional status. The quest has been affected at times favorably, at other times negatively, by such factors as social policies, labor shortages, organizational changes, and public perceptions of the work itself, to name a few. Consequently, the issues and tensions we discuss below, which emerged in private charity work and later carried over into public social welfare, are recurrent themes within social work practice.

Two important trends—deprofessionalization and proletarianization—have challenged professionalization and facilitated the transformation of welfare work. Deprofessionalization refers to the reduction of education or training requirements necessary for employment. Proletarianization signifies the deskilling of work tasks. In this article we delineate how these trends are inter-related and what impact they have on the social welfare labor market and workplace.

Two specific periods of the past century in public social welfare are most noteworthy for welfare work struggles. The first is the decade of the 1930's that witnessed the development of major public relief initiatives and a shift in the locus of charitable efforts from the private to the public sector. The second significant time period began with a resurgence of federal anti-poverty efforts in the 1960's and persists to the present as the spectre of a fiscal crisis endangers those and other programs. However, we have chosen to focus only on the latter time period in order

to provide the detail sufficient to document our theses. The de-professionalization and proletarianization of welfare are not issues that only recently emerged; rather, they accompanied the development of federal public relief in the 1930s and have been sustained by federal legislation and the vagaries of the private sector labor market since that time.

Personnel Transformation

Since the 1930s public welfare efforts of the federal government have expanded alongside the activities of private charities. Personnel demands from both labor markets have not been met by professionally trained social workers. Instead, periodic critical shortages of personnel with Master of Social Work degrees (MSW's) have always been addressed through the use of non-professional workers (Spano, 1982; Fisher, 1980; Transue, 1980; Gartner, 1971). Most recently, the demand for MSWs accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s with the expansion of domestic social policies. During this time a number of factors converged that collectively paved the way for the growth of low-skilled, low-wage work within the social welfare industry. These included a shortage of professionally trained social workers, a worrisome surplus population (i.e., the poor), a socially activist federal government, and an intensifying fiscal crisis (Oppenheimer, 1975). Professionally trained persons were readily absorbed into the labor market, but still all available social work positions could not be filled with professionals. At the same time political demands of poor people were being aired with growing frequency and volume. The stage was set for some ingenious pieces of federal legislation that addressed both of these problems simultaneously and that have far-reaching implications for the current transformation of social welfare personnel and their work. The ideology of indigenous "paraprofessionalism" was given impetus and legitimized through a series of social policies in the mid-1960s. Indigenous paraprofessionalism refers to the creation of work in the social welfare industry for members of the surplus population who themselves are eligible for or receiving welfare services and benefits. Successes with paraprofessionals in smaller efforts such as Mobilization for Youth, the New Careers Development Project of NIMH, and Project CAUSE of the

U. S. Department of Labor in the early 1960s laid the groundwork for more broad-based paraprofessional utilization (Gartner, 1971). The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 called for "maximum feasible participation" by the poor in community services; later amendments reinforced the development of entry-level employment opportunities and called for educational assistance and advancement opportunities for indigenous paraprofessionals. Debate surrounded the need to alter civil service regulations and professional standards in order to achieve employment and advancement of the poor. In effect, the processes that produced the deprofessionalization of social welfare work in the 1960s were symbolically packaged as maximum feasible participation, new careers, and target group empowerment for the poor.

Other federal legislation followed the model of the Economic Opportunity Act. Openings were made in the welfare workplace for paraprofessionals or aides in education, juvenile delinquency projects, allied health programs, neighborhood crime prevention activities, rehabilitation services, and public welfare agencies (Brager, 1969; Gartner, 1971). In short, a combination of economic conditions and political pressures not only created a demand within the welfare state for paraprofessionals but also helped supply the workers from the surplus population.

The creation of low-paying, low-skilled jobs in social welfare work was timely in the 1960s as a strategy of job creation and political appeasement packaged as citizen participation. The same strategy is also timely in the 1980s whereby deprofessionalization is also being used as a vehicle for fiscal retrenchment. It is timely in the 1980s as well as a strategy of fiscal retrenchment. Recent fiscal troubles of states and the federal government have prompted many state civil service commissions to undertake job reclassification in the social services (Karger, 1983; Pecora and Austin, 1983). Reclassification is a further attempt to deprofessionalize and deskill social welfare work by reducing educational requirements for public social service jobs, combining work tasks to eliminate functions mandating higher levels of education, and breaking jobs into smaller tasks that can be organized in assembly-line fashion.

These changes prompted professional social workers to ac-

tion in order to protect their own status and jobs. Not only has the National Association of Social Workers opposed reclassification efforts (Tambor, 1983); it is also seeking state licensure of social work practitioners (NASW News, 1985) in order to consolidate the position of its credentialed membership. Limited evidence suggests that professionals may for the time have succeeded in holding their ground, as the proportion of aides to social workers appears to have peaked in 1979 and has fallen off gradually since then (figured from U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1982, table B-20).¹

Work Transformation

The welfare industry's adoption of private sector labor practices has accelerated in response to legislation promoting the use of paraprofessionals and to the growing fiscal crisis of the state, with its consequent cutbacks in spending for social programs. Perhaps more than ever before, the state is demanding control over and efficiency and accountability from the social welfare enterprise. Social welfare agencies have responded to the cry for cost-savings by employing strategies already proven profitable for private sector operations (see Patry, 1978). Changes in social welfare work that parallel private sector dynamics include the restructuring of welfare tasks and the adoption of measures promoting work efficiency.

The restructuring of welfare work has meant dividing it into smaller, simpler components. This has produced an increased specialization of tasks among welfare workers, elaborated hierarchies within and among social welfare agencies, and opened the way for the employment of low-skilled low-wage workers. In recent years social welfare work has been restructured in at least three major ways, through: (a) the separation within organizations of eligibility screening and intake procedures from casework functions (e.g., Finch, 1976; Funciello and Sanzillo, 1983; Piliavin and Gross, 1977; Vondracek et al., 1974); (b) the separation within organizations of circumscribed problem-solving activities and resource assistance from long-term counseling and casework (e.g., Finch, 1976), with the former functions performed by case aides, and (c) the separation across agencies of income maintenance activities and social service provision (Piliavin and Gross, 1977; Wyers, 1980).

The foregoing separations have elaborated agencies' hierarchies in two ways. First, the separation of income maintenance activities from social service provision created a two-tiered status system of welfare agencies. Kadushin (1958) noted some time ago that the prestige of an occupation is closely related to the nature of its clientele. Because income maintenance organizations by definition serve the poor, whereas social service agencies may also draw from the middle classes, the former occupy the lower stratum in welfare agency hierarchies. Further, the separation of tasks within agencies created a two-tiered status system of welfare workers, with screening and intake workers and case aides on the bottom. The work of employees in income maintenance organizations and the work of intake and case aide personnel in all welfare organizations consequently has come to be viewed as less skilled, requiring less education or training, and thus worthy of lower pay.

Service agencies have also responded to the cry for accountability and cost-savings by placing greater emphasis on service efficiency. The measures adopted to promote efficiency are not unlike those used to extract greater profit from the manufacturing assembly-line. First, some agencies have changed their product from one that is complex to manufacture and evaluate to one that is more readily created and assessed. That is, they have switched emphasis from less tangible casework functions to more tangible and simpler forms of service delivery, such as transportation services and meal provision (Finch, 1976; Gilbert, 1983). Or they have moved away from services altogether in favor of an income strategy (Adams and Freeman, 1979). The more readily quantifiable "products" (actually inputs) generate noticeable and quick evidence of agency productivity, advantages not lost on political decision-makers (Binstock and Levin, 1976). Further, the shift in emphasis complements the separation of agency tasks and the reclassification efforts of state civil service commissions that were discussed above. It also gives administrators and policy analysts greater control over the nature of social welfare activities than they had in the past (Adams and Freeman, 1979; Groulx, 1983).

Second, some service agencies have in effect speeded up the assembly belt without hiring more workers to staff the line (e.g., Kaufman, 1982). Some workers have accommodated larger ca-

seloads by streamlining movements through the use of intake questionnaires, structured interviews, limited objectives, case recording forms, and group work rather than individual assistance (Eldridge, 1982; Patry, 1978). Alternatively, the inability or unwillingness of workers to employ various coping strategies in the face of faster-paced work has resulted in the supposedly-professional malady of "burnout" that is structurally no different from working class alienation (Braverman, 1974; Dressel, 1984; Karger, 1981; Lipsky, 1980).

A third agency response to the demand for efficiency and accountability is the growing use of computers for work such as intake and diagnosis that heretofore has been performed by service personnel (Boyd et al., 1978; Schoech and Arangio, 1979; Vondracek et al., 1974). Automation of the service assembly line effects cost-savings by replacing service professionals and paraprofessionals with still lower-paid secretarial technicians. Computers also serve supervisory functions, such as setting workers' schedules and monitoring their progress (Schoech and Arangio, 1979).

The reorganization of welfare work and the adoption of efficiency measures are both cause and effect of the deprofessionalization of social welfare work. These transformations are critical and timely because they enable the state to obtain personnel cost-savings, afford administrators and political decision-makers more control over the nature of social welfare work, and open up jobs for a growing surplus population.

The foregoing changes in work organization and worker classification have produced social welfare agencies that are increasingly hierarchical in structure. An examination of who fills what positions in welfare organizations reveals that the social welfare labor force mirrors that of the larger society. Scattered data on the breakdown of workers by gender and race into administrators, professionals, and paraprofessionals (e.g., National Association of Social Workers, 1984; U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1977; U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1982) allow two generalizations to be made. First, men and whites are more likely than women and Blacks, respectively, to be found disproportionately in administrative positions. Second, while the social welfare enterprise is majority female, the lowest rung is overwhelmingly

female. In other words, white men fare best in social welfare work, as they do in the private sector labor force. They are more likely than their race/sex counterparts to control others. As superordinates, their work has less tendency to be fragmented and alienating, and they will be higher paid than those whom they supervise. Alternatively, women of all racial/ethnic groups and men from oppressed racial/ethnic groups are more likely to shoulder the new burdens of a transformed welfare workplace. Workers who fill the newly created paraprofessional positions come disproportionately from their ranks. Their work is likely to be deskilled and poorly paid. As task rationalization and scientific management have infused social welfare organizations, the division of labor and managerial functions have broken down along the familiar lines of gender and racial/ethnic stratification found in the private sector workplace (Wright et al., 1982).

Implications for Workers and Clients

What are the implications of these shifts in welfare personnel and their tasks? Numerous issues can be raised, but we will focus specifically on two. First, Braverman (1974) has argued that the degradation (deskilling or proletarianization) of the labor process in the private sector fuels the drive for worker unionization. Similarly, do deprofessionalization and proletarianization set the stage for a strong union movement among social welfare workers? Second, Piven and Cloward (1982) have maintained that increasing demographic similarities between welfare workers (especially paraprofessionals) and clients create the potential for worker-client political coalitions. Indeed, legislative mandates for the use of paraprofessionals (e.g., the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964) were in part intended to foster the empowerment of marginalized groups. Consequently, we address whether the presence of paraprofessionals, many of whom are former or current welfare clientele, enhances the likelihood of political coalitions between welfare workers and their clients?

Social Welfare Workers and Unionization

Certain dynamics of social welfare work historically and contemporarily have constrained the likelihood that welfare workers as a group will coalesce under a common union umbrella. Factors inhibiting this coalition include competition be-

tween unions and professional associations and the horizontal and vertical stratification of welfare workers. On the other hand, there are other factors that could facilitate the political alignment of welfare workers, regardless of the aforementioned restraining factors. Specifically, there is some evidence which shows that professional social workers are not categorically anti-union, that there are increasing similarities among welfare workers of all strata due to the deskilling of their work, and that some union leaders and professional people recognize the need to seek common political ground.

The symbolic packaging of social welfare work as a profession, or even a semi-profession (Etzioni, 1969; Toren, 1972), has competed with efforts to unionize welfare workers (Sarfatti Larson, 1977). Alexander (1980) summarized a number of the prototypical differences that exist between unions and professional associations, including the philosophy, goals, and tactics of each group. For example, while unions emphasize adversarial relations with management and stress economic issues, professional associations incorporate management in a quest for "public good" and professional autonomy. Union tactics frequently involve power struggles whereas professional struggles often get played out through codes of ethics and expansion of the knowledge base (e.g., studying issues). The ideology of professionalism in social welfare work encourages putting the client's welfare above one's own; matters of welfare workers' class interests become subordinated as a result (Tambor, 1979). In contrast, unions highlight class issues.

A further critical distinction noted by both Alexander (1980) and Karger (1983) is the difference in constituencies of existing welfare worker unions and professional associations. Professional associational membership is typically restricted to individuals with certain educational credentials (for example, a BSW or MSW); union membership may be open to all line staff but will exclude managerial personnel. As a result, unions and professional associations tend to break down along social class and to an extent racial/ethnic lines as well as on the basis of different philosophies, goals, and tactics. Indeed, the interests of the less trained, lower-paid union membership of social welfare workers may run headlong into the interests of social work MSWs.

Their different interests have been made highly visible through their conflicting positions on civil service reclassification and licensure, as we described earlier.

In short, within the broad category of social welfare workers there is considerable heterogeneity both horizontally and vertically. Unions and professional associations are stratified along those lines, and their political positions on behalf of their respective constituencies are grounded in different needs. The introduction of paraprofessionals into social welfare work further differentiated practitioners, created more strata of workers, and may have reduced the potential for political alignment (see Reich, Gordon, and Edwards, 1977) under an umbrella organization. As the work of professionals has come to look much like the work of paraprofessionals, the former are likely to resist the comparison by relying on the factors of prestige to differentiate themselves (Mills, 1951; Sarfatti Larson, 1977). In doing so, they should be expected to cling tighter to the ideology of professionalism and membership in exclusive professional associations. Unlike the social welfare workers of the 1920s and 1930s, contemporary workers are disinclined to perceive their class similarities across job classifications. The current fiscal crisis has not yet provided the impetus that the Great Depression did for coalition formation.

There is evidence, however, that permits an alternative scenario wherein social welfare workers of differing backgrounds and organizational responsibilities might forge a united political front through unionization. Studies by Shaffer (1979) and Lightman (1982) have indicated that professional social workers do not necessarily harbor anti-union sentiments and do not find unionization incompatible with professionalism. Rather, there seems to be what Lightman (1982, p. 138) called "divided zones of responsibility" between professional organizations and unions, with the latter's arena encompassing matters of workplace treatment that have traditionally been their strength.

The deskilling of social welfare work may also have created a cadre of professional welfare workers now amenable to unionization. Mills (1951) and others (e.g., Tambor 1983) have predicted that white-collar resistance to unions would erode with the blurring of distinctions between white-collar and wage-

workers that accompanies the deskilling of the former's work. Further, some unions have been at the forefront of efforts to reduce caseload sizes and restore various resources that enabled welfare workers to do their jobs in a more comprehensive and autonomous (i.e., "professional") way (Tambor, 1979).

A third factor that may facilitate welfare worker political coalitions is the recognition by some union leaders and individual social work professionals that a unified front is advisable in the face of declining political and fiscal support for social welfare programs. For example, Adams and Freeman (1982) have argued that social workers should align with labor unions because of the considerable political clout that the latter enjoy and that social workers lack. Issues of common concern between the two groups include pay, working conditions, racism, sexism, and support for social welfare programs. As both a professional social worker and labor organizer, Tambor (1979, 1983) has stressed the need for a coalition of professionals and paraprofessionals. He noted that unions and professional associations already have a track record of mobilization around specific issues through the Coalition of American Public Employees. He lists among the issues of common interest to both groups those of job security, improved working conditions, and the defense of human service programs.

Whichever scenario gets played out is likely to depend on the degree to which cross-cutting schisms among social welfare workers are highlighted or obscured. For example, civil service reclassification schemes have been motivated in part by fiscal concerns and in part in response to judicial decisions surrounding affirmative action (Karger 1983). Opposition to reclassification based on professional skills and prerogatives could be perceived, fairly or not, as opposition to affirmative action. If so, it is unlikely that solid political bases can be built within professional and paraprofessional classifications, not to mention between them. The existence of both horizontal and vertical stratification has always constrained broad-based collective political expression.

Worker-Client Coalitions

The second question raised by the trends of deprofessionalization and proletarianization regards the potential for political

coalitions between welfare clientele and agency workers, especially paraprofessionals. As noted earlier, social welfare legislation promoted, and in some cases mandated, the use of paraprofessionals. The ideological bases for the mandates included (a) the desirability of employment for indigenous peoples, (b) the enhancement of contact between professionals and clients by utilization of the local resident as mediator (e.g., Adams, 1965; Berman and Haug, 1973; Grosser, 1966), and (c) the empowerment of relatively powerless groups (e.g., Loewenberg, 1971; Gartner, 1969, Gatewood and Teare, 1976). At first glance the legislation appears to have provided the opportunity for increased alignment of social service providers and clientele. Upon further reflection, however, it seems instead to have made more visible certain paradoxes of social welfare work that mitigate against collective political action by workers and clients.

One paradox derives from the structural fact that the welfare worker is aligned with both the state and service recipients. In important ways welfare workers, especially paraprofessionals, are like other marginal workers and members of the surplus population (e.g., in demographic characteristics and the performance of deskilled work). In other important respects, however, they are structurally aligned with the state, as its employees and for whom they reproduce the social order (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1979). In fact, welfare workers need the ongoing existence of recipients to maintain their own positions (McKnight, 1980). As a result, the question of worker-client politicization is problematic.

Another paradox concerns the expressed function of paraprofessionals as mediators between clients and professional staff. Because paraprofessionals often are similar demographically to the clients with whom they interact, it is presumed that they will have more rapport with clients and thus can facilitate the latter's experience with the service system (e.g., Adams, 1965; Berman and Haug, 1973; Cudaback, 1968; Field et al., 1980). However, some sources (Adams and Freeman, 1979; Grosser, 1966) have argued that the paraprofessional is likely to develop allegiance toward the service organization and away from the target population. Indeed, Berman and Haug's (1973) study showed strong interest by paraprofessionals in upward mobility. Because interests of the welfare organization often differ from

those of the client group (Dressel, 1984), the indigenous worker may become co-opted into the ideology of the organization. Thus, the presumed benefits of hiring indigenous peoples as mediators may instead become "fatal remedies" (Sieber, 1981); in fact, indigenous workers may have a greater personal vested interest in engaging in role distancing from clients than do their non-indigenous co-workers. Furthermore, professional social workers may object to paraprofessionals' attempts to mediate between themselves and the clients, since they have invested in professional training.

Demographic similarities between service system paraprofessionals and clients have been seen as a basis on which political coalitions can be forged (Piven and Cloward, 1982). However, there is support for the opposing claim, namely, that the similarities exacerbate worker-client tensions. People receiving assistance experience the welfare system as a series of face-to-face negotiations with service personnel. Any discontents that clients have about welfare rules, regulations, and decisions are likely to get registered with the service provider, regardless of the latter's role in shaping policy or her/his ability to alter it. Client's complaints frequently take the form of anger with or hostility toward the worker as the embodiment of an unjust or capricious welfare system. The indigenous worker in an unresponsive agency stands to be blamed further, since her/his presence is meant to facilitate the client's interface with the service system. Under these circumstances, political coalition-building between paraprofessionals and clients is threatened. Ironically, and in contrast to the argument of Piven and Cloward (1982), the present retrenchment of state welfare functions may reduce the likelihood of worker-client coalitions because of increased client dissatisfactions that get played out as anger against and mistrust of the service worker (see also Lipsky, 1981). Such dynamics are functional for the existing order: political decision-makers are buffered from welfare system discontents by multiple layers of service system functionaries who deflect the blame. Further, divisiveness is created among people who otherwise might coalesce politically.

At the same time, the presence of indigenous workers in the welfare system lends credence to the American dream of upward

mobility for those from whose ranks the paraprofessionals come. While the workers themselves may engage in role distancing from clients, clients instead may embrace the roles of those above them and have renewed belief in the opportunity for upward mobility. Paraprofessional workers perhaps should not be described as upwardly mobile, since their employment resulted from the down-grading and deskilling of the occupation. Further, the low wages many receive do not alter their own eligibility for welfare assistance. Nevertheless, their presence in the workforce can serve to reinforce the notion that one can work out of poverty through individual effort. The predominance of this belief undermines the likelihood of collective action for social change.

In sum, the likelihood of transformation of the social welfare system via worker-client coalition is debatable. Inter-group dissension and cross-cutting allegiances obscure the common political ground on which professionals, paraprofessionals, and clients might coalesce. The developing fiscal crisis of the state has not reached a level of severity sufficient to motivate workers and clients to recognize their inherent similarities or even to overcome their immediate differences.

Concluding Remarks

We have argued that important trends are currently transforming labor in the social welfare industry. The trends are the growth of jobs requiring little formal training or education which are being filled by paraprofessionals and the deskilling of previously professional work. Professional social work associations may decry such changes, but it is fruitful to pose the following question: Is deprofessionalization "bad"? To be sure, deprofessionalization has provided a convenient rationale for proletarianization: lower pay, fragmented work, increased supervisory and managerial control in the workplace, and a shift in policy decision-making away from street-level practitioners. But there is nothing that inherently binds these features to deprofessionalization.

Consequently, the current changes in social welfare work could afford an opportunity for the examination of basic issues in welfare practice as well as an occasion for recognizing the

vulnerability of both welfare workers and clients to the demands of a political economy premised on stratification and control. Present tensions among workers arise in part because the welfare enterprise is not expansive enough to provide employment for all members of the surplus population, educated and untrained alike. Policy-makers have tried to impose the latter on a limited labor market in order to solve some of their own political problems. For the short-term they will have succeeded if the arena for conflict is limited to narrow internecine disputes among sub-groups of welfare workers.

The transformations we have described within the social welfare industry are not unique to that workplace. Indeed, the increasing bifurcation of the private sector occupational structure of the United States is attracting both scholarly attention and political concern. Issues of gender, race, and class stratification and debates over educational credentials for low-paying, deskilled work have emerged there also. How these issues are negotiated in either the private sector or the public sector social welfare industry is likely to impact their resolution in the other arena as well.

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Footnote

1. Don Tomaskovic-Devey should be credited with this observation.

