Beyond Professionalism: The Child and Youth Care Worker as Craftsman*

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ABSTRACT: In an effort to move the professionalization dialogue in child and youth care toward greater concern with the quality of client service and toward move conceptually-based consideration of the content of the work, the authors propose that the field be viewed as a craft. An initial approximation of such a conceptualization as it might look through the eyes of most current workers is followed by a discussion of possible implications for progress in significant areas of concern in the field.

KEY WORDS: craft model of child and youth care work; professionalization of child and youth care work; youthwork; youth development.

Together with other human service specialities, the field of child and youth care has in recent years been the scene of much effort to acquire professional status (e.g., Beker, 1975, 1979). Recognition of the complex, sophisticated nature of the tasks involved and the competencies required if those in the field are able to accomplish what is increasingly being expected of them has increased as well (e.g., Austin, 1981). European, North American, and other service models for personnel working with youth in the milieu or "life space," whether in community or residential settings, have begun to make common cause in this connection in recognition of the shared, generic core of their work (Beker, 1979a). The thrust toward professionalization has opponents

as well, both within and outside the field. Some of these maintain that it is an inappropriate objective because, they suggest, successful practice in this field is and will continue to be idiosyncratic rather than scientific or systematic. The majority, however, seem to conclude that the acknowledged artistic elements are best viewed as embedded in a systematic body of knowledge and practice that lends itself to prescribed training programs and to the development of a formal profession.

As a result, much effort has been devoted by those in the field in recent years to the tasks of assessing the position of child and youth care work in those areas generally accepted as indicative of professional status (e.g., body of knowledge, professional association, code of ethics, community sanction, power over clients), and moving to enhance or acquire those that seem to be weak or absent. While recognizing the importance of this work to the structural development of the field, the present article focuses on the content of the work and the relationship between a member of the occupational group and what he does, and it proposes that a "craft" perspective may help to illuminate key issues of practice, the training of practitioners, research and professionalization itself.

The Impact of Professionalization on the Client

The implicit—and often explicit—idea that acquiring the structural concomitants of professionalization (Greenwood, 1957; Ritzer, 1972) will automatically lead to better service to clients is an assumption; it is not based on empirical proof. Actually, the experience of at least one major allied field suggests that there is no such direct relationship. Reviewing the evidence on professionalization in social work, Epstein and Conrad (1978) concluded that since Greenwood's (1957) classic statement that "crowned" social work as a profession, the endemic, vigorous, and occasionally vicious debate regarding professionalism has done little to enhance the quality of service provided to clients. They reflect the view that professionalization is an inadequate descriptive variable (Epstein, 1970) and a poor predictor of how practice will be done (Baker, 1974), in terms of both quality of service and openness to organizational innovation (Downs, 1976). Finally, they suggest "the need for a more empirically based, *de-professionallized* conceptual model of social work" (p. 179, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, when faced with a discrepancy between aspiration and recognition, most occupational groups in the human services, including child and youth care workers, have responded with efforts to establish

their status, credibility, and autonomy as those of a profession in accordance with generally accepted criteria. Many investigators (e.g., Moore, 1970) have preferred to characterize the status of occupational groups along a continuum rather than in terms of discrete categories—professional and non-professional—to which a group may belong. In this frame of reference, child and youth care work appears to be akin to other human service fields that have been characterized as "near professions" (Joffe, 1975), "semi-professions" (Etzioni, 1969), or "bureaucratic professions" (usually practiced as an employee; private practice not normative—Toren, 1969).

Whatever the utility of such concepts in comparing the development and relative occupational status of various fields as they are arrayed along the continuum, they say little about how people actually do their work and the quality of service they provide to client groups. Thus, the concept of professional implies much about how those involved should be expected to approach their work, but does not describe the content or the process of the work itself. For this, it is necessary to examine what practitioners actually do.

An implicit recognition that the location of an occupation on the professional continuum need not correspond to the quality of daily work with clients is conveyed in our everyday manner of speaking. We tend to use word *profession* with some caution, reserving it for the highest status occupations. The idea of *professional*, however, is credibly used to represent a much broader notion. We can easily conceive of a secretary and a carpenter, for example, as truly professional in the way they do their work, although we might feel less comfortable about labeling either as a member of a profession. In this sense, the word is used to convey something about how well the worker performs his or her job, not about the position of the occupational group as a whole on a continuum of professionalism.

As a further example, the field of medicine reflects a high level of professional development in the structural sense. This says very little, however, about the circumstances and the manner in which a physician prescribes a particular medication. Most of us would probably agree that the physician's competence or ability to provide effective client service resides not in his or her authority to write the prescription, but in the diagnostic and decision process and in the interactions with the patient with regard to the malady and the prescription. Yet structurally, the professionalism resides in the former. Thus, professional status is clearly not enough to permit a reasonable assessment of the quality of direct service and to inform such associated concerns as personnel selection, professional education, and standards of ethical practice.

The Relevance of a Craft Perspective

If professional status according to agreed structural benchmarks does not suffice, how are we to address questions of the competence of professional practice, in this case in child and youth care work? How are we to design effective programs for worker preparation? Many related questions that are critical to the quality of service to be provided by the field could be added. It is proposed here that the relation between the worker and the content and methods of the work be conceptualized as the critical variable and labeled as "craftsmanship"[1].

Craft is variously defined and includes the notion of "cunning" in its sense as "occupational technique" (Bensman Lilienfeld, 1973). In common-sense terms, we view craft as differing from art in that its product is a practical one rather than purely aesthetic, yet similar in that its production (or production ideal) is idiosyncratic. It bears the converse relationship to commercial production; it is similar in that commercial products are designed to be practical, but different in that they are standardized rather than idiosyncratic. The craft ideal is that each product be a little different; the commercial ideal is that they all be the same, and interchangeable. Industrialization is a process by which commercial production has been made very efficient through standardization, leading to pressure to apply analogous technology in all areas of endeavor.

The craft perspective, on the other hand, holds with those who maintain that this model is inappropriate to the medium with which we work in the human services. Such work cannot be effectively standardized in this way because its success is a function of the practitioner's interpersonal sensitivity in applying the requisite knowledge and skills contextually in situations where the need is determined in part by the dynamic and often unpredictable responses of all those involved (Beker and Maier, 1981). Further, this must be done in situations where the "product" is emergent and the task is defined as much by the step-by-step responses of clients and others as by the expertise of the worker. But this is not a random or unsystematic process: it is grounded in the shared body of knowledge and technique that dictates the direction, structure, and limits of intervention, though not the specifics. In short, it is grounded in a professional perspective.

The concepts of craftsman and craftsmanship, again in the everyday sense, illuminate the point. Craftsmanship, the work of the craftsperson, is viewed as an individualistic, expressive process that can, nonetheless, be taught, generally through modeling rather than academically, but with distinct conceptual principles at the foundation. The notions of apprentice, protege, and working with a mentor fit more comfortably than those of student and teacher. Typically, the learner

will produce work identifiably different from that of the mentor, yet clearly in harmony with it. Likewise, craftspeople working together or in close contact develop recognizable collegial guilds with identifiably similar, yet not identical product patterns. This is the "texture" of the craft concept to be applied to child and youth care work as a proposed occupational orientation[2].

The essence of craft is four-fold: (1) *sustained effort* on a (2) *practical (useful)*, (3) *durable* (4) *product.* Collegial linkages are assumed to reflect shared techniques (methods and skills) and social arrangements, which combine to develop shared "habits of mind" (Veblen, 1912) among those who work together or in close physical or occupational proximity. "Habits of mind," in turn, serve to organize and give perspective to the techniques and social arrangements in a continuing evolutionary cycle. These shared procedures, settings, and attitudes toward occupational life and the world—occupational ideologies—underlie the coherence and identity of collegial groupings. The craft concept also allows for the subtle mix of consistent, specifiable principles and techniques with infinitely variable applications to meet particular situations which characterize child and youth care work with other professional enterprises.

The Applicability of the Craft Concept Explored

The description and analysis that follow begin to explore and elaborate the notion that craftsmanship is a critical concept for those who seek to understand and build the child and youth care work field in the context of optimal service to clients. The idea is "grounded" in extensive direct service in the field, close observation of others in direct service roles, informed reports of the recipients of such services, and the content of open-ended, in-depth interviews with practicing child and youth care workers designed to elicit their perceptions of their work. The data are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive at this early stage, providing a basis for developing the proposed rationale, rather than rigorous evidence of its validity. It reflects experience in several countries and with varied populations, although the practitioner interviews were conducted only in Israel. The authors observed what seem to be remarkable similarities in the ways child and youth care workers approach their work, both cross-nationally and cross-culturally.

The techniques (skills and methods), social arrangements, and "habits of mind" that seem to be characteristic of how child and youth care workers tend to approach their jobs are portrayed in Table 1 and described below in the context of the four definitional components of

Table 1
Craft Components in Child and Youth Care Work

	Sustained Effort	Product	Practical Product	Durable Product
Techniques	Sustained effort as a skill in itself Relationship skills Rhetorical skills "Handling" superiors "Buying time"	Short and long range Improvisation Relationship skills Rhetorical skills	Survival skills Eliciting participation and involvement Modeling Advocacy Self-consciousness	Harmonize intervention with development Continuity of care intra- and extra-organizationally
Social Arrangements	Nonformalized Locus emergent Ambiguous mandate Organizational marginality	Group orientation Age of workers	Work in client's life space "Real life" issues	Long-term effort Imbedded in clients' lives
Habits of Mind	Long-term effort Successive approximation Personal involvement	Dual view: short and long term Identify with client, sometimes against authority Advocacy Individualization	Concrete, limited abstraction Distrusts ideation and conceptualization "Artistic" perspective Spontaneity	Hard to "let go"

craft: *Sustained effort* on a *product* that is *practical* and *durable.* Thus, the theory of craft is used heuristically, as an exploratory tool (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to help illuminate the occupation of child and youth care work. It should be noted that what follows describes the normative situation, or how direct care workers actually feel about their work, not what might be needed to enhance the current level of service in the field. The latter would require intervention based on the current situation and a redefinition of the same categories in terms that would reflect the desired changes, a task for subsequent paper if the present analysis proves to be productive.

Techniques and Sustained Effort

Sustained effort is seen by child and youth care practitioners as linked to techniques, or skills and methods, in three ways. It is viewed as a skill in itself, as a critical element in the relationship skills considered to be fundamental to successful practice, and a work orientation that needs protection and support through the use of other kinds of skills. On the last point, it is not enough to "hang in there" or "hang tough"; the worker often feels the need to "buy time" from authorities whom he or she perceives as not sharing the commitment to sustained effort on this level and, consequently, as seeking more rapid evidence of results:

> You have to make sure to show some progress. They often have a preset idea that you work for so long and the kid's got to be doing these things like upgrading and certificate, taking part in activities after school, and all these. So I tell them sometimes what they want to hear, just so they leave me alone to keep working.

As a result of this need, the use of appropriate rhetoric and related "salesmanship" techniques (including clinical, legal, and educational terminology) is seen by many workers as a critical skill, although these technical languages are viewed as having limited utility in connection with the "nuts and bolts" work with clients.

Sustained effort is viewed in at least two related ways: being there and available, and being there when and as significant incidents occur so as to be able to respond appropriately. These lead to the establishment of rapport and relationship skills, which child and youth care practitioners view as including, for example, observing, listening, empathy, role-taking, providing support, and advocating. "Being with" clients as they grow and change is also seen as crucial, and a task that usually cannot be rushed.

Techniques and the Product

Product-related skills encompass at least two conceptions of the "product": short-range, "tactical" products and the young people themselves viewed as the long-range products of the work. An example of the manipulation of the former by a worker in the service of the latter is reflected in the following:

> I brought him to the community center myself, to be sure he got through the door. I told him to cool it and stay out of fights, but then they don't notice him so he just sits there. I know if he gets a break, he'll get into something he can do, and that will keep him off the streets and he'll have a chance.

Since the product is emergent, or "becoming," and unpredictable in its specifics from one stage to the next, a major product-related skill is improvisation, the ability to spontaneously select and adapt techniques to fit the situation at hand. This reflects the need to be in dynamic harmony with (yet still in some control of) the media one is working with, a notion closely linked to the concept and practice of craft.

The rhetorical skill mentioned above—"mastering the talk"—is viewed as essential from a product—or client—related perspective as well as in working with colleagues and superiors:

> After a while I knew what should I say when, to get a certain effect. And even if they were noisy as hell I just threw in the magic words and they were like innocent lambs.

> I kept wondering why he (the supervisor) blocks out when I talk about the political shit at the municipality. But in a way it helped to know that if I get sick of him interpreting my defenses or my obsessions I would just push the conversation to politics. He'd just leave it right there.

It often seems as if talking about the product *is* the product; this is seen by workers as temporarily legitimate, since it provides time and psychological space for them to continue work with their clients until a "real" product is achieved, that is, it permits sustained effort.

Techniques and Practicality

The focus of many child and youth care workers on practical product outcomes is evident in the characteristic emphasis they give to providing "survival skills" for their clients. Because of the nature of many of the clients and their world, their survival seems to require the ability to behave normatively, to play the social game and "fit in," rather than always to expose one's "real self." Thus, one can gain space for himself by creating a normative facade under which he can pursue his everyday

existence. It is in this context that normative is equated with practical. Appropriate interpersonal participation is seen as fundamental, both on the individual and social systematic levels:

> I struggled with him for weeks to walk up to the youth employment agency. Just to show up, sign up and look for a job. This way he'll learn how to present himself, how he comes across, what should he be like to get a job. Most of the time I didn't care if he gets the job.

More sophisticated concepts of what is "practical," for example, longer range goals related to personal integrity and character development, are frequently downgraded or ignored.

Workers' skill in eliciting participation is also used to involve appropriate authorities in the problems faced by clients. This is viewed as a safety valve against mutual alienation and as a means of helping to assure that responsible officials will maintain practical expectations of child and youth care clients and programs and what they see as practical policies with regard to the allocation of opportunities and resources.

Client participation is fostered in part through the practical use of the skill of "modeling," through which workers influence the development of young people by exhibiting the nature of the desired client behavior in their own. Thus, for example, workers view their use of rhetoric to control situations as essential not only for those situations, but also to demonstrate these techniques for their clients.

Finally, for many of these workers, being practical includes self-consciousness of the fact, or *knowing* they are practical, together with using themselves consciously toward specified objectives. They maintain the same practical objectives for their clients. Teaching self-consciousness in this sense is viewed as teaching self-restraint, for example, which further enhances self-confidence and enables clients to maximize the visibility of positive aspects of the self. Worker skills in this area encompass a range of rehearsal and dramatic techniques used to help clients to "re-examine the already known," to keep them in touch with what they are doing and its meaning in relation to changes in themselves and those around them (Eisikovits, 1980).

Technique and Durability

In addition to their concern with practicality, child and youth care workers emphasize the need to have a *durable* product. Two major skill areas are stressed as functional to this end: skills and techniques which can harmonize between the content and level of intervention and the young people's developmental level, and those related to achieving

continuity in working with clients both intra- and extra-organization-ally through the implementation of a continuum of care.

Even though it seems plausible to assume that developmentally appropriate changes would tend to be durable, child and youth care workers often have little formalized developmental knowledge. There is, in fact, often a clash between what workers view as their practice wisdom and their conceptions of the nature of developmental stage theories. When they speak about the difficulty of harmonizing intervention with level of development, they stress the unsystematic patterns in which youth develop, the sociological and political implications of the notion of underdevelopment, and the lack of synchronization between cognitive, emotional, moral, and social development. Therefore, they tend to assess level of development in strictly behavioral or "practice wisdom" terms (i.e., what the client can do) rather than conceptually, and to face clients with challenges appropriate to their capacities assessed in this way. This may, of course, be effective in individual cases, depending on the worker's sensitivity, but it does not directly yield principles that can be applied elsewhere or transmitted systematically to others. The failure to apply developmental knowledge conceptually is usually explained by using "case level arguments" such as "It does not fit any specific client I know."

Durability of changes in clients is also seen as depending on continuity of care, which is viewed as partially dependent on workers' skill in making appropriate arrangements within and beyond their own agencies. In this, they unknowingly echo the findings of much recent research on program effectiveness, which suggests that continuity of care after residential placements end is crucial to favorable outcomes (e.g., Durkin & Durkin, 1975; Taylor & Alpert, 1973). Similarly, they place high value on not changing workers for a client and see consistency as a key technique in avoiding regression, or achieving durable change. They often express difficulty in terminating relationships, (i.e., in knowing when the product is finished), and they frequently are reluctant to talk about or make organizational arrangements to this end, which may reflect their own as well as client needs.

Social Arrangements

In contrast to most other human service occupations, child and youth care work is usually done in a relatively nonformalized framework with little emphasis on role relationships. Although this lack of formalization often poses difficulties in terms of the worker's occupational status in relation to other professionals, it is seen by most as a major asset.

> We were sitting on the floor and playing cards. He kept teasing me, pushing, pinching and the like. He would never dare do it with the shrink

> or the social worker. But then I let my voice out. I was angry. And he knows that I don't play it when I am angry. I show it, just like him.

Attempts to formalize the setting are often considered to be phony and as hampering the work. This tendency presents a major barrier to attempts to implement conceptually clear program processes in child and youth care settings.

There is no one particular locus in which child and youth care work is done. Most workers interviewed see the arena as emergent, changing appropriately as the needs and environments of young people change. They see no place they could not go to do their work, but they are often reluctant to work within the schools. Although most of those interviewed were under the same organizational auspices as school teachers, they viewed the teachers as responsible only for the enhancement of the knowledge and cognitive development of youth and interchangeably unwilling and/or unable to deal with their clients' other needs. They try to keep a low profile and prefer to stay away from other, "normal" organizations with which their clients are involved as well, viewing their role as primarily to bring youth to such settings and to work with them after they leave. They also seek to avoid the possible effect of their presence as stigmatizing a youth as "the kid with the worker," although many would not hesitate to involve themselves in an advocacy role if this became necessary. This often occurs at the price of the worker (and sometimes, therefore, the client) not being taken seriously by various social agencies or others concerned.

Social Arrangements and Sustained Effort

Sustained effort is facilitated by the ambiguity of the child and youth care worker's task or social mandate in contrast to that of many other human service personnel whose work is focused on a much more limited realm of client need. As with the medical or legal general practitioner, the generalist's sphere of practice tends to be defined by the kinds of specialists available rather than in accordance with what the generalist, with a broader, contextual perspective, can do best. Child and youth care workers may be mandated to attend to young people's developmental, recreational, social, emotional, and other needs or to stay away from some or all of these areas since each has specialized, supposedly better qualified patrons. Nor is much guidance available from legal quarters, since there are few applicable laws or regulations concerning the qualifications and work of such personnel. In practice, however, child and youth care workers are frequently on their own and impelled to view themselves as having wide latitude to create and implement intervention models, executive strategies, and policy interpretations:

> When I get off the bus I am there to decide who to contact, who to leave
> out. I decide who gets money or some specific activity, who should be
> referred. It's like I am the whole agency.

This is the counterpart in social arrangements of the critical skill of improvisation cited above, a freedom from some conventional limitations that makes sustained effort possible. It also imposes and supports a considerable degree of organizational marginality, a condition that contributes significantly to characteristic habits of mind to be seen below.

Most workers stress such organizational marginality as a necessity in their work, justifying this on the basis of their need not to be tied too closely to formal structures, so that they can follow clients through a variety of programs and organizations and thus ensure continuity of care through sustained effort. This often leads to conflict with colleagues and superiors who interpret their marginality as "sitting on the fence," and interchangeably as denial of responsibility, lack of professionalism, bending to client pressure, or undermining their own professional authority. An incipient paradox emerges: will success in changing normative inter- and intra-agency social arrangements to facilitate continuity of care reduce child and youth care workers' own marginality in ways that will limit their effectiveness, particularly in working with marginal populations, e.g., adolescents; clients from marginal sociocultural groups?

Social Arrangements and the Product

In relation to the product, and youth care workers in both community and institutional settings emphasize the importance of groups and view the group as the major locus of their effort. There is also an overall sense that one should be close in age to the youthful clientele in order to "have contact." Older (above 35) workers emphasized not only a feeling of being "stuck" in terms of advancement, but also the disadvantage of their age in their work with youth:

> In our job like in sports, you're no good after a certain age. Kids sort of
> stop trusting you, sort of respect you too much. When this happens you
> know you've got to move on to something else.

There are, on the other hand, occasional practitioners for whom even relatively advanced age appears to be no handicap and may even sometimes be an asset.

Social Arrangements and Practicality and Durability

The practical emphasis is reflected in social arrangements through the locus of work in the client's life space or milieu. Working together on the client's "real life" issues comprises the curriculum and emphasizes

practical issues and outcomes. Concern with durability is reflected in social arrangements that emphasize the longer-term, continuing aspects of the work and the focus on tasks and issues embedded in the ongoing lives of the clientele.

Habits of Mind

The authors' exposure to child and youth care workers internationally, cross-culturally, and in widely ranging settings serving vastly disparate populations suggests that such workers tend to share some pervasive ways of thinking about themselves and their work, "habits of mind." Child and youth care workers in India, Israel, and the United States, residential child care workers in South Africa, educateurs in Canada and Western Europe, streetworkers, chemical dependency, and juvenile correctional personnel—even those with very different philosophical orientations and work environments—often seem to share a recognizable core of perspectives and concerns about what they do and why. These habits of mind or occupational ideologies are, notably, different from those of the societies and many of the settings in which they work. Since cross-national contact among these workers has been limited and unsystematic, it seems clear that this shared perspective arises from the nature and the imperatives of the work itself—the techniques and social arrangements involved—and what draws them to it. They think as they do because they must in order to do their work as they view it.

Habits of Mind and Sustained Effort

Sustained effort is an element of this shared commitment. As reported by a detached youthworker:

> I am always there: evening by evening I get to the same corner, the same balustrade. I am always there. Time is working for me. The later it gets the more kids come around. But they come and go. Whether they stay or not, they'll always know that when it comes to it they can count on me. I am there.

And from a residential setting, the importance often attributed to "hanging in there" or "hanging tough," perhaps even in lieu of the knowledge and skill that might permit a shift to a more effective technique:

> I don't know how many times we draw up this contract with her; she keeps flunking it. So we try again, over and over. We change a clause here, a goal there and start all over again. You can't let it break you.

This ideology is reflected in the use of successive approximation as a method of choice. The commitment to sustained effort and personal

involvement (discussed below) frequently combine in the experience of difficulty in "letting go" of clients when that becomes appropriate, an important theme that has been noted above and to which we shall return.

Habits of Mind and the Product

Child and youth care workers tend to maintain a dual view of the product as involving, on one hand, concrete, short-range problem-solving in relation to the issue-at-hand (e.g., clients stealing, bedwetting, suspension from school, or not having a job) and, at the same time, the "ripple effect" (in a "systems" sense) on the lives of the clients that is believed to make them better, more successful people.

> I remember I put him to work in the woodshop and stayed with him. I had to wake him in the morning, check on him during the day, see how he spends his money. Then I just wanted to keep him off the streets. But I also knew it's like a stone you throw in the water. Having a job changed his life.

Most fundamental in product-related habits of mind, however, is the tendency of the craftsperson to identify with the product, which has a variety of complex consequences when the "product" is a client. Workers may come to think of themselves as older friends of the young people with whom they are working with the task then viewed as a joint effort. This may in some ways be functional in helping youngsters begin to take control of their own lives.

On the other hand, such identification is a major source of worker hostility to authority and control, of rejection or manipulation of accountability procedures (perceived as designed to control them), and of implicit or explicit secret alliances with the clientele. When the clients are adolescents, these tendencies may attract their approval and support while conflicting with their needs, something that may be difficult for the worker who rejects a conceptual understanding of development to appreciate and handle.

The tendency to reject accountability other than to the clients themselves is reflected in other ways, such as acquiescence in the power of the peer group, the concern about the worker's age mentioned above, and a frequent sense of injustice with feelings of alienation leading to the establishment of alliances against "the system." This is a source of the investment in verbally manipulating superiors to gain "space" for sustained effort. Combined with the marginality of these workers and their social mandate, it leads to their view of their function as being not only to work with the youth, but also to advocate socially and even politically for the needs and rights of the young people in their

care against what are viewed as often indifferent and/or oppressive systems:

> It took me a while to convince the judge to take custody of him. I convinced him that even he would run away from a home like that. But that was only the beginning. I ran around for months to try to persuade places to take him. Most people were scared of him, so I had to "sell" him as a good kid and make sure he got his rights.

In these ways, child and youth care workers tend to reflect the "best interests of the child" (or "least detrimental alternative") perspective proposed by Goldstein, Freud and Solnit (1973). Although they may seem to represent a "mixed bag" when viewed in terms of the developmental needs of youth, these habits of mind fit more neatly together in the context of the social arrangements—marginality, the seductiveness of young clients (Sobesky, 1976), etc.—under which child and youth care workers normally function. Were the workers given appropriate training, clearer role expectations, a defined program, and meaningful agency support, significantly different habits of mind could be anticipated.

Although the identification of child and youth care workers with their clients typically leads to highly individualized approaches with emphasis on each client's uniqueness, the same workers tend to seek out, recognize, and try to utilize patterns in and even sweeping generalizations about the various agency and other social systems related to their work. The tendency to deny the existence of such patterns in the young people being served contributes to the frequent rejection of abstract, conceptual orientations and approaches in favor of spontaneity and improvisations. In fact, this reflects the nature (the social arrangements) of milieu work, which often requires spontaneous response:

> One big thing is that I am there with them as they do their trip. If something comes down, they have a fight or they rip off, I am not hearing it after they did it and sure enough I don't have a lot of time to get my act together. I have to work as things happen, like last night they wanted to break into the kitchen to steal the wine bought for the holidays. I was there, and I had to stop it or do something about it.

Habits of Mind and Practicality

Being practical emerges as the dominant orientation of child and youth care workers to the work—doing concrete, practical things to help the client and impatience with more theoretical approaches—and reflects their practical orientation towards the ultimate "product"—the young people themselves. By fostering the development of personal and

social competence, youthworkers believe, they are contributing to the production of an eminently practical product, perhaps the most practical we have:

> I don't know how "insight" fits in. I just want him to go and so something about himself, not sit and stare. I want him to finish school and get the damned diploma and get started in his trade!

Another reflection of the value placed on practicality in the narrow sense is perhaps less functional for the field and its clients. For many child and youth care workers, practical is equated with doing and tends to exclude ideation, or thinking about doing, which is not seen as part of the work. In the context of craftsmanship, this perspective can be seen as atypical and dysfunctional, since reflection and planning as means of adapting techniques to the desired outcome are essential elements in the craft endeavour.

Further, child and youth care workers often portray themselves as artists expressing a talent that cannot be taught or acquired, the exercise of which depends on instant reaction to "inside" information. Attempts to systematize the work by identifying patterns are rejected as not practical in favor of institutionalizing tentativeness and spontaneity of response by those who have talent for the work.

Habits of Mind and Durability

The concern with durability is often reflected in the difficulty experienced by many youthworkers in "letting go" when that becomes appropriate. Thus, the relationship with the client (or the process itself) may be viewed as the product, or the practitioner's confidence that the product has been completed may be uncertain. This is consistent with the craft orientation, with its implicit assumptions that the course of the work and its completion cannot be entirely preplanned, that the appropriate point for termination must emerge (if at all) in the process of the work, and that such a decision is always somewhat arbitrary and pragmatic, since no craft product is ever really finished. Any crafted product may be viewed as incomplete in the sense that more could be done with it, and part of the task of the craftsperson is to know when to stop!

Implications of the Craft Perspective

The foregoing represents some of the "habits of mind," functional and otherwise, that appear to be normative among child and youth care workers in widely varying situations, and how they have emerged

from the techniques and social arrangements that characterize the work. If we are to adopt such a perspective in an attempt to understand better and to enhance the development of child and youth care practice and service, it is important to establish that this will be the outcome. The following offers an initial view of how this approach might be helpful in the areas of professionalization, practice, preparation of practitioners, and research. More detailed and specific implications remain to be explored.

Professionalization

A variety of professional associations of child and youth care workers have emerged in recent years, most of which focus on structural factors in professionalization and respond only indirectly or extrinsically, if at all, to quality of care considerations. Although some sponsor conferences, workshops, courses emphasizing practice methods, and even worker certification programs, relatively little systematic attention is given to raising the level of expectations or standards that define quality practice itself as a means of enhancing the level of competence of the profession as a whole[3]. It seems to the authors that further explication of child and youth care work in accordance with a craft perspective conceptually and through research, and subsequent reorientation of practice in that direction, can provide a more potent and sophisticated identity for the field, such as that proposed by Barnes and Kelman (1974). This should lead not only to greater progress in achieving professional recognition, but also to the development of more effective services to clientele and the emergence of more viable roles for practitioners.

Practice

Despite the modest proliferation of training programs and other work related to the professionalization thrust in the field of child and youth care, much confusion remains as to the essence of the task, the appropriate body of knowledge, the method and content of training for the work, role relationships, and related issues, as well as regarding the appropriateness of professionalization itself. The craft perspective seems to the authors to provide a more compatible conceptual schema within which to consider and, hopefully, to resolve these issues. Significantly, it supports an individualizing orientation to clients without negating the relevance and importance of a shared methodological core, and it supports the autonomy of the individual practitioner in a framework of technique, social arrangements, and ideology or habits of mind. It also illuminates the habits of mind that tend to characterize

workers in the field and how they may foster and retard effective service.

Preparation of Practitioners

The craft perspective lays the groundwork for a new and perhaps more fruitful consideration of both content and method in curriculum for the preparation of child and youth care work practitioners, an area in which consensus to date is limited. An understanding of the dominant habits of mind among child and youth care workers and resulting perspectives on techniques and social arrangements can do much to illuminate training needs and objectives grounded in the realities of practice as well as the needs of young people. Recognition of the "practical" habit of mind is critical in designing a curriculum that is grounded in the realities of practice, yet can help learners value essential formalized knowledge as they confront work situations that reinforce the importance of learning by doing. Mentor and apprenticeship models may merit another look in the evolution of models of field work and how it can best be arranged and used didactically.

Research

Such craft-linked elements as an orientation toward the product as emergent and the method of successive approximation raise questions about traditional approaches to research in this field, particularly in the sphere of evaluation. Process research, qualitative approaches, and emphasis on the development of grounded practice theory, all having come to the fore in recent years, seem particularly relevant to the needs and nature of this perspective.

Conclusion

To explore adequately the utility of the craft concept in the development and enhancement of child and youth care work, it will be necessary to look more intensively at the techniques, social arrangements, and resulting habits of mind that have been cited above, to identify and analyze others and their systematic inter-relationships, and to compare these with projected alternatives that could be hypothesized (or identified in exemplary program contexts) as representing an enhanced level of service quality. The task is to discover whether the craft hypothesis "works" by providing a more effective conceptual handle than more traditional approaches to analyzing the field, the content of the work, and the selection and preparation of effective personnel.

Endnotes

1. Although the present paper develops its analysis for the child and youth care field, analogous material could be offered for medicine, law, social work, and other occupational groups.
2. The craft concept has been applied to this field before, albeit tentatively and with qualifications (e.g., Beker & Maier, 1981, p. 202; Fulcher, 1979, p. 83). It has also been used in such related areas as teaching (Eble, 1976; Marland, 1975), interviewing (Brady, 1977), public administration (Berkley, 1980), and social science (Epstein, 1979; Kimball & Partridge, 1979).
3. Nor, it should be noted, has this been done in other professions, as has been discussed above in relation to social work.

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