REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

WORK AND THE WORKPLACE

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Introduction: A Path Well Taken – Reflections on Social Work in Occupational Settings

Paul A. Kurzman, Ph.D., Hunter College

"Work is the only thing which makes life endurable to me," Charles Darwin wrote, noting that it was his "sole enjoyment in life" (Lehrer, 2010, p.40). While perhaps not everyone would be as enthusiastic on the topic, surely most of us would agree that work is a central life function, and so those who help others to prosper in the world of work are doing some pretty important "work" themselves. Such are the stories that constitute the experiences recorded in this special issue of *Reflections,* a journal which is aptly subtitled *Narratives of Professional Helping.* As the editor of this special issue has been known to say: If there is a good story to tell from practice, then find a way to tell it. To their great credit, the contributors to this issue have done just that, in a scholarly fashion, but personally and informally, and very much in their own words. And what remarkable stories they tell—individually and collectively—capturing the roles of innovative social work professionals who are embedded in the world of work as deeply as any foreign correspondent has ever been embedded with a battalion in combat. Appreciating that all good practice begins with service but likely moves toward collective action, the narrators here poignantly demonstrate that social workers are indeed socialized to understand the cause that is inherent in function (Lewis, 1976).

Beth Lewis' opening account, "A Path Well Taken: Reflections on Social Work in Occupational Health," distills her 30 years of experience as a member of multidisciplinary teams providing service and advocacy on behalf of workers who suffer from work-based illnesses and injuries. First at an Ivy League academic medical center, and then at a neighborhood occupational health clinic, Lewis captures the plight of many virtually invisible workers who suffer from industrial accidents: psychological numbing from performance of dangerous and repetitive tasks that most of us would not want to perform and from the lasting (and often fatal) damage derivative from years of unprotected exposure to endemic hazards such as lead, silica, asbestosis, and organic solvents (Lewis, 1989). She sensitively explores the very complex ethical issues that frequently are present, along with the classic dilemma of which comes first— education, prevention, advocacy, or service—knowing, of course, that all will be required. The need to have command of a generalist practice perspective (which includes provision of case services, formation of mutual-aid groups, development of psycho-education seminars, collaboration with lawyers and unions, and the promotion of social action campaigns) may test a worker's expertise and comfort zone. Not every professional social worker would see this as her preferred field of practice, but Beth Lewis embraces the opportunities inherent in the setting with a calm and measured enthusiasm which captures the reader's respect and attention.

Emma Lucas-Darby continues discussion of the theme of social action as a core social work function. The importance of employment, especially for low-income clients of color, is central to the Pennsylvania-based urban renewal encounter she both chronicles and critiques in "Role Change: From Community Work to Activism." A failed urban renewal experience in the neighborhood in the 1960s and 1970s, which displaced 800 residents, led to a forceful "never again" response from the community decades later. With the formation of a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), community leaders advocated for a legally binding contract this time that would ensure alternative and affordable housing for those displaced. Most important, as Parks and Warren (2009) and Laing (2009) have

documented, were the written guarantees that community organizers and community leaders built-in to the CBA, which would ensure work force development, guaranteed entry into union apprenticeship training programs, and allocation of jobs with benefits and living wages. Lucas-Darby worries that these gains may not be sustained, and that these contractual promises may not even be kept. But from experience in New Haven and other cities, she concludes that community activism, supported by experienced community organizers, is the surest pathway to success for low-income communities that are coping with institutionalized oppression (Simmons & Luce, 2009).

Marilyn Moch takes us abroad as she shares her experience in Yugoslavia (now Croatia). "Control and Coherence in Service Delivery: The Yugoslav Experience" brings us inside a worker-managed workplace where self-management reversed decades of state centrism prior to World War II. Brigades, Workers' Councils, Business Committees, and Workers' Organizations (Unions) became the units of workplace authority, as decision-making at all workplaces devolved to the workers, while the managers managed. The Workers' Councils routinely hired social workers to carry out broad Employee Assistance Program (EAP) functions, not based on supervisory referral (as envisioned in Roman and Blum's (1988) "Core Technology"), but rather according to a "Comprehensive Services Program" self and peer-referral model (Kurzman, 1993) which conceptualizes EAP services as entitlements. The result of self-management, communal decision making, and worker control of the work environment (Rocha, 2009) produced a humanizing of the workplace, entirely concordant with social work values. Moch concludes with the powerful observation that controlling one's own work life is a necessary, but not sufficient step toward moving in harmony with social work principles.

Louise Simmons' entry entitled "Work and Economic Justice: Connections with Social Work" again underscores the appropriateness and necessity for activism in social work practice. Her experiences as an activist, formerly in Wisconsin and currently in Connecticut, demonstrate the power of a social work perspective (Simmons, 1994). Her many roles—directing an urban internship program, serving as an elected member of the Hartford (CT) City Council, and participating in progressive social movements and labor-community coalitions—all vividly demonstrate the difference that a skilled community organizer can make in the political arena. Simmons' experience with a protracted strike in Hartford at Colt Firearms in the late 1980s gave her the opportunity to engage her CO students first-hand in an educational experience that no film or textbook could offer. Students witnessed the power derived from developing working partnerships, forging community-based alliances, and building coalitions with unions. Modeling professional behavior as their class instructor, Simmons demonstrated that an educator could be an activist (indeed, *needed* to be one) if an authentic pedagogy means that one has to "walk the walk" as well as "talk the talk." Her course, "Economic Justice, Labor, and Social Work," has become both one of the graduate school's preeminent electives, focused on social workers' obligations under the NASW Code of Ethics and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and a prominent primer for all students in her program on social workers' central role in promoting social and economic justice.

James Williams presents us with a wonderful narrative that reads like a log. "The Role of Labor in Transition to Social Worker" begins with statement that perhaps relatively few social workers could make: "I can't remember when unions weren't part of my life." Before pursuing his M.S.W. (and then Ph.D.), Williams was a rank-and-file member of the International Union of Electrical Workers, Newspaper Guild, United Steel Workers, National Education Association, West Virginia AFL-CIO, and Fraternal Order of Police. He traces his experiences, and the gradual evolution of his ideology, with great humility and candor. His commitment to the labor movement was instrumental in his interest in and transition to social work practice—and

now social work education—where he constantly shares his experiences, professional approaches, and belief in activism and collective representation with his students. In this splendid narrative, Williams' self-awareness, insight, and sensitivity come across with power and authenticity, and we see how blue-collar work and a focus on economic justice (Harding & Simmons, 2009) have shaped his commitment to his students and his profession.

Nan Van Den Bergh's timely entry underscores the value of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CIDS) for work populations that have experienced trauma. In "Debriefing 9/11 through Managed Care: Balancing Ethics and Empowerment with Profit," she speaks forthrightly to the dilemmas incurred by a social work consultant when a for-profit managed care provider contracts for her services. Reminding us of Bakalinsky's classic treatise "People vs. Profits" (1980), Van Den Bergh describes her quandaries with great insight and candor. Told that her CIDS model must conform to the more simplistic (spelled: cheaper) framework which the managed care provider had pre-approved, Van Den Bergh has to decide, for example, if groups of 80 (instead of 8), arranged on a casual drop-in basis (instead of by appointment), and conducted solely by a social worker (without customary collaboration with an occupational partner) represent an acceptable compromise, or a de facto vitiation of the standards for effective CIDS intervention. Such are the predicaments frequently present in nontraditional world of work settings, posing the core conceptual question: Whose agent are we? While many occupational social work practitioners and authors would argue that it is in fact possible—indeed fruitful—for professional social workers to practice in proprietary settings and under for-profit auspices (Akabas, 1983; Kurzman, 2000), Van Den Bergh vividly illustrates the struggle of a seasoned social worker facing daily real-life conundrums most of us would wish to avoid.

In tandem with the above entry comes Jennifer Shotlander's powerful first-hand commentary on the life of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) consultant. She too struggles with ethical issues, and the complexity of practicing solo in non-human service settings in the labor-management arena. Her life as a consultant involves one-on-one counseling, management coaching, new employee orientation, lunchtime wellness workshops, consultation with union leaders, supervisory training, and support for a CIDS team which serves several settings. No two weeks ever look the same, but she shares one week very candidly with the reader. Like Nan Van Den Bergh above, Shotlander confronts struggles with observing confidentiality, maintaining appropriate professional boundaries, managing her own counter-transference, and adhering to the precepts of the social work profession and its Code of Ethics (2008). What is prohibited and what is permitted, she implies, are the relatively easy issues. For her, the hard issues involve reconciliation of management's goals, such as efficiency, productivity, and profit, with the norms and sub-dominant values of her profession, such as due process, pluralism, and social justice (Kurzman, 2009). We are left with frameworks for resolution but never with absolute answers, which seems entirely consistent with the practice reality.

Vorricia Harvey, Philip Hong, and Kweli Kwaza's commentary in "Shared Responsibilities: Challenges of Client Empowerment in Workforce Development" takes us inside a sector of practice rarely discussed, even in the occupational social work literature. Despite federal laws and funding, through programs such as the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, and Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002, they discover that the placement of low-income, largely unskilled community members in the working world is problematic. Even in relatively good economic times (which we currently do *not* enjoy), meeting contract and funding expectations proves difficult to achieve. In such a situation, the authors movingly ask: How do social workers avoid the feeling that they are just "part of the poverty pimping game?" One is reminded of Bertha Capen Reynolds' observation (1975, p.10) that sometimes one needs to have "faith in the

capacity of ordinary people to do a better job for themselves than anyone outside their situation could do for them." The authors conclude that they, as outsiders, need to engage not merely in skills training and remedial education, but also in initiating a client empowerment process that starts with hope and leads to self-sufficiency.

Sheila (Shelley) Akabas walks us through her experience as Director of The Workplace Center at Columbia University in implementing a contract to assist the New York City Fire Department with gender integration. More than any other uniformed service, fire departments are known as male enclaves; despite modest prior efforts by the FDNY, the New York City department proved no exception. Set in motion by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a successful class action law suit in 1978, 42 women became NYC firefighters in 1982. Seeing strong systemic resistance and rapid attrition, the department turned to the well-known and respected Columbia Center in 1988 to advise and assist them with their efforts toward more successful gender integration, hence their compliance with the 1978 class action edict (Akabas, Grube, & Krauskopf, 1989). Using Kurt Lewin's Field Theory and a Force Field Analysis (Brager & Holloway, 1992), Akabas and her colleagues pursued a sophisticated two-year plan of intervention. However, she candidly notes that in the end "We did all the 'right' things, but success eluded us." There was frankly no way the consultants could foresee the unremitting bitterness, fury, and determined opposition of the firefighters (and their wives). The brotherhood marshaled and closed ranks, providing a closed system for which even Lewin's sophisticated conceptual framework could not offer a path of resolution. Today, the FDNY has fewer women firefighters than in 1990, but this bittersweet process of engagement has in no way tempered the author's steadfast commitment to action research, equal rights, and social justice.

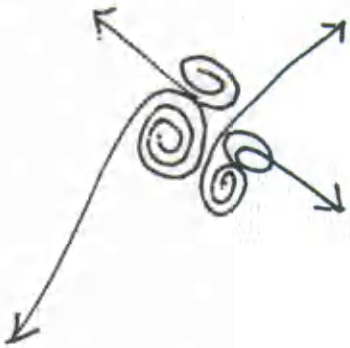
Daniel Molloy's paper entitled "Social Work at Sea" records astute observations from one social worker's remarkable 30-year commitment to merchant seafarers and their families. Initiating a Member Assistance Program (MAP) at the National Maritime Union in the late 1970s, Molloy crafted a MAP model that blended professional provisions with peer assistance (Molloy, 1989). The emphasis would be on claiming benefits (including veteran's status), addressing alcoholism (on ship and shore), serving as an advocate for members within the maritime industry, and providing peer support for seamen who spend long and lonely periods away from family at sea. Recognizing the centrality of work in seafarers' lives—despite its many hardships—Molloy envisioned the presence of a latent and inherent symbiosis that would support the melding of peer and professional intervention (Molloy, 1986). He conceptualized that the use of natural helping networks, embedded in the world of work, could effectively complement and supplement the activities of professional staff at the MAP. Enriched by vivid and effective examples from the author's long and fruitful career, the reader readily concludes that members of the social work profession are extraordinarily well-suited for work in such a uniquely collaborative member assistance setting. Molloy illustrates that the goodness-of-fit, of which we so often speak, is present.

Finally, Mica Slavek-Lamothe's "A Tale of Two Jobs: When the Body is the Workplace" stands up to its subtitle: "What This Social Worker Learned about Breastfeeding along the Way as a Working Mother." The narrative chronicles the personal experience of a social work student who was also a breastfeeding mother, as she navigates bumps and moguls at her work setting. Despite the fact that she presents a very personal journal, Slavek-Lamothe makes the point that currently half of all workers today are women, and that they are not present at the workplace merely to fill in for men (like the fabled Rosie the Riveter during World War II). In the language of labor economics, women today have a permanent attachment to the labor force that is no different than for men. The reality is that they overwhelmingly are (or plan to become) working mothers, and that many wish to have the opportunity to breastfeed both at home and at work. Under terms specified in The Patient Protection and

Affordable Care Act of 2010 (just signed into law on March 23 of this year), employers with 50 or more employees will be expected to adapt their workplaces to the legitimate (albeit unique) needs of workers who are also nursing mothers. Although this may be perceived by some as a women's issue, in one respect, it is a universal issue as well, since our entire society should be invested in maintaining a stable work force, personal privacy, gender equity, and healthy children. These very children, after all, are our next generation of workers.

I conclude with thoughts about the profound meaning of work, and the importance of this issue of *Reflections*. To its great credit, the journal has chosen to feature the subject of "work," and the participants in this endeavor have each made enduring and profound contributions. My good friend and colleague Shelley Akabas and I have written several books on the topic (Akabas, Kurzman, & Kolben, 1979; Akabas & Kurzman, 1982; Kurzman & Akabas, 1993; Akabas & Kurzman, 2005) and we have also committed a major portion of our work and careers to developing a better understanding the world of work arena. Too often overlooked, even by sophisticated scholars, work, workers, and work organizations are a pivot–not only for society but for the individuals within. I am reminded that Studs Terkel's famous book titled *Working* (1974) after all is knowingly subtitled: "People Talk about What They Do All Day, and How They Feel about What They Do." One would almost think that Studs was a social worker! In this moving book Terkel writes (xiii), "Work ... is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying. Perhaps immortality too is part of the quest." Dominique Browning, a magazine editor, recently wrote of the closing of the publication for which she had worked for 12 years (2010, p.26): "Work had become the scaffolding of my life," she opined. "It was what I counted on. It held up the floor of my moods, kept the facade intact. I always worried that if I didn't have work, I would sink into abject torpor ... With the closing of the magazine, my beloved family of colleagues was obliterated. And so was the structure of my life." How could one possibly say it better?

I am therefore deeply grateful to Michael Dover and to the publishers of *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping* for their commitment to the theme of this issue. Understanding "Work and the Workplace" is what it's all about, and how could any subject be more important at this moment in history? I feel grateful to have been asked to write this Introduction, and I want the contributors to know that Michael, the publishers, and I are all in your debt.



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A Path Well Taken: Reflections on Social Work in Occupational Health

Beth Lewis, D.S.W., Smith College

In this narrative, the author shares reflections on her work with other disciplines in the field of occupational health and safety, beginning over 30 years ago in the context of an academic medical center. She describes social and economic realities shaping the "beginnings" of a program designed to address the impact of occupational hazards on workers and families. She discusses the nature of services that developed over the course of the program's development and reflects on her actions as a member of the multidisciplinary team during a memorable episode in the program's history. Additionally, the author discusses the complexities involved in determining a course of action when one's views conflict with other team members, and the ethical issues that may arise in the use of a publicly-sanctioned authority on behalf of a population at risk.

Introduction

A little more than 30 years ago, I stood with others outside a large medical center on the occasion of a ground-breaking ceremony for a new hospital wing. I remember the day well. I was a relatively newly-minted M.S.W., just two years out from graduate school where I had majored in "The World of Work" and less than one year into my role as a medical social worker. This was a time of expansion in academic medical centers around the country. Carter was still in office and funds had been allocated for medical student and physician training, including in the area of occupational medicine.

The hospital expansion carried much significance for the surrounding community; among other things it heralded the promise of new jobs, and organized labor was out in force for the groundbreaking. Owing to personal connections and a general interest in labor, I had made the acquaintance of staff from several unions and I stood among them in the large crowd that had amassed for the ceremony.

"Did you hear?" The local president from the state's largest industrial union was speaking with a health care union rep. "They're going to start up an occupational health clinic."

My ears perked up! I asked a few questions and learned the name of the physician who would be heading up this effort. No sooner had the ceremony ended than I had contacted him by phone and arranged a meeting time to discuss the role that social work might play in this new venture.

As I look back on this eventful day, I realize that I was propelled forward by a strong belief in the importance of worker health, the skills and values that social work uniquely lent to this field, and the rich possibilities for productive work that lay ahead. While I was learning a great deal as a medical social worker, I longed for an opportunity to be engaged in work that was closely connected to the workplace: my ongoing passion.

I couldn't have known that I was about to embark on a journey lasting more than 18 years and providing a richness in practice experience beyond what I could have imagined. My learning began with meeting individuals whose work lives had ended abruptly, sometimes in their 30s or 40s. The devastating effects of job loss and work-related disability had eroded their health, self-confidence, and means of livelihood in many cases never to be regained. I was introduced to the complexities of interdisciplinary teamwork in the context of an institution characterized by long-standing hierarchical relationships. I gained an appreciation for the groups, organizations, science, and laws comprising the field of occupational health and safety and the continuous interplay of these elements in efforts to bring about change. My learning continues in reflecting on a memorable piece of practice at a time when social work was forging a path alongside other professions

in the development of a new model of occupational health care practice.

While working in the field of occupational health and safety, I obtained my doctorate and went on to teach social work and direct a program serving vulnerable populations. In the forthcoming narrative, I return to a time and place in my professional experience that—while removed from my daily thoughts more than two decades hence—continues to have a profound impact on my practice today.

Beginnings of the Program: The Social Context of the Work

From the standpoint of occupational health and safety, this was a very different era from the one that exists today. Jimmy Carter had been elected President just two years earlier and had appointed Eula Bingham as head of OSHA. An occupational health scientist, Bingham called for "an all out effort to combat occupational illnesses and disease" (United States Department of Labor [USDOL], n.d.). The new energy infusing the occupational safety and health movement as a result of Bingham's pro-worker stance unfortunately foreshadowed the backlash that followed on the part of business interests throughout the Carter administration, culminating with the resignation of Bingham and the nomination by Ronald Reagan of Thorne Auchter, the Vice President of a construction firm, in 1981.

In the decade immediately preceding the passage of OSHA, labor had begun to shift its own focus from a traditional emphasis on-the-job safety (i.e., protection against injuries) to dealing with the long-term health effects of occupational hazards (Early, 2008). The "New Directions" grant program had just been established to provide seed money to other organizations to develop and offer training to employers and employees about workplace hazards and their legal rights.

Coalitions for Occupational Safety and Health (COSH) had already been in existence around the country beginning in 1972. The COSH groups had played a prominent role since the passage of OSHA supporting union locals' health and safety work, including safety training and community organizing. Although I hadn't been actively involved with them, I had known people who had during and following my undergraduate years. The occupational health and safety "cause" held much attraction for young, progressive professionals and graduate students including nurses, industrial hygienists, physicians, and community activists; it was seen as an opportunity to join with workers and labor unions in the industrial sector in the struggle for healthy workplaces. The group that rallied around the fledging clinic reflected this perspective and constituted more of a "collective" than a program staff. As whatever start-up funds were then available did not support salaries, most people associated with the new venture worked on a volunteer basis. Some, like me, had other full-time jobs and added voluntary hours to their work day to help out in the clinic. Others were students in the university-medical center complex; still others were neither employed or attending school but were determined nonetheless to add their influence to the beginnings of a new program.

The feeling of camaraderie among the participants—mostly late 20s, early 30-somethings—was unmistakable. The "office" was literally a small closet that had been converted into a work space located in the primary care center; everyone managed to pile in. Characterized by alliances primarily among non-medical groups and organizations in which labor held considerable sway, the occupational health movement exercised a powerful effect over the clinic's "team" concept in the beginning; physician dominance, true of the surrounding medical establishment, was repeatedly and openly called into question by all involved. However, it was the physicians who authored the grants that would provide the basis for funding a future program.

Incorporating the "Activist" in the "Professional": A New Perspective

Those drawn to the clinic brought with them the fervor of volunteers in a political organizing campaign. While my own attraction to a social work concentration in the workplace had held similar meaning, I now began to view my work from the vantage point of a professional, rather than volunteer activist.

During this time, I can recall numerous three- and four-hour long meetings, often held in people's homes, in which the future of the program was discussed with great intensity. In these early meetings, the question as to whether the program would provide a clinical service rather than advocacy alone was the main point of contention. At the time, I don't think I fully grasped that the program's real chance for survival probably lay in developing its clinical function as a training ground for physicians. What I did know was that the provision of services for workers and their representatives was a necessary first step in establishing the program. Following the principle that directed the medical social worker to enable the patient to make the best use of what the physician has to offer (Cockerill, 1950), I conceived of my role as strengthening and making available to workers and labor the resources that the medical setting had to offer. In the seemingly endless meetings, I took the position of supporting the efforts of the physician who had begun taking the necessary steps to establish the clinic as a legitimate program in the department of internal medicine.

While I viewed my perspective as one of forwarding the struggle for health and safety in the workplace, others—arguing against a clinical model—felt that I had been co-opted by the status quo, or that I "identified with the physician." Since I felt secure in my purpose, their criticism did not deter me. In my view, their position risked the loss of the entire venture, since whatever activism we may have envisioned for the program, it had been conceived in the context of an academic medical setting. As Hyman Weiner put it "...an interdisciplinary group doesn't transcend boundaries of the institutional setting" (Weiner, n.d., p. 8).

Looking back now on my view of the social worker's role on the team, I may have missed an opportunity to develop a more collaborative approach toward a shared vision of the program with other group members. Although the group's objective in this case may have differed somewhat from the provision of traditional health care (the context for Weiner's discussion), still the overarching issue he addresses—the dynamics of inter-professional communication—is the same. Weiner writes:

> *"Although social workers feel that they have limited power, they also have a sense of omnipotence and really believe their job is to straighten out the hospital.... Who appointed us as the social conscience?"* (Weiner, p. 4)

The Economic Context

In the late 1970s, steel factories began closing. A recent study looking at the decline in injury and illness rates since the late 1970s and early 1980s attributes approximately 18% of the decline to a shift in employment from more hazardous to less hazardous industries. According to this study, shifts in manufacturing sub-sectors accounted for an additional 5.7% of the decline (Morse, Deloreto, St. Louis, & Meyer, 2009). This shift from manufacturing to service jobs in the 1970s and 1980s was most acutely felt by residents of large industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest (Bound & Holzer, 1993). With the loss of manufacturing jobs, union membership began to decline in the United States. The percent of workers age 16 and older who were members of a union or an employee association similar to a union (12%) in 2007 represents a decline of 8 percentage points in union membership since 1983 (Freeman, 2007).

Many workers who came to the clinic at the start of the program were being laid off from the heavy industries, mainly steel. They had come (often referred by their union) to obtain evaluation and treatment for health problems they had been experiencing and to learn whether these problems were a result of exposures to lead and silica dust. The latter service was critical, as a work-related diagnosis was necessary in order to apply for compensation. In addition to the loss of physical health, impeding a move into alternative employment, workers in manufacturing at this time often lacked the post-secondary education and technical skills needed for comparably paid work in the non-industrial sector (Workforce Alliance, n.d.). Years later, some of the early patients were able to obtain

low wage employment in health care and other expanding sectors; these jobs were a far cry from the "well-paid, unionized industrial jobs that had disappeared" (Olson, 2005).

Learning from the Past: Re-integrating the Social Work Role in Occupational Health

I became interested in the intertwining roots of social work, industrial hygiene, and occupational medicine in the context of Hull House and the settlement house movement in the early part of the 20th century. I sought to convey this history to social work colleagues as well as to other disciplines on the occupational health care team. From the investigatory work of the social survey movement documenting the unmet needs of workplace injury victims, to the subsequent enactment of workmen's compensation, to the work of Grace Burnham, Harriet Silverman, and Charlotte Todes Stern (who founded the Workers' Health Bureau of America in the 1920s), the social work profession had played a significant role in highlighting the impact of workplace hazards on workers and their families and advocating for services and preventive strategies on their behalf (Eastman, 1910; Kellogg, 1914; Rosner & Markowitz, 1987). Looking over notes from a lecture I had given during this time, I am struck by the power of a quote I had included by Frances Perkins. Perkins trained as a social worker and witnessed the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in 1911, in which 147 women and men were killed trying to escape the factory; the actual building structure itself received minimal damage (Perkins, 1921):

> *"Never shall I forget that cold sinking feeling at the pit of my stomach as I watched those girls clinging to life on the window ledge until, their clothing in flames, they leaped to their death from the ninth floor of that loft building."*

Over the next eight years, while continuing as a member of the hospital social work department, I threw myself into all aspects of practice, advocacy, and education in the area of occupational health and safety. Others had already begun to develop the social work role in this arena (Shanker, 1983), and our mutual work in similar settings served as an additional source of support and professional growth. The work involved a range of practice modalities. In the early 1980s, there were advocacy meetings supporting the passage of plant closing legislation as well as opportunities to present in diverse settings ranging from the medical school to the AFL-CIO-sponsored community services series. Joint work with educators in the labor movement led to work with a support group for striking workers and an opportunity to serve as group leader on an occupational health and safety tour to the Soviet Union. We also carried out a study looking at outcomes for injured workers who had applied for workers' compensation (Lewis & Mama, 1987). I recall a colleague teaching in a school of social work noting that the work in the clinic provided an example of "generalist practice," an approach that was being widely introduced to foundation social work curriculum at the time.

The following excerpt from an article written during this period captures the range of services provided:

> *"The work of the early reformers continues to serve as a model for practice with an ever-changing workforce; accordingly, a range of direct service modalities—including psychosocial assessment and evaluation at intake, ongoing individual and family casework, and therapeutic and psycho educational group treatment (both individual and multi-family in membership)—have been developed in the context of the author's work as a member of an interdisciplinary team of health and safety professionals. Community organizational efforts aimed at developing self-help and advocacy groups for the work-injured and disabled have also been utilized, along with outreach*

and education to the labor and industrial community and its social service network contributing to the expansion of clinic services to meet identified needs of the industrial community" (Lewis, 1989, p. 100).

The Efficacy of the Small Group

By 1987, the Occupational Health Clinic had been in operation some eight to nine years. Over 4000 patients had been seen at the program's two clinical settings (a satellite clinic had been located near a large industrial site). According to my contemporary account:

"Patients were referred from a variety of sources, including employers, labor organizations, lawyers, other physicians, and through media promotion and word-of-mouth. Diseases of the lung (asbestosis, asthma, and others) were among the most frequent occupational diseases seen in the clinic. Symptoms due to exposures to lead, organic solvents, and heavy metals are a second common category of problems. Psychiatric sequelae of workplace exposures and injuries are evaluated and referred for treatment" (Lewis, 1993, p. 22-23).

My notes from this period included pages of facts about occupational exposures, the history of occupational medicine, and the nature and treatment of post traumatic stress disorder. They illustrate the extent to which other members of the interdisciplinary team contributed to my professional growth during this time. In addition to medicine and industrial hygiene, psychiatry and psychology, also interested in contributing to and learning from interdisciplinary work in this setting, had become actively involved in the program. In particular, family intervention—still a burgeoning practice modality at this time—offered rich opportunities for interdisciplinary practice, with each of the disciplines offering different expertise and interests.

In addition to working with individuals and families, I led a series of groups for workers, the first being an educational/informational group with an open enrollment. Among other issues, the group had touched on the frustration members experienced coping with illness while dealing with the compensation system. A quote from an influential author and pioneer in group work is worth remembering today (Schwartz, 1986, p. 24):

"The group workers' experience told them that there was something in the nature of doing, and particularly collective doing, that helped people find new ways of looking at themselves and the world around them."

About 10 individuals and families from this larger group requested continuing assistance in the form of a more intensive support group. A multi-family psychoeducational group for recently diagnosed occupational disease patients was thus conceived by a doctoral-level psychology student whose interest was stress in the workplace. The criteria for group membership included that they be a clinic patient/family member, that their presenting complaint had been diagnosed as having a workplace etiology, and that the onset of their complaint/illness had occurred within six months prior to admission to the group. Initial group members included manufacturing, steel, and building trade workers with diseases related to long-term exposures to lead, asbestos, and silica dust. The group ranged from those with significant impairment who had continued to work, to those with mild impairment who had been unable to continue working and had become socially withdrawn. This smaller group dealt with members' personal experiences: anger regarding their experience with employers' lack of responsiveness and failure to assume responsibility for the hazards that had led to their health problems, fears associated with work including re-exposure and physical impairment, and family issues including "role reversal" with wives taking on the role of main breadwinner. Members benefitted from

sharing with others, which added to their self-esteem. Some patients utilized the group to gain support for enrolling in vocational rehabilitation, a route previously rejected due to feelings of hopelessness.

The psychology student served as group co-leader, imparting much in the way of knowledge and skills in group dynamics. Upon reflection, the male/female co-leadership also played a supportive role for group members, most of whom were male workers and their wives. The multi-family short-term group ran for several years with a changing membership; each incarnation of the group reflected the varying perspectives and emphases of psychiatrists who later served in co-leadership roles.

One the early attendees of the group had worked in a chemical plant for many years and had developed a serious lung disease that left him with a permanently disabled while still in his 30s. Two or three years after attending the group he enrolled in a human services program at the local community college, choosing to carry out a semester-long internship at the clinic. The opportunity to work with him in the role of supervisor was, and remains, one of the highpoints of my career. His assignment involved organizing an advocacy event with the local COSH group. In a file from this period, I saved a letter from the COSH director congratulating him on the fine job he had done, and inviting him to become a member of a newly-formed coordinating committee for a local labor council health and safety initiative. Also in this files is a signed invitation to his graduation, a powerful reminder not only of human fortitude but of the learning we gained, as professional staff, from those who made use of our services during this time. In her book about social work services in the National Maritime Union in the early 1940s, Bertha Reynolds reflected on the learning available to professionals working in membership organizations:

> *"Proximity to people working on their own problems in such well-planned ways could not but enhance a caseworker's faith in the capacity of ordinary people to do a better job for themselves than anyone outside their situation could do for them"* (Reynolds, 1951, p. 10).

A Multidisciplinary Team Struggles with an Ethical Dilemma

Two questions—generic to practice in a number of settings—can be distilled from the following reflection on a memorable piece of practice during this time:

> *What does a social worker do if she feels strongly that something other than what the team has determined to be the correct approach should be done?*
>
> *When and in what circumstances does one make use of the public sanctioned authority, however flawed its protective capacity?*

After nearly eight years of practice in the occupational health clinic I encountered a situation which, while not completely unfamiliar, was nevertheless cause for a feeling of uncertainty which signaled a need to reach beyond practice tools which were usually readily at hand. First one, then more workers from a local fabric-coating plant (eventually totaling 37) were diagnosed with liver-function abnormalities; 10 of these had toxic hepatitis caused by exposure to chemicals in the poorly ventilated plant. None of them spoke English.

Familiar were the identifying characteristics of the presenting problem: a 38 year-old worker who had moved to Connecticut from Puerto Rico with his family, presenting to the clinic with a debilitating illness caused by exposures in the workplace. Familiar was the economic backdrop to this worker's plight; with few vocational opportunities on the island, he had taken a job in an unorganized shop employing mainly Spanish-speaking immigrants from Central and South America. Familiar also was the response on the part of the employer: only after the physician provided convincing evidence of the workplace etiology of toxic hepatitis which had

afflicted almost one-third of the workforce (and probably many of those who had already left) would the employer give permission to the clinic's industrial hygienist to inspect and make recommendations for changes in the workplace. Familiar as well was the insurance carrier's decision to contest the workers' claims for compensation on the basis of cause despite the employer's implementation of recommended changes to the work processes that were felt to be contributing to a toxic hepatitis epidemic. Familiar finally was the broader context of social injustice characterized by racism and exploitation giving rise to and perpetuating such conditions in the first place.

Somewhat less familiar was my perception of the wide gap between the set of practice principles to which I, as the social worker, looked as a guide to intervention and those of the other disciplines (medicine, industrial hygiene) on the team, since there was usually mutual agreement among team members. The other team members had decided to work in concert with the employer in an attempt to forego a lengthy delay in government response (and the potential for ultimate inaction) that was felt almost certainly to occur had the team decided to notify OSHA of the problem. The decision to work in concert with an employer who had disregarded recommendations by federal authorities to correct health standard violations in the past seemed to me a risky proposition.

While physicians provided medical treatment and advice to individual patients—including recommending removal from the workplace—and the industrial hygienist provided guidance to the employer on structural changes in the work process, the company continued production and the number of workers showing signs of illness increased, rather than decreased. The physicians then recommended that the company shut down production until the situation could be remedied, threatening to contact OSHA if they did not comply. Only when this threat was leveled did the employer agree to the physicians' recommendations. In addition, the physicians also notified the Board of Health that a toxic hepatitis epidemic had been uncovered; this agency also had the authority to shut down the plant if necessary. While the physicians recognized that the "threat" of contacting OSHA was a powerful motivator in the company's decision to comply with their recommendations, they also viewed the possibility of leaving a response to the outbreak in the hands of OSHA as unacceptable.

In the meantime, there had been no effort to involve the workers in a decision-making process, especially as they were without any elected representation. In the absence of a contractual agreement between workers and management, those who had not filed workers' compensation claims (but who were ordered to stop working in the jobs in which they were likely to be further exposed to harmful chemicals) were either being laid off or, in an effort to avoid the economically unfeasible alternative, were electing to continue working. So while the clinic attempted to work with the employer to contain the outbreak and bring about the necessary changes, the conditions of work—outside the jurisdiction of the clinic—continued under the control of the employer. In fact, had an OSHA inspection taken place, the rights of the workers to compensation during the period in which they were removed might have been better assured, due to the provisions of the Act.[1]

As a general rule in practice, I knew to access available resources for clients if their circumstances warranted them, and if they agreed to such a plan. However, the decision of the other team members to circumvent an OSHA complaint and work cooperatively with the employer to protect workers from further exposure while their claims for compensation were being denied resulted in the creation of major impediments to the implementation of this rule. I felt the workers needed more help than we were providing.

A decision to withhold information about filing an OSHA complaint as a resource for workers is an example of paternalism, wherein decisions are made on the client's behalf in order to protect him. While the conscious withholding of information is the same as lying, there may be circumstances where lying is necessary. On what ethical grounds were we to withhold information from the client(s) that

would have permitted their making well-informed choices? Lewis's article on "Ethical Assessment" (Lewis, 1984) discusses the issues involved in following a principle of maximizing a person's participation in decisions that affect him or her, if doing so may lead to the undesirable consequence of presenting a further threat to his or her well-being. In such circumstances, Lewis explains, "a series of logical steps must be followed in assessing the ethics of the situation to see what conclusions would be reached for further action" (p.209). Applying this analysis to this situation, the decision to withhold information from clients concerning their rights with regard to accessing OSHA resources should have prevailed only if it was clear that the threat to the clients' well-being in providing such information was sufficient to warrant sacrificing their freedom of choice. Since the company's compliance with the clinic had not yet yielded a level of well-being for workers that exceeded that which had existed before, and since the health of more workers was in fact worsening, then the possible consequence of company non-compliance or OSHA non-responsiveness was not sufficient enough threat to the clients' well-being (already compromised) to warrant sacrificing their freedom to choose an alternate strategy. In such a case, the client's rights "would be given precedence over what is thought to be for his own good" (Lewis, 1984, p. 210).

The Role of Students in the Agency: Catalysts for Change

Two MSW students carrying out their field placements in the clinic (both students of color) questioned me privately as to whether the physicians would have made the same decision if the workers were white and English-speaking. One voiced discomfort over her perception of the team's decision to withhold information as hinging on the workers uninformed status regarding their rights, the language barrier, and their fears associated with their immigrant status. The students wondered what rationale we would offer if the workers later learned of the right to contact OSHA, and asked why, if we had known of this option, had we not informed them? The justification for keeping this information from them could only be that by doing so their health and well-being was protected beyond what would have been the case had they been informed.

Utilizing Labor's Involvement: The Labor Advisory Committee

The students had been assigned to convene the next Labor Advisory Committee meeting. I had organized the Committee some four years earlier, beginning with outreach to the member unions of the state AFL-CIO, speaking at monthly meetings of several of the 16 central labor councils state-wide and gauging their interest in such a committee.

The purpose of the committee was to review and ensure labor input into the program's outreach, education, and clinical services as well as to provide education regarding the health and safety priorities of the attending unions' membership. The Committee met quarterly with a core membership of 15; at its height, the Committee had a mailing list of 40 individuals representing labor unions, labor educational programs, and the social service program of the AFL-CIO, activist organizations/COSH groups, and representatives from the offices of elected officials. All clinic staff attended, and staff as well as labor participants and invited speakers presented on topics of interest at each meeting. Given the breadth of its membership, the Committee was able to grapple with issues forming the larger social context of occupational health care. A year earlier, in 1986, the Committee had hosted a presentation from a leader of the effort in Massachusetts to carry a ballot question about a national health program—the first state in the country to do this—and a leader of a coalition working to pass the National Health Services Act which had been introduced annually since 1975 by Ron Dellums, Democrat of California. Now, reading through an article that appeared in the local newspaper at the time about that meeting brings into sharp focus the years of struggle for universal health care that have led up to our current impasse (Barbuto, 1986)[2]. Sometime later, participation began to dwindle and the Committee ended. By this time, most

of the unions were familiar with the work of the clinic and were actively working on issues within their local; the original purpose of the group no longer held the salience that it had for either the clinic staff or the participants. However, when the program faced loss of funding from the hospital in the late 80s- early 90s, many members of the group were quickly activated to support state legislation to fund a statewide network of occupational health clinics.

Based on their experience in the clinic, the students had decided to focus the upcoming Committee meeting on the issue of minority workers' occupational health risks. Earlier they had expressed concerns that the population seen in the clinic was overwhelmingly white, reflecting the demographics of the unionized workforce. The students reasoned that this did not make sense, since workers of color were at higher risk. Minutes from this meeting (April, 1987) indicate that the students presented statistics including a 20% higher disability rate among workers of color compared to whites, and led a discussion on the barriers to accessing clinic services for minority workers in hazardous jobs and work settings.

Meanwhile, I had begun pursuing a plan that the team had agreed upon, which was exploring other community resources that might be available for the workers. A local multi-service agency serving a mainly Latino population had indicated that while they did not have the resources to help address the workplace problem, the workers could present for help with referrals to entitlement, housing, or employment programs. An agency in another part of the state with which I had developed strong ties (a large health care council whose mission was to improve the health of the Latino community) indicated that while they couldn't offer direct help, they had just been visited the previous day from a union organizer who had visited them specifically hoping to learn about workplaces employing Latino workers in which workplace health, and other working conditions, were problematic. They suggested I contact him and gave me his number.

I knew that any involvement with an organizer might signal the end of the clinic's private collaboration with the employer. I thought about how to approach the situation: I was not interested in undermining the clinic's efforts, but felt that making contact with the organizer would be important.[3] I thought about the upcoming Labor Advisory Committee meeting that would focus on minority workers and felt that this organizer's involvement could be beneficial to the Committee as well as to other workers at risk. I decided to contact him and invite him to the next meeting which was to take place the following month. The Labor Advisory Committee, created years earlier, proved to be a vehicle through which to incorporate his involvement.

The organizer of course wanted to know something about the clinic's experience with minority workers; I talked in general about our experience in this area. He asked whether he might be able to speak with any of the workers we were currently seeing. I explained that I could not share this information, but offered to talk with the physician to see whether s(he) felt it would be helpful to provide his name to the workers; if the physician agreed and the workers were interested, they could contact him. In the meantime, the organizer indicated that he would come to the next Committee meeting and we would meet then.

Paving a Path for Worker Involvement

I then went to the physician providing care for this group and shared information about the union organizer's interest. The physician agreed that it would be a helpful resource for the workers. I contacted the patient we had seen initially and, through an interpreter, explained the organizer's interest and gave the patient his name and number. I knew that by doing so the possibility for outside intervention was now being opened and that the clinic's decision to act alone on behalf of the workers might come under some scrutiny, but felt that this was a necessary step.

Within 72 hours of that phone call, the workers had been organized and plans were underway to bring them out on a strike for wage, health, and safety improvements. To launch the union's campaign, the organizer had contacted the local health department, the regional office of OSHA, the press, the mayor's office, the local office of

environmental protection, the state attorney general, and an organization representing the community in which the plant was located that had long wanted the plant shut down. When I received a call from the organizer letting me know that these groups were converging at a meeting later in the day at his union headquarters, I immediately let the director of the clinic know so that a spokesperson from the clinic could be present to explain the clinic's decision to work privately with the employer rather than risk the consequences of inaction on the part of OSHA. While initially this turn of events created some friction within the program, as the strike progressed the workers' plight became a cause célèbre throughout the state and the clinic was hailed for its work on behalf of the workers in uncovering the problem and bringing to light the weakened state of federal occupational safety and health oversight at the federal and regional levels. Within four months, the union was voted in and the occupational health clinic was contracted by the company to provide on-going occupational healthcare, medical surveillance, and consultation as part of the stipulation of the contract.

Post-script: Using an Indirect Path to Effect Direct Action

In an interesting study about the issue of power on the team, one author writes about the nurse (DiPalma, 2004, p. 305):

> *"There was no direct path for her to address her concern within the current system other than trying to influence an open-minded physician to write an order for a consultation, and there was no other obvious forum in which she could engage with others in a productive discussion about her concerns and frustrations. The only paths she could use were indirect."*

In some way this statement resonates with me in the context of this reflection. In "connecting with community resources"; in speaking with the director of a long-standing health care agency, knowledgeable about issues of health and safety for Latino workers; in following up a lead that this director provided to a union organizer *specifically* interested in organizing Latino workers around the issue of workplace hazards; in utilizing an existing formal committee structure as a vehicle for inviting labor's voice; in speaking with the attending physician (in lieu of raising the issue in a staff meeting) who I was reasonably assured would agree to providing this contact as a resource to her patients; in contacting the worker personally to let him know about this resource and the fact that the union organizer was interested in speaking with him about working conditions at the plant; in short, by paving a path for possible direct involvement of the workers in addressing the problem they faced, should this be something they desired, and linking this with the physician's recommendations, I had more than an inkling of what would be the likely outcome of these efforts. But due to the fact that a different course of action had been chosen by the team that limited the workers' opportunity to take action on their own behalf, to some extent I had taken an indirect path to arrive there.

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Footnotes

[1]Provisions under Section 11(c) of OSHA include protection for employees who have exercised rights to refuse to work when faced with an imminent danger of death or serious injury. Retrieved from http://www.osha.gov/Publications/3021.html.

[2]Expounding on the provisions of the Dellums Bill, journalist Joan Barbuto wrote: The bill would create a U.S. Heath Service to provide all citizens, without charge, medical, dental, and mental healthcare delivered by salaried health workers. It would emphasize occupational health services and the presentation and treatment of illness. The system would be governed by elected community boards supervised by district and regional boards and a National Health Board. Healthcare would be provided through facilities maintained by the service including community health centers, doctors' offices, nursing homes, district hospitals, and regional medical centers. The service would be financed by a surtax on individuals and corporations, the elimination of health deductions on income tax, and Medicare and Medicaid funds.

[3]For an analysis based on the perspective of one of the medical team members, see Cowan's thesis: "Ms. Lewis also recognized that there were more issues to resolve than just those involving health and safety. Workers had no benefits, were required to work 12-hour shifts, and were fired indiscriminately. They needed more help than the clinic or an attorney could provide" (Cowan, 1988, p. 52).

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Role Change: From Community Work to Activism

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The author's first work experience was in a community that would later become her permanent residence. The community had a rich history prior to being subjected to devastating and failed urban renewal. As new development projects come to the community, local residents are determined to prevent slight and oversight that was experienced previously. Employment of local residents was a critical negotiation point in a Community Benefits Agreement and the result is a First Source Center. Because of committed community activism, these issues were a part of an enforceable contract and continued community activism is critically important for future economic development.

Learning to Work in a Community

Fresh out of graduate school, I moved to a new city with high hopes of "working with people." I was anxious about landing a job and using some of the skills I had learned in graduate school. After searching for one month, I interviewed for a job as a community organizer. I was excited about the community where the job was located as well as the responsibilities—that was until the salary was revealed. It was less than $6,000. What a surprise, even 30 years ago! I could not believe what I was hearing. I decided to indicate my keen interest and stated that I needed to think about the offer overnight. After listing my loan re-payments and rent expenses, I could not reason this salary amount; so my answer was "no." This was a big disappointment because I wanted to work. I felt a need to start working to build the list of "experiences" that were needed for my resume. I continued to meet as many people as possible and indicated I was unemployed with a fresh master's degree. I also faithfully searched the want ads daily. Within a month, another offer came, and I was pleased when hired as a job developer by a faith-based skills training development organization based in the Hill District/Uptown. The agency offered training in several skills areas, as well as GED preparation. I anxiously counted down the days before I would start the following Monday.

Although I was excited about the job, I soon realized that because I was new in the city I did not have ready-made contacts that would be helpful when seeking jobs for trainees. As a quick study, I asked the four individuals I knew for advice. They offered helpful suggestions for contacts, and I continued to "let my fingers do the walking" through the yellow pages. My supervisor suggested a specific number of placements per month that were needed for gainful employment of the trainees. There was even a chart on the wall that tracked the placements. I looked at the chart daily, hoping that today would be the day to record a number resulting from my hard work. This was a task I would conquer, and my supervisor was encouraging, although I felt a need (and pressure) to increase my numbers. My drives through the city to meet with prospective employers provided mini city tours, and I noted every business and agency along the way as a future contact.

As a job developer, I quickly realized that I needed to get to know the person for whom I would be scouting a job. These initial contacts were especially helpful, and most often information from the trainees and their counselors proved vital when considering the most appropriate match with a prospective

employer. Many of the trainees wanted to work, but often faced situations that smacked of racism and discrimination. Interactions with the trainees were learning experiences unlike those that I had in the classroom or during my years growing up in Mississippi. I heard stories and concerns first-hand that I had previously only read about in books such as Liebow's *Tally's Corner* and Valentine's *Hustling and Other Hard Work*. Clients' stories reminded me of the street corner men whose jobs included nondescript chores (Liebow, 1967, 51-59). I also recalled Valentine's caution against a "blame the victim" syndrome and her analysis of the residents of Blackston (Valentine, 1978). She identifies the wider social systems that perpetuate an unequal status for African Americans.

Admittedly, I also encountered situations that required more personal discipline on the part of the trainee. Initially, after identifying job sites and interview times, additional follow-up was required for some trainees. In some instances, this meant meeting with the individual to review and emphasize time management skills, proper dress, and language usage. This was a tough eye opener for me. I soon learned that any number of factors impinged on the ability to follow through responsibly and promptly with a scheduled interview. However, I was determined to do all that was necessary for individuals to land a job; I sometimes found myself doing wake-up calls, providing transportation to the job interview, and conducting last minute mock interviews. I recall the sense of hopefulness of many trainees about this opportunity: the desire to be self-sufficient, and the need to provide for their families. They expected the work environment to be receptive and supportive, and they hoped to survive the probationary period.

During lunch on most days, I would walk or drive through the community in which my job was located, as well as an adjacent community. I became interested in the rich history of these communities, so I read up on the history and talked with colleagues who were familiar with the area.

It is now 30 years later and I find myself living blocks away from my first job in this city. At that time, I had no way of knowing that I would call one of these communities my home, would be actively involved in community activities, and would be working as a concerned citizen to revitalize the community that I had admired 30 years earlier.

My current community has a major concern: economic survival. Employment for local residents is an immediate concern at the heart of economic viability. Large development projects have been planned for my community. As this unfolds, local residents believe they should not be forgotten and should have their voices heard about these projects. Additionally, they believe the developers should want community involvement through employment opportunities. Local residents were not given consideration when earlier urban renewal efforts were approved. These earlier efforts failed and today displaced residents still carry memories of the devastation of the social fabric of the community. The richness of Pittsburgh's Hill District included national and internationally known artists and sportsmen, including August Wilson, Art Blakely, George Benson, Stanley Turrentine, Mary Lou Williams, Billy Eckstine, Josh Gibson, and Cool Papa Bell. Well-known entertainment and cultural venues included the New Granada Theatre, the Hurricane Lounge, the Savoy Ballroom, and the Crawford Grill—famous jazz spots that attracted local and international patrons. Recently, a community located near one of the new massive re-development projects (a new hockey arena) observed plans for economic development moving forward without their input. Acting with determination, the community organized so that they could also be active participants at the planning table. The realization of the existence of valued community human assets buttressed this determination for mobilization. Furthermore, the community was positioned for renewal capacity building using residents' talents and skills. My first job dealt with employment opportunities; then and now I find myself searching for opportunities in the same community where I started as a job developer. But this time, I'm a concerned resident who is convinced that collective action will lead to desired outcomes.

Working Towards a Community Strategy

Because I am once again concerned with employment opportunities for residents in my community, I am actively involved in organizing efforts. For two years this has meant attending weekly and monthly meetings that determined organizing strategies to be used as a means of conveying residents' seriousness and determination. From 2006-08, residents addressed the proposed new development coming to our community in a space that had been stripped away 50 years earlier. The primary concern was to stop the repeat of a major failed urban renewal effort in the late 1960s and 1970s, which displaced 8,000 residents. The main strategy considered—which would possibly bring with it immediate returns—was a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). A CBA would demand inclusion of local residents' voices during the planning stages of development projects and offer community give-backs or benefits. Because urban development projects were springing up in low—income communities and ignoring their neighbors, the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department urged more proactive input by residents prior to development projects approval. This position meant more involvement and influence over local development processes by local residents. A CBA—a legally binding agreement or documented contract between a developer of a proposed project, governmental officials, and coalitions of local residents and organizations—also begins to redress past injustices and begins to reconcile lingering oversights in an effort to plan for a more sustainable future. CBAs offer low-wealth and racially diverse communities the opportunity to negotiate directly in organized and unified formats with those in control of development capital (Ho, 2008; Salkin, 2007).

Community Activism and a Community Benefits Agreement

Although I was not living in the community during the 1950s and 1960s, the hurt and disregard experienced by the community at that time should not occur again. With the announcement of a new arena for the local professional hockey team were concerns about employment opportunities for local residents. The coalition organized by the residents identified community equity as a primary concern. I began attending community meetings in early 2006 that specifically addressed proposed new economic development. The need for community residents to take action was imminent; they realized that "their seats at the table were empty." It was not until elected officials and religious leaders cautioned the group about the need to move with more deliberate speed that specific actions were discussed. At a strategy meeting on January 27, 2007, approximately 15 concerned residents met to strategize in response to rapidly moving decisions regarding the new hockey arena. However, up to this point Hill residents' input was nonexistent. I recall the different positions that were expressed regarding whether immediate actions should take the form of non-violent protests or be more confrontational. This reminded me of the discussions I participated in during my undergraduate years in Mississippi during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Now as then, we were saying we must stand up for what we know is "right" even though it may mean irritating some local and state elected officials. After lengthy discussions, it was decided that our immediate action was to hold a press conference the following Sunday. Within 24 hours a detailed press statement was crafted which included the main points identified at the strategy session. Bundled in layers of clothing and a wool scarf and hat, I stood with other residents in front of Mellon Arena on that cold Sunday afternoon as we proudly expressed our rights to full participation in development decisions and voiced other concerns. A determined strength was apparent among the community residents at the press conference. Our press statement indicated a fierce determination to be included in all talks regarding the development of the new arena, especially since public tax dollars would be involved. This collective of faith-based institutions, private citizens, and service and development entities identified the present moment as a pivotal point that could determine a new path and brighter future for our community.

Meetings among this initial group of residents followed, including some appearances by government officials. However, four months later another series of meetings began with backing from organized labor organizations, with the intent of forming a coalition. Labor organizations were initially viewed as ideal partners because of their continuing and committed fight against social injustice. They touted their concern that public investments were not benefiting the public. This was congruent with concerns of community residents. Clearly, the stance taken by community residents was a response to an historical injustice with a renewed spirit to prevent another. The Hill community was now focused on empowering itself so that a repeat of failed urban renewal efforts would not occur. On August 19, 2008, after approximately 18 months of negotiations, countless hours of meetings and protest marches, a CBA was approved. The benefits included workforce development, living wages, affordable housing, smart growth and livability, and community services and improvements. These are often the ultimate goals of a community coalition, and can be seen as common goods for a community (Baxamusa, 2008). Such work often involves extensive negotiations; in exchange a developer may receive a community coalition's support of the proposed project while leveraging its chances of receiving government subsidies and project approval. Workforce development opportunities for local residents can have an immediate and, hopefully, long-term benefit for the community. Communities that face high unemployment rates and low skills training should consider development projects that seek to hire and train residents rather than employ individuals outside the neighborhood. Local hire actions will develop human capital resources within the community (Chaskin, Joseph, & Chipenda-Dansokho, 2001).

Prior to the inclusion of employment in the CBA, residents engaged in a priority setting process that resulted in the document Blueprint for a Livable Hill. The priorities called "planks" would serve as benchmarks for addressing residents' concerns and lead to meaningful engagement of residents in any new development. With employment a lingering issue in the community, this would allow developers of the arena to contribute directly to the economic survival of the community through Hill-employed workers. The "plank" emphasized training, hiring, and apprenticeship/ trainee programs. The latter would require unions and subcontractors to provide training and hire community residents in service unions, the trades' apprentice programs, and management positions. Local residents would be recruited and trained for permanent jobs at all levels of employment in service unions, trades, and management. Lessees at the new development would also be required to recruit and hire local residents. The creation of a "first source" center would become the vehicle that would serve as the prime contact point for developers to communicate employment opportunities and also serve as a clearinghouse for inclusion of local residents in all employment areas from construction to jobs at all levels throughout the complex when opened. The more immediate action to address employment was the First Source Center, which was a CBA benefit. The First Source Center opened on June 10, 2009 and manages the referral of residents to jobs at the new hockey arena, after receiving first notice of openings. This one-week advance notification applies to all job openings, prior to the release of public announcements.

The dedication ceremony for the Center, which was held in August, was filled with the usual upbeat comments from elected officials, community leaders, and corporate sponsors. The joy of the occasion was tapered for me because my usual positive beliefs for my community were not a match for what I was hearing regarding the anticipated outcomes of the Center. Where were the individuals that are referenced in the speeches? Was I "out of touch" and unfamiliar with community residents who would benefit from the Center? My continuing concern about qualified residents who could be employed immediately on the new arena construction caused me unrest. Undisputedly, the Center is needed, but its programming must be multi-focused on present and future opportunities. Future training programs will prepare residents for

jobs one to two years out. However, no program would prepare residents for jobs on the current construction site where every day land was being cleared and the foundation was being poured. Prior targeted behaviors that left adults unqualified for some construction jobs are irreversible. So the question is—What can be done to prevent this from happening in the future? Maybe the answer lies with our future generation: community teens and youth. Giving hope to the youth of the community is not the only solution. Other programs and support systems must be considered. Several leadership programs are being introduced to Hill youth with explicit goals of providing mentoring and leadership skill development that will prepare them for various future leadership and employment roles within the community.

It takes the input of the whole "village" to address the lingering problem of qualified community residents who will fill jobs identified as part of the CBA benefit. I felt compelled to structure an education plank that was among the priorities considered by Hill residents. This plank was included among those in the "*Blueprint for a Livable Hill*." A year later this plank was approved for inclusion for funding as part of the State of PA Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP). The NPP award supports Hill college students who have indicated a commitment to return to the community after graduation.

The First Source Center devotes energies to assist all residents with job placement. However, a continuing concern for me and the local organizing group is the employment of local residents at all levels of management and service within the new arena facility, as well as the adjacent hotel and development of acreage next to the existing hockey arena. Would the arena developer and the hockey team see any job as fulfilling the employment CBA work benefit, with most being in the service area? Vigilance by the Center's staff and community residents is required to monitor this component of the CBA benefit. The Center is currently funded by a two-year grant; therefore, the long-range planning that should be part of its work is questionable. Hopefully, additional funding will be forthcoming. An extended life will allow for its effectiveness to be evaluated and measurable outcomes to extend beyond present employment opportunities to future possibilities. I recall the many discussions during organizing and strategic meetings about the need to work with unions and project developers on workforce development. During many of these conversation comments also turned to concerns for identifying residents who could meet the qualification needed for employment. Comments early in strategy meetings recounted the deep-seated problems experienced by qualified residents in the community, such as drug-related and violent crimes. During an earlier request for local residents to work on a development project close to the community, a local agency put out a call for workers. Approximately, 300 local residents responded, but only about 30 residents qualified for an interview because of drug problems, criminal records, and the lack of a driver's license. This demonstrates the breadth of the task facing the First Source Center.

My community realizes the importance of income-producing opportunities for its future sustainability. Unemployment rates have a direct impact on the economic viability and sustainability of a community. With employment comes a greater sense of personal value, as well as a sense of stability, satisfaction, purpose, and financial security (Center on Race and Social Problems, 2007). In Pittsburgh, African American men and women are twice as likely as whites to be unemployed (Center on Race and Social Problems, 2007, pp. 41-42). These figures highlight the recognition by community residents to emphasize the need for employment opportunities for local residents. These startling figures provide the backdrop for one major push in the CBA: the establishment of a "first source center" to assist local employable residents. This benefit and the expected commitment of developers to give back meaningful tangibles to the community is one essential component of community renewal.

Recently, I read a publication that noted the value of racial equity in employment as well. It indicated that "inequity imposes high economic costs on virtually every actor in the regional economy including homeowners,

renters, rich and poor, the idle and workers alike" (Sustainable Pittsburgh, 2009, pp 3). Qualified workers benefit not only themselves, but neighborhoods, communities, and regions. This is a fact that Hill community advocates realized and, thus, pushed for inclusion of a "work" CBA benefit.

Changes Come with Renewed Hope and Continuing Involvement

The questions now confronting this community as a whole and the activists working for change within it include: How do we work now to ensure a positive and promising future outlook for our youth? And how do we prepare them for future employment opportunities? We are unable to change the historical situations of those men and women who felt a sense of hopelessness and isolation and were caught in a series of unacceptable behaviors that lessen their chances for gaining meaningful employment and succeeding in this society. But community advocates can set a foundation for our youth. I will continue to be engaged because I want my community to strive in the future and to be a part of the economic growth taking place around our community. We must work now to provide our youth with hopefulness, inclusiveness, and real possibilities. We must help them to see that they possess leadership skills that will allow them to make a difference in their lives and others. No matter how small a part I play, my hope is that local programs will provide our youth with resources that will enable them to develop their leadership skills and provide useful information about skills development that will lead to productive employment in the future. Most important is that residents from my community will be qualified to fill jobs that come with development projects within our community and beyond.

For me, community activism is special and satisfying work, even though it can be demanding and sometimes filled with compromise and disappointment. Committed residents concerned about the past, present, and future status of their community, continue to be involved. This commitment is often accompanied by participation in all aspects of making the community as attractive as possible for current and future occupants. Some adult residents may carry feelings like those expressed by the trainees I worked with 30 years ago, but upcoming generations must believe in their value in being contributing members of their community and of society. They must also be prepared to compete confidently in all employment fields. Future employment opportunities can be part of development projects' commitment to the community. Community residents must be prepared to be involved so that there are "give backs" to their community. Residents must advocate for and be prepared to take advantage of all opportunities such developments present. Community assets exist and further nurturing is required. This need is acknowledged and is being addressed, in many instances, by Hill leaders.

These examples from the intersection of my own community practice and the world of work suggest that, more and more, community organizing will be about issues of jobs and the effects of unemployment. Twenty years ago I established a bond with this community, and today the attachment is stronger than ever. This is a community with many assets that can and must be developed. I will remain active and work toward the future development of this community's human capital.

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Control and Coherance in Service Delivery: The Yugoslav Experience

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This narrative comments on the influence of worker "self-management" on the organization and delivery of social services in the former Yugoslavia. The author focuses on how the system affected the accountability of social workers and service delivery, as well as on worker, community, and client involvement in decision-making. She concludes that social workers' control over their work life and involvement in decision-making is a necessary—but not a sufficient—requirement for implementing social work values and meeting life goals.

In the United States, social services are generally administered by either not-for-profit or governmental agencies. In both cases (excluding very small agencies) the structure is typically hierarchical: with direct service personnel, supervisors, administrator(s), and, in the case of not-for-profit agencies, a board of directors. A personnel department, the board, or the administrator makes hiring decisions, and policies come from the top down. Those served are referred to as "clients," or by the term "customers," though the implied ability to refuse service in favor of another provider is not usually available. In any event, they are external to the provider agency.

Some organizations have upended this relationship to varying degrees, with regard to both the providers and the users of services. This narrative describes my experience with one such agency, the municipal Center for Social Work (or Zavod za socialni rad) in Zagreb, Yugoslavia (now Croatia).

The former Yugoslavia is the only country to have had worker-managed workplaces on a national scale (Horvat, 1981). The closest extant example is at the Mondragon Corporation in Spain. In the U.S., there have also been several timber and other enterprises based on worker-managed workplaces, including a productivity experiment at the Bureau of Motor Equipment of the New York City Department of Sanitation, where I used to be employed (Moch, 1987, 1988).

Yugoslavian President Josip Broz Tito initiated "samoupravljanje" (or self-management) in the economic sphere for political reasons, and it proved to be undeniably problematic. However, social workers and others in the United States can expand their vision of administrative options from Yugoslavia's experiment in worker self-management (Kras Company, 1985; Prasnikar & Svejnar, 1985; Shephard, 1983).

Yugoslavia abandoned state centrism between 1945-1950 in favor of "social" rather than state control, not only of capital, but of organizational administration. Workplaces in Yugoslavia were redesigned to consist of Basic Organizations of Associated Labor (BOALs) and ancillary support units. In diversified workplaces, the BOALs would be further broken down unto units based on function. The smallest unit was the work group, or brigade (the same term used for the work group in France). Each brigade elected its own leader and representative to the Workers' Council, which may or may not have been the same person. Brigade leaders were working team leaders while higher-level supervision was appointed by the workplace administrator with the approval of the Workers' Council.

The director of each BOAL and Support Unit formed the top of the managerial hierarchy, along with the director of the Workers' Organization (the union). The top decision-making body, the Workers' Council, elected the Business Committee and an Executive Committee from its members—one each for each BOAL. These two committees were responsible for running the organization on a daily basis. Each organization set its own

internal rules for release time to serve on the Business and Executive Committees. Where there was only one release slot, this position was that of the top administrator. The Executive Committees of the BOALs, with the approval of the Workers' Council, hired the top administrator. BOALs could hire members of their Executive Committee from outside the organization, and ads recruiting for these committees and for administrators were posted daily in the newspapers. Administrators were expected not only to be good managers, but to know business and self-management law and keep the organization running efficiently, profitably, and legally. BOALs also had standing committees and standing and temporary commissions.

While there appears to have been a dual hierarchy, the managerial hierarchy was elected to manage; the worker hierarchy was the decision-making body. After the change to self-management, decision-making at all workplaces devolved to the workers. The Workers' Council met once a month, and regular meetings of all workers (called zbor meetings) were held. Certain decisions, such as changes in the organization or in the rules, required a referendum of all the workers at the site. In theory, this worker decision-making continued beyond the workplace, but power, politics, and economics overwhelmed the system at the highest levels. In any event, the goal of this narrative is to discuss worker control of the workplace environment, so the primary focus will concentrate on self-management at the workplace.

To a greater extent than in the U.S., eligibility for and the nature of social services available were tied to the workplace. As a result, what constituted one's workplace was much broader than in the U.S. If a worker left a workplace for any reason (laid off, sick, injured, fired), the last place of employment was still legally considered the workplace until the worker began work at another site. Since the tie would be broken if the worker simply quit without cause, most workers would not quit without first securing another job offer.

The "Zavod za socialni rad" was organized internally in a manner similar to other workplaces, but externally had to market itself for funding and clients either to public sources ultimately funded by worksites, or be hired directly by a BOAL or a Workers' Council as a support unit to provide services.

The Act of Associated Labor of Yugoslavia provided special help for women, the young, disabled, and other "at-risk" workers. The Zavod was established to coordinate the work funded by the Town Council of Zagreb following a proposal submitted by the Institute for Social Welfare to provide "social aid and social protection" for at-risk workers. The Town Council consisted of representatives elected from all Workers' Councils plus additional town units, so the services of the Zavod were available to the general public for counseling and other assistance without charge. However, worksites had to allocate additional monies to obtain on-site social workers. The Zavod provided specialists in psychology, special education, delinquency, and other areas, but most of its workers were placed on jobsites—what we would refer to as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or Industrial Social Welfare. Some, but by no means all, Workers' Councils hired one or more social workers to comply with or go beyond the requirements of the Act of Associated Labor. In Zagreb, there were 58 such social workers in factories—for the most part one to a factory—who received services and coordination from the Institute for Social Welfare. The following discussion comes from my placement in the social work unit of a large electric company, Nicola Tesla.

Tesla had three social workers. As employees of the workers in the company, we were answerable to them through the grievance and disciplinary procedures already described, not to our agency, the Zavod. Our position was more precarious than that of most workers because we were a support unit, not a BOAL. Our head was a chief (one notch below a director) so we had no direct representation on the Executive Committee. Our job security was completely dependent upon whether or not the workers valued our services enough to keep budgeting for our unit. While their co-workers may suggest they come to us, such could only be to help them with a problem, never as a requirement from

their foreman or director without their consent. While the written job description for the social workers read like any of our Industrial Social Welfare units, our job specifics were set by the Workers' Council. This often made for awkward exchanges. For example, as social workers we understood issues of confidentiality. However, workers would not only talk about their problems when other social workers were present, but would often continue to talk when co-workers walked in. Attempts on my part to get them to move to a more private location were usually fruitless. Therefore, I became privy to the unusual range of assistance provided by the Tesla social workers, including:

1. Ordering flowers for a funeral, attending the funeral, and making financial arrangements or the family.
2. Purchasing basic school books in bulk and making them available to the workers at cost. We would also provide financial aid to lower paid workers to purchase school supplies for their children.
3. Issuing funds to meet basic needs, such as rent and winter coats, based on a request for aid form.
4. Advancing part of a worker's sick-pay to his wife due to financial need.
5. Counseling a man having trouble between his kids and his neighbor. The police had been involved, and it was getting out of hand.
6. Referring a worker to a drug treatment program. This man was scheduled for a hearing with the Discipline Commission at work (one of the standing commissions). He admitted that he was making a mess of the job and needed help. He had used drugs all his life "with no problem," but felt it was now catching up with him and he needed help.
7. Counseling a man having trouble coping with his elderly parents and with his own aging.
8. Occasional issuance of condoms from a large cardboard box above the coat closet.

Workers walked in and out of our office all day to obtain information, major and minor, and to utilize the services provided by the unit. There were often timid inquiries from workers trying to find out how to get help. These were either helped on site or referred to the Zavod as appropriate.

The social workers often went onto the factory floor to make ourselves available to more workers. We would answer brief questions, agree to follow-up on a problem, and make appointments for larger issues or those requiring paperwork. We worked later hours than the production workers to make ourselves available to them.

One observation I made was that the role and range of behaviors of these social workers were more like that of public social service workers than private agency social workers in the U.S. Only one of them had an M.S.W. The other two were educated middle-class workers. From the younger of these two there was, at times, overidentification with clients—which is also common with our younger, untrained social workers. He was sympathetic but had few skills to actually counsel workers. The other was an old-timer who knew all the ropes. At times he could behave—as do some of our older public social workers—like the bureaucrat, showing annoyance at a worker who did not know, or did not follow, all the procedures properly. (The specialized M.S.W.s worked centrally in the Zavod.)

It was also the responsibility of the social workers to organize the annual retirement party and dinner, planned by a committee of retirees. This committee also planned picnics, bus trips, and Red Cross drives, all of which the retirees planned and the social workers organized.

The major difference between the role of the social worker at Tesla and in workplaces in the U.S. was that, while the social workers did have an administrative chief, they were responsible to the four BOALs when it came to decision-making. Each BOAL had a Commission for Social Aid. Reports of money spent were made to this Commission, and larger or undefined grants had to be approved by it. These Commissions met every month, prior to the Workers' Council. The consumers of service were thus also the source of funding. At the meetings I attended, the social workers had petitioned for an increase in funds due to

increased usage of their services by the workers and were able to report to the Commission that funds were administratively available. Though the Council had to ratify the funds for increased services, the Commission recommendation would most likely be approved.

In the U.S., the social worker often sees him/herself as a professional: a person with a unique body of knowledge who should be respected for that knowledge, listened to, and followed by those (s)he serves. I did not experience this bias among the social workers I got to know in Zagreb. But the bias was quite evident among some professionals and other technocrats who resented, sometimes with great vehemence, their dependence on workers who they felt should be dependent on them. A surgeon I spoke with resented that a chairwoman on the hospital Workers' Council should have a vote on whether or not he could purchase a new M.R.I. machine. Others such as doctors, lawyers, and technology experts felt that they were privileged by virtue of their training and should not consider themselves superior. (Such professionals, as well as higher-level managers, could not earn more than 3:1 salary ratio over the lowest paid worker at the workplace.)

A word about supervision. While the specialized workers at the Zavod were supervised from that workplace, outplaced social workers were in support units headed by a chief. "Supervised" is not quite the right word, since the responsibilities of the leaders are clearly stated in the rules and differ in many respects from our notion of supervision. If a worker broke the rules, (s)he was referred to the Discipline Commission. Not enforcing the rules was unacceptable, whether by "looking the other way" or by leaders disciplining workers directly. The minutes recording the decisions of the Workers' Council are interesting. While delving into these records would get us off of the subject of this narrative, one decision worth noting reads: "The meeting accepted the petition of A. Selak to the decision of the Discipline Commission, thus rescinding the disciplinary action of the 'warning.' The BOAL is embarrassed that in the Electronic plant, the radio workshop reviewed and held onto carrying out disciplinary actions."

Part of each worker's salary depended on his/her team production, and all of it depended on the organization's profit (or, in the case of Zavod, designated budget). The three basic criteria for a leader to keep his/her standing were (1) enforce the rules; (2) help the unit work efficiently; and (3) maintain a pleasant work atmosphere. If the leader were successful, the workers would be "zadovoljne," meaning satisfied. Satisfied social workers at Tesla hustled to be more productive, which could increase their budget and therefore their paycheck. Perhaps because the workers select—or at higher levels ratify—leaders whose ability and personality they respect, this part of the system seemed to work well. When one of the social workers at Tesla could not be located, our chief instructed her co-workers to find her. They did—at home, preparing her bed-and-breakfast for overnight guests. She came in quickly, and she and her colleagues found it appropriate that she was immediately called in to the office of the chief for a disciplinary discussion. The sense of being treated fairly was pervasive and important and was probably the main reason why, as samoupravljanje fell out of favor as an economic system, workers had no desire to lose their codified voice ("glas") and rights in the workplace. Kardelj wrote:

> *"It is feasible and right to direct and guide the worker in the work to see that it goes successfully, that it follows our work laws and the decisions of the work organization. In this sense, the workers have a social and political right to answers and to work together (with the leaders) because this is how, in our society, we realize the way to bring about the social function (of getting the work done)."* (Kardelj, 1978)

An example of group discipline occurred during a meeting of the Zavod Workers' Council. A worker had received partial pay while on an educational leave of absence, with the understanding that she would return to the

Zavod for at least a year to work. She returned, but left again for good after two months, so the Council voted to fine her the remaining 10 months of partial salary for time not served. Zavod only had 22 workers, so everyone was on the Council. No privacy for such disciplinary action, but all present (the worker involved could have been present, but was not) agreed the discipline was fair. With peer-based discipline such as this, there was no possibility of commiserating with a disciplined friend while secretly agreeing with the punishment. Each co-worker made a public vote.

While such a cooperative system may work well for worker creativity and productivity under the control of the individual (and zadovoljne), one of the difficulties lies in assigning responsibility when things are not going well or if there is a question as to whether or not things could be improved. Workers often did not have sufficient information or knowledge about whether or not their leaders were performing well, especially on the level of foremen and chiefs whose positions were the most under the direct control of the workers (Kardelj, 1979). If productivity was low, could workers have been reassigned? Could work have been provided? Was the foreman helpless in the situation, or was it his fault? What about the chief? Who was responsible?

Some members of our support unit approached a foreman with a suggestion to improve the flow of referrals. The tenor of the discussion was so even, so intent on problem-solving that, coming from the U.S., it was a breath of fresh air. However, the foreman ended by saying that the suggestion couldn't be implemented because it was not in accordance with the rules. Perhaps what he said was true. However, it also sounded like a convenient excuse for not being creative, not being innovative, not, perhaps, even trying very hard, not really listening. Never being the bad guy. It sounded like, "The boss wouldn't like it," was used as a way out by our supervisors.

Another incident occurred at a zbor meeting when the workers voted to work on three Saturdays during the year when their wages would go directly to a fund for making much-needed building repairs in town in preparation for the city, which was hosting a major sports event the following summer. I was impressed until one of the directors told me that it was the responsibility of the leaders of the firm to explain the need in the correct way, so that the workers would vote to contribute to the fund. It was important for the workers to believe that they make the decisions, but it was also important for the leaders to manipulate them into making the right decision. Workers often discussed this process of "manipulare."

Of course the workers could also manipulate the system. One day at Tesla, the workers were called to the shop floor, not for a zbor (decision-making) meeting, for which there would have to be advance notice, but for an informational one. While everyone stood in a cramped space at a relatively open end of the shop floor, the chief explained for 20 minutes the Tesla and Yugoslavian economic reasons for the lack of work, what was being done, what the outlook was. Of greatest concern to these workers was that lack of work meant lower incomes, which, as the chief confirmed, showed no indication of getting better soon. Yugoslavia was caught in a period of low productivity and high inflation. The chief explained the need to "stimulate" improvements. He referred to the various strikes throughout the country and expressed his hopes that Tesla could avoid this problem by everyone working together.

One of the working team leaders then spoke up. Though the lengthy speech seemed designed to tire the workers and avoid a debate, both the status of the team leader and the fact that the chief's speech fed into an ongoing discussion on the shop floor kept everyone's attention while she spoke for another 15 minutes. In her work unit, the idle units were the wire winders, who were being phased out as computerized wire-winding was instituted. As computerized units were brought on line, the younger workers were retrained while her unit had little work to do. She argued that "workers want to work" and the older workers should be sent to school and retrained so that their work flexibility would not only be lateral, but upward. "Ne zadovoljan when someone is

hired for a higher-level job while we sit here when we can be trained to do that job." As she spoke people murmured agreements, nodded their heads, and turned to each other to express agreement, the local equivalent of "right on" often heard. When she was finished, a popular foreman got up and spoke, this time urging belt-tightening, use of pension funds to pay salaries, or bookkeeping credits being postponed. He, too, spoke at length. Others argued with him, illustrating another norm, that of the workers having "glas" (i.e., voice.) So the meeting called by the chief merely to try to dissuade the workers from striking by providing information ended in a firestorm of suggestions for alleviating the situation. And the woman had used the magic words "ne zadovoljan," assuring that her suggestion would get serious consideration because the Executive Committee would then have to provide a resolution that would result in "zadovoljne." Otherwise, the issue could be taken to the zbor, where majority vote would rule.

The sense of equality while maintaining role responsibilities was especially noticeable at lunch time when any level of leader would join workers, or vice-versa, and the overriding—indeed the only obvious—relationship was that of co-worker. When a leader would approach workers during the day, they would continue to do what they were doing: no scrambling to get busy and no cutting short a conversation as though it were just about to end anyway. In the U.S., such relationships between supervisor and workers often do exist. However, there is a sense that they are somehow illegitimate. So there is the possibility (and often the fact) that one side or the other will "take advantage" and abuse the relationship, thereby bringing the traditional power relationship into play.

At the end of the day, walking out of the factory in the middle of a mass of workers, the sense was of people going from one responsibility, Tesla, to another—home or whatever. While I assume that Tesla workers would rather do something else if they could and still have money for living, there was no change of attitude at the factory gate or heavy sense of being drained of life during the day. An even stronger and more unusual example of the work environment producing not only a different attitude, but an attitude that seemed to include a sense of personal control and control of work with a corresponding lack of alienation toward the work environment, was evident at the senior living center where I lived. The residents provided much of the staffing for the center. They were responsible for managing the budget set for them by the Town Council (composed of Workers' Councils and others). They set the rates they would pay as well as staff salaries, and determined how much of the discretionary budget would go for food, entertainment, etc. One evening at dinner, my seatmate complained to the waitress about the food. She gave him a puzzled look, then asked why he was complaining to her. She was not on the Workers' Council, but the resident sitting next to him was, so the complaint should be directed to him.

An interesting opportunity for social work involvement in the community was that anyone involved in any organization could request that the zbor make their representation official, that they represent their workplace in the organization. Social workers hired by Tesla could request that they represent Tesla or Zavod in their chosen organization(s). Tesla had representatives in an incredible number of political, professional, and cultural organizations, as well as child care groups, women's groups, educational institutions, etc. Such an arrangement greatly enhanced communication and understanding all around.

Housing issues are not the direct provenance of social workers in either the U.S. or the states of the former Yugoslavia, but they are so central to the needs of many users of services in both countries that it is appropriate to mention them here. In the worker-managed workplaces, funds for building new housing—usually apartment buildings—was budgeted by the Workers' Council. In most cases these funds were made available to a citywide fund to provide worker housing, with the donating workplace having apportioned apartments for its workers. Larger or more prosperous enterprises, like Tesla, often built their own worker housing. Available housing (in Zagreb, these were usually apartments) was

apportioned by the workplace Commission on Housing. Bound by rules which were constantly tweaked by the zbor and the Council, the Commission accepted applications not only for new apartments, but to evaluate worker requests for loans to maintain and repair existing housing or to renovate existing apartments or houses available to them but uninhabitable. Priority for loans was based on a point system, with a worksheet for each applicant. One day as we were slogged through 30 applications, a typist came into the room with some finished work, taking advantage of the opportunity to ask about her own application. Rather than covering their work and sending her on her way, they showed her the worksheet and told her, "You have very few points." She asked why, and they explained how she had few seniority points and that her living conditions did not justify the category she had placed herself in, so she had fewer points in that area than she had thought. She admitted as much and got depressed, shaking her head and saying that she absolutely had to do something to improve her living situation. Commission members in the room then helped her begin the process of thinking of other solutions before settling back down to work. Fair application of the rules in this case seemed to satisfy everyone. The most needy applicants got priority. There was no cynicism in the work of the Commission. The members did their job very seriously and carefully.

Assessment

A worker managed workplace can give social workers more control over their work environment. But in a U.S. context, how would that include extending the social work principle of user self-determination, of the mission being focused on the needs and wants of the user?

Were organizing outings and parties, giving book grants, and handing out condoms making the best use of social workers at Nicola Tesla? Probably not, from the point of view of the social workers. However, they were in a position close to the workers in need of their skilled services, who saw them as helpers and came to them for help with more complicated problems. Would these workers have voluntarily approached the social workers? Would the social workers have even been approachable, unless both parties saw social work in the service of the workers? In most cases, no. Where the users of services determine service priorities, as in this situation, the social workers could educate, negotiate, or use their status as "experts" to manipulate or to convince the users into giving them more control over rendering services.

When working for a labor union in the U.S. that provided an E.A.P. for its workers on both the Zavod model and in a "reach-out" program where social workers went onto the shop floor, the social workers (unlike those in Yugoslavia where work issues were the purview of the Workers' Council) often fielded complaints about both management and about the union representation (or lack thereof). By relaying management complaints to the union representatives and establishing relationships with them, issues involving the reps could be resolved. But the union representatives also knew that the social workers had access to the workers and could advocate for them, giving the workers more of a voice.

Another model perhaps more familiar to U.S. social workers in structure and language is that exemplified by Wellspring Family Services, "a private, non-profit organization helping families achieve self-sufficiency" (all quotes from website: www.family-services.org). Wellspring has a strong commitment to "hiring good workers, then staying out of their way," which provides its workers with control over much of their work life. But this control is subject to the core value of remaining mission-centric: "Our services have changed over the years, but our commitment to a stronger, healthier community has never wavered." Over its lifetime, this organization has maintained the user control over services that Yugoslavia tried to attain by codifying it into law. Several other organizational norms also reflect the strengths of Wellspring, such as open access to information and being a place where, at all levels, your voice is heard.

The way to user-centered practice can vary, but is not assured. When a person has little control over his/her work life, the social

worker projects a personal source of power and control—expert skills—onto the "client," who is required to accept the proffered "service" if (s)he is to be deemed "worthy." But the social worker has often acquired these skills precisely in order to gain control, power, and status. Controlling one's work life may be just another step to control, not a new mind set that would allow the user control over services. Can society provide professional training not only for social workers, but for doctors and lawyers, tech experts (oh my!) without those professionals then turning into an elite group who want a better life for themselves than for others? Fear of losing whatever power they possess causes people to behave in ways they think will keep them in control, behavior which often destroys their own efforts and undermines their best intentions and professional goals. Why do those with power forego real power—the power to grow, to learn to live a life with coherence between actions and our goals—in favor of the sham power of giving orders and being obeyed, of being in control of others (Freire,1987)? Controlling our own work life is a necessary—but not sufficient—step toward meeting the principles and values of social work, toward alleviating the damage and pain of those we are trained to help.

Perhaps if we implement a process of progress in our work rather than aiming at a static change, we can move forward: take an action, get a reaction, assess the results, take the next action based on the assessment, get a reaction…

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Work and Economic Justice – Connections with Social Work

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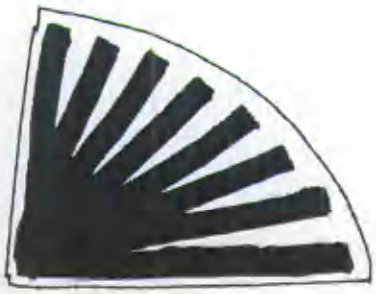
This narrative explores the author's interest and activism in the arena of economic justice and how she integrates this into teaching and scholarship. Issues of work and the workplace, forms of economic justice activism, and analysis of economic issues that are relevant to social work have been incorporated into courses offered in the M.S.W. program with which the author is affiliated, and she has helped to make field placements available for students at local economic justice organizations. The author chronicles her involvement in a number of labor-community coalitions over a 25-year period and how these experiences have contributed to her approach to social work education.



Sometime early in my activist life, it became absolutely clear to me that so many problems for individuals, families, and communities stem from lack of income and/or means of support, in particular some connection to work and the workplace. Not every problem stems from this, but plenty of them do. Perhaps this stems from my own childhood, when my family went through a period of time where my father was unemployed: his small dry goods went out of business as suburban malls began to spread across the landscape, and the income from my mother's job in a university office along with some support from relatives kept us afloat. The lack of income (or greatly diminished income) has always struck me as an incredibly scary thing for families, as it was for my family, and thus underpins my affinity for economic justice struggles. So in thinking about what constitutes social justice, economic justice is surely close to the top of the list: to have a just society—in the U.S. or elsewhere—economic deprivation and economic inequality must be eliminated or at least dramatically reduced from current levels. Economic inequality is also a substantial feature of both racial and gender inequality and thus addressing economic disparities is critical in addressing the structural inequalities within U.S. society. However, translating such worthy goals into reality requires the development of purposeful organizations that employ effective, viable methods of confronting economic power. This is why organization and organizing are so indispensable to social change. Organizing harnesses the capacity of everyday people to forge change. Getting them to recognize and realize their potential is the inherent challenge of economic justice organizing, and really any type of social justice effort. The movements that do this work are involved in some of the most urgent issues we face in U.S. society. Rights in the workplace, access to work, and decent wages and benefits constitute an enormously important agenda, an agenda to which I have devoted considerable time and effort.

A very significant factor that continually shapes my work on economic justice is that, since moving to Connecticut in 1971 after attending the University of Wisconsin in Madison, I have been surrounded by union organizers and activists. Since the early 1970s, some of my closest friends were union builders: first in Connecticut, then many of them

fanned out across the country to take leadership roles in the labor movement and a variety of unions.

One of my closest friends, the late Merrilee Milstein, went to work for the health care workers' union—now a large regional union, the New England Health Care Employees Union-District 1199 SEIU. The union was quite small in the early 1970s and a dedicated team of organizers spent hours in the apartment I shared with her and her husband strategizing on various campaigns and strikes. In the early 1980s, a strike at a local nursing home prompted many of us attending a support rally to do a sit-in in protest; that is when I had my first arrest for civil disobedience. There were close to 40 people involved in that action and it was invigorating, although a little scary. Since that time, I spent (and continue to spend) time on countless picket lines, at support rallies, in planning meetings, in small meetings with community leaders, and in several cases, doing other civil disobedience actions on behalf of striking or laid off workers. My own forte developed into helping create community support for labor issues. I've worked for some time in higher education, and it might have been redundant if I joined my friends and became a labor organizer. Yet being involved in community issues from my early years during the 1970s in Hartford doing anti-war, women's issues, and anti-racism work, the people and organizations I came to know through these issues made me a useful ally for the labor movement.

Coming into young adulthood during the late 1960s, having grown up in Madison, Wisconsin, and attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and—as I came to understand much later—growing up in a Jewish family in the decade after the Holocaust in a very gentile environment, I was pre-programmed to connect to "The Movement." That's how many of us defined our politics: being part of "The Movement." During my college years, it was ubiquitous in Madison. You didn't even have to join any organization—politics were part of the air you breathed, tear gas and all.

When I moved to Hartford, my friends and I defined ourselves as being in "The Movement." In Hartford, as opposed to Madison, if you were an activist, you interacted with a variety of people, not just middle-class white students for the most part as in a campus setting. In Hartford, if you were involved in the movement during those years, political work overlapped among the peace movement: our own grassroots Women's Liberation organization, anti-racism and political prisoner defense work with the Committee to Free Angela Davis and its successor, international work on the Chile Solidarity Committee, the Puerto Rican independence movement, and the various labor struggles that were going on.

The activist community shared a systemic critique of capitalism and American society: its domestic and foreign policy. So if you were a labor organizer or if you focused more on the peace movement, it all originated from the same critique. We were constantly learning and evolving. We learned from experienced people in the old left, the new left, the faith community, the African American community, the Puerto Rican community, the then-nascent gay and lesbian activist community, women's groups, socialists, communists, progressive lawyers and doctors, academics, Black liberation activists, and everyone whose cause aligned with the general critique of the system that was widely accepted by many in my generation and certainly by friends and activists in Hartford.

My thinking evolved into an overall critique of American society with its vast inequalities and injustices stemming from the economic system, but also overlaid by the systems of racial and gender oppression that are so much a part of the fabric of social relations. I concluded that class, race, and gender were all woven together into a fabric that produces injustice, and I wanted to find effective ways to always be involved in social justice movements. As I continued in the movement, it became clearer and clearer to me that one's place in the economy, and the means that one has to address one's own economic well-being, are some of the most powerful factors that shape people's lives. The labor movement and unions are the best means to achieve some control and economic stability in the labor market, especially for low wage workers.

In 1980, I was hired by the University of Connecticut School of Social Work to direct an undergraduate urban internship program (now falling within the rubric of service learning). I had received a Masters in Education, but worked at the School of Social Work where this non-B.S.W. program is housed within the university. In seminars that accompany service oriented internships, I brought in speakers to talk about race, class, and gender. When the topic was about class differences, I often brought in friends of mine from the labor movement to speak. I discovered how little my undergraduate students knew about labor or even how class differences manifest in society. As I decided that I liked working in higher education and college teaching, it was time to pursue a Ph.D. so that I could have a true career in academia.

I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Studies while maintaining my job as Director of the Urban Semester Program at UConn. My courses and research focused mainly on issues of urban economic dislocation and restructuring. When I finished my coursework and was more available for political work, I worked with an evolving coalition of community and labor forces that developed a third local political party: People for Change. I finished my dissertation, then ran for and served a term on the Hartford City Council as a member of that party, and began teaching within the M.S.W. program, in addition to the undergraduate teaching. That is when I began to really use some of my knowledge and experience from my doctoral studies and my own involvement to contribute to the curriculum at the School of Social Work.

Economic Justice within the Curriculum

At UConn, our school has a methods-oriented curriculum. When students apply, they select one of five major method concentrations in the application they complete: casework, group work, community organization, policy practice, or administration. Most faculty members are associated with one of these concentrations as their academic home within the school (we are a non-departmentalized school). We also usually teach in other areas: specialty areas of practice, foundation and research courses. I have been affiliated with the Community Organization Concentration since the mid 1990's. After I assumed responsibility for several elective courses that were "on the books" but taught periodically, I was able to substantially revise their content. Full disclosure: since I do not have an M.S.W., I obtained a waiver from the Council on Social Work Education that allows me to teach Community Organization courses and non-practice courses, including electives.

I have tried to use to the advantage of my students and my school both the graduate work that I did and how I participate in social movements, particularly around urban issues and economic justice. I am fortunate to have supportive colleagues who are helpful in this regard, and who also share these sentiments so that economic justice organizing is within most of our Community Organizing courses, to one degree or another. We have been able to blend the concepts of labor organizing or labor-community coalition building as important contemporary forms of organizing. Thus, it is not only in my electives, but also with the CO methods courses that these topics are raised and reflected by the speakers who come into class or assigned readings.

All of the courses that I teach have very macro foci that integrate a political economy perspective, particularly the two electives for which I have responsibility: Urban Policy Issues, and Economic Justice, Labor, and Social Work. In order for students to gain perspective on the environments in which people function, I believe it is crucial to have a clear sense of the socio-political and economic factors that shape people's realities, particularly in the arena of the workplace. The role of work in a person's life and issues associated with the workplace—fairness, adequate compensation, safety, discriminatory or illegal practices, exploitation, intimidation, relations with co-workers and supervisors—all impact one's sense of self and one's quality of life, as well as one's income and standard of living.

I often point out to students how much of our identity comes from the work that we do. So if one is unemployed, it can shake a person's sense of who they are, as well as

impact income. We talk about students' aspirations for a career and what kind of work they have done in the past. They don't envision themselves as ending up in the type of part-time work or entry level jobs they've held. Just attending a university is assumed to have a material benefit in terms of being able to get a "decent" job, and attending graduate school is seen as being necessary for advancement within social services. Frequently, undergraduate students discuss how frightened they are of entering the labor market. Graduate students hope that the M.S.W. they are pursing will translate into better jobs and higher salaries. These conversations tie into developing a consciousness around work, the lack of work, and the identity issues associated with work.

In the Economic Justice, Labor, and Social Work course, one topic we concentrate on is the problem of the right to organize within the U.S. One of the exercises that students like best is when a local labor attorney walks us through a role play about an actual organizing campaign he was involved in that serves as a poignant example of what is currently wrong with U.S. labor law. There are four roles: factory owners, a group of supervisors, pro-union workers who are leaders in the unionization effort, and rank-and-file workers who are being organized. If there are students who have union experience in the class, I try to get them to play the boss so that other students can experience an iota of what organizing means. I build on this real-life story as the course develops because so few people understand this process and all of the ways in which power takes actual form in day-to-day situations at work.

At the UConn School of Social Work, we have a strong focus on international social work as well as on human rights. The larger university has several human rights initiatives; thus, many of us are conversant with human rights discourse and a number of faculty members have a great deal of expertise in this area. Within this environment, I have been able to absorb some thinking about how human rights can inform social work, social policy, and macro social work practice. Additionally, in some of my own work and professional activities, particularly in becoming familiar with labor studies' and labor education's growing use of a human rights framework, it has become apparent to me that human rights—particularly the International Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)—is a logical and fruitful place to begin a discussion of economic justice.

Likewise, within the NASW Code of Ethics, there are several places in which issues of economic justice are mentioned, even including a provision that is permissive of social workers engaging in strikes. This is not a merely theoretical issue: I have guest speakers in the Economic Justice class who are M.S.W. level social workers and who describe the tribulations of going on strike. There have also been guest speakers who have been on strike when they spoke to the class. These were women workers from a local nursing home, some of whom were immigrants. Their courage and tenacity were inspirational to both the students and me. It never ceases to amaze me when I encounter this level of dedication and sacrifice.

It is possible to think of many ways to insert the UDHR into curriculum. In the very first session of the Economic Justice, Labor, and Social Work course, the first substantive discussion we have is on the UDHR and its economic provisions. Consider Articles 22 through 25:

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment.

2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitations of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2. Motherhood and childhood are, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall be entitled to special care and assistance. All children enjoy the same social protection.

Source: UN

Rarely do we in social work emphasize the economic dimensions of the UDHR, if we even discuss any of the rights enumerated in this important framework for social justice. The ways in which many of these rights (both economic and non-economic) are ignored and/or non-existent in the U.S., as well as the lack of enforcement of most existing economic rights, can serve as starting points in the conversation. There is some debate emerging within social work and labor studies as to whether human rights, particularly as enunciated in the UDHR and in other international treaties and covenants, are the appropriate standards with which to assess any nation's social progress or as a core construct within struggles for labor rights.

For example, in a session at the Council on Social Work Education's Annual Program Conference in 2008 in Philadelphia, a presentation by Garvin, Reed, Reisch, and Yoshihama (2008) mentioned how developing countries do not necessarily find the UDHR to be the most useful set of standards for development and that we have to look at the most appropriate standards in international contexts. Additionally, in a prominent labor journal, *New Labor Forum*, a provocative debate was published in 2009 about whether human rights or solidarity should be the basis of labor's claim for justice (Compa, 2009; Youngdahl, 2009a, 2009b). However, as a tool to use in comparing the U.S. to other developed nations in terms of economic rights and workers' rights, I have found the UDHR extremely useful.

The National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics is another source of support for economic justice and labor issues. Consider these excerpts from several sections:

Ethical Principles Section: *Social Justice*

Ethical Principle: *Social workers challenge social injustice.*

Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity...

Ethical Standards Section:

Section 3. Social Workers Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings

3.10 Labor-Management Disputes:

(a) Social workers may engage in organized action, including the formation of and participation in labor unions, to improve services to clients and working conditions.

(b) The actions of social workers who are involved in labor-management disputes, job actions, or labor strikes should be guided by the profession's values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. Reasonable differences of opinion exist among social workers concerning their primary obligation as professionals during an actual or threatened labor strike or job action. Social workers should carefully examine relevant issues and their possible

impact on clients before deciding on a course of action.

Section 6. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society

6.01 Social Welfare

...Social workers should advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs and should promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice.

6.04 Social and Political Action

(a) Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers ...should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.

Source: National Association of Social Workers "Code of Ethics."

These two important documents—one, indeed, for the world and the other for the profession of social work—offer ample areas of discussion and application within social work education. Using these documents to highlight how economic rights are elevated on an international scale and how economic justice has a place within the social work profession provides whatever entrée one needs to include this type of curriculum. I use them quite freely.

For example, in the Economic Justice, Labor, and Social Work course, I always have the Executive Director of the Connecticut Chapter of NASW discuss guidelines the chapter issued with regard to social workers' involvement in strikes. These guidelines are respectful of social workers who participate in strikes, and also urge social workers to observe ethical principles when dealing with strikes. He also points out that NASW is in a difficult position since both managers and line staff are NASW members, so the organization cannot appear to be favoring one side or the other in any particular strike.

Economic Justice and Community Organizing

Within the realm of community organization, economic issues are more and more assuming center stage. An array of organizations from both the labor arena and the community organizing world are now organizing around economic issues such as living wages, responsible development, immigrant rights and other low wage worker issues. The labor movement's work on these issues brings it into contact with constituencies with whom social work has historically been involved. My colleague Scott Harding and I have noted elsewhere (Simmons & Harding, 2009):

> *"...union-led innovations hinge on community organizing strategies in terms of developing shared agendas and reciprocal relationships with local community forces. This provides community social workers multiple opportunities for collaboration with organized labor to challenge workplace and community concerns. In addition, many of the organizing tactics used in organized labor's current efforts—door-to-door canvassing and mobilization, petitions, rallies, lobbying, public protest, and other displays of power—are central to community organizing and thus familiar to many community social work practitioners, particularly in urban areas."*

In its early development, particularly through its involvement in settlement houses, social work did embrace economic issues very directly. As Harding and I note, previous generations of social workers identified as workers, pursuing unionization for themselves and supporting other workers seeking to join labor unions (Selmi & Hunter, 2001; Walkowitz, 1999).

Yet social workers en masse have not been as active as one might hope in the economic justice struggles of recent decades. Within community organizing, however, economic issues are currently at the forefront of the agenda in terms of the housing crisis, employment, and support for those at the margins of the economy. Both established community organizing networks and newly formed networks are finding common cause with labor and economic rights organizations to develop and pursue economic justice goals. At UConn, we have been offering CO students various opportunities to be involved in these issues firsthand in terms of field placements and class assignments.

I started to learn about the power of community and labor organizations working together back in the mid and late 1980s and have been involved in several community-labor coalitions in Connecticut since that time. In the late 1980s there was a strike of over four years (1986-1990) against Colt Firearms that had plants in Hartford and West Hartford. The workers were represented by the United Auto Workers (UAW) union. There were approximately 1,000 strikers and their needs during the strike were immense, both material and in terms of morale.

I was part of the Community-Labor Alliance for Strike Support that planned rallies, picketed, raised funds, lobbied politicians, educated area community organizations, and even planned civil disobedience actions to support the strikers. One civil disobedience action that we organized was called the "Colt 45," in which we got 45 volunteers from unions, clergy, community, and even several elected officials to sit in at the plant gate in a show of solidarity for the striking workers. It took some cajoling, but we convinced three State Representatives—including Carrie Saxon Perry, who was soon to become Mayor of Hartford—and a City Councilwoman to take part in this and agree to be arrested.

It was during those efforts that I became interested in how local neo-Alinsky organizations and unions shared some characteristics, particularly around engaging members in direct action and leadership development. (It was when I saw younger union activists of color and older white neighborhood residents joking with each other at a City Hall demonstration in which they shared the protest agenda that the idea came to me for my dissertation and the subsequent book based on it (Simmons, 1994).) Three local neighborhood organizing groups existed in Hartford at the time of the strike and the Community-Labor Alliance did targeted outreach to them to build support and head off efforts by the company to hire local residents as replacement workers.

The strikers needed outlets for their anger, and we planned many events/demonstrations in New York City at Colt's corporate headquarters. We also held a children's vigil at the suburban home of the President of Colt Firearms, a march through a tony part of Hartford where a member of Colt's Board of Directors lived, and major demonstrations at the plant or in downtown Hartford on various anniversaries of the strike, as well as routine picketing and staffing of the picket line. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised by other labor unions and community forces so that strikers didn't lose their homes and financial emergencies could be handled.

Various students I taught during those years in my undergraduate classes took part in Colt strike activities and most recently graduate students have been involved with projects of present-day coalitions, especially around electoral and health care reform efforts. Within each excursion or internship, the exhilaration of the students makes me know that this is real learning, real organizing. I realize that many contemporary students go through college and even graduate school never having gone to a single demonstration or rally. Even graduate students! If there is one thing that I try to get my classes to do, it is experience a rally or demonstration so that they can get a first-hand sense of the energy and the sense of purpose in these events.

For me, the strike and also the attendant issues and developments, were unbelievable eye openers. That strike taught me overwhelming lessons in terms of the courage and dedication of ordinary people and how important community support can be for

strikers so that they maintain their strike and accomplish difficult goals.

Besides the Community-Labor Alliance, the emergence of the local third party that I became active in and with whom I eventually ran and served on the Hartford City Council, the connections to other strikes and labor organizing, and the ties that started to grow between labor and community forces all trace back to that strike and our coalition work. Later iterations of community-labor alliances retained participation by some of those same actors and organizations. I have also spent considerable time analyzing some of these developments in publications and academic conference presentations in order to share and compare our local experiences with similar efforts in different locations (for the period around the strike and a comparison of labor and neighborhood organizing methodologies, see Simmons, 1994). These types of local movements provide students with incomparable educational opportunities if they truly want to be organizers. Moreover, they exemplify modes of resistance to the current neo-liberal agenda that tries to diminish expectations for public solutions to social problems and roll back or block economic progress for many segments of the working class and the disenfranchised.

The current agenda of many contemporary labor-community alliances embodies the issues mentioned earlier: the plight of low wage service-sector workers, the returns to communities for public subsidies or approvals for development, healthcare reform efforts, immigrant worker rights, and the right to organize, among other issues. However, there is also attention to building partnerships that include participation of communities of color and their local organizations. The agenda has expanded from the earlier generation of alliances to include more electoral work and the need to develop regional agendas within metropolitan areas (Dean & Reynolds, 2009; and Pastor, Benner, & Matsuoka, 2009).

Subsequently, my own work in Connecticut has followed this trajectory by my participation in two coalitions: Citizens for Economic Opportunity (CEO), and the Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE). CEO emerged in the 1990s as the insurance industry in Connecticut was downsizing dramatically (a trend that continues to the present), and mergers and acquisitions were wreaking havoc among the local workforce. CEO tried to address the needs of the laid off, unorganized insurance workers through lobbying, testifying, and raising public awareness about the issues surrounding the downsizing and mergers. We mounted a lawsuit when Connecticut Blue Cross/Blue Shield was acquired by Anthem and went from a mutual insurance company to a for-profit company. As in similar "conversion" situations when non-profits turn into profit-making enterprises, CEO and other parties, including public entities, mounted a lawsuit demanding that the public be repaid the benefits of non-profit status. The plaintiffs were given a multi-million dollar award that was used to establish a healthcare access foundation. This foundation became the parent for the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut (UHCF), which has funded many organizations in a campaign within the state for universal access to health care. Thus, the product of our organizing and litigation, UHCF, came to fund subsequent organizing campaigns by CEO and many other groups for the passage of statewide health care reform legislation that hopefully will lead to broad access. This legislation survived a governor's veto and is currently being implemented. Several different M.S.W. students have had field placements at CEO, and in the network of organizations involved in the statewide healthcare reform effort, as well as UHCF itself. To a person they have been enthusiastic about the learning and organizing opportunities in these field placements. The students helped organize large rallies, got individuals to testify at legislative hearings, and had their own specific contact lists to turn out for events. They also were able to be in on strategy sessions and meet with labor leaders and other coalition leaders. One student was hired by CEO to be on its very small staff after his internship.

The other organization I have worked with, CCNE, is part of a national network of organizations, the Partnership for Working Families, who all work on such issues as living

wage campaigns, community benefit agreements in urban development and other strategies that leverage rewards from economic development for local residents in cities across the country. CCNE has been in existence for over 10 years and has done intensive work in New Haven surrounding Yale University and Yale-New Haven Hospital (Rhomberg & Simmons 2005; Simmons & Luce, 2009), and work in Hartford around low wage worker organizing, healthcare reform, and the local living wage ordinance. It is also one of the organizations that receives funding from UHCF for healthcare reform work. Here, again, social work interns at CCNE have found their experiences to be incredibly valuable, indeed, life-changing in some instances. In our School's Alumni magazine, *Interaction*, one student who was interviewed about her experience at the school and her emerging career, Karen D'Angelo, talked about her field placements this way (*Interaction, 2009*):

> *"As a community organizing student, my passion for social justice was ignited ...As a second-year student, I was placed at the Connecticut Center for a New Economy. There I was exposed to the development of a grassroots social movement and gained direct experience as a community organizer. These experiences helped me develop leadership, understand empowerment and political strategy, and clarify my social work values. These experiences have prepared me for a social work career orientated towards social change."*

There is also the issue of unions themselves as places where students can learn and thrive. Since many social workers work in the public sector, which is much more unionized than the private sector (at least in the "blue" states), social workers in the public sector often find themselves to be members of unions without much of an understanding of what unions really do or how to participate in them. Here is where the course I have worked on, Economic Justice, Labor, and Social Work, as well as field placements within unions have offered students opportunities to do some challenging organizing or work on projects of importance to union members. Last year, a student who worked at a state agency and who is a member of New England Health Care Employees Union-District 1199 SEIU, did her field placement at the union. She was involved in the negotiation process with the State of Connecticut for the next major contract for the several thousand 1199 members in a number of settings. Besides being a valuable learning experience for her in terms of the negotiation process, her work was considered invaluable to the union. She was able to draw on remarkable organizational skills she possessed to help keep track of the progress of the negotiations in incredible detail and helped the entire negotiating team be much more effective than in past negotiations.

Several individuals have developed long careers in labor after graduating with their M.S.W.s from UConn, most of whom concentrated in Community Organizing (several before I began teaching at the MSW level), and had field placements with unions or allied groups. There is no more challenging organizing, I believe, than organizing unorganized workers, but there are few things as rewarding as seeing workers win a unionization drive and secure decent working conditions. When I've gone to Victory Parties for organizing drives, the sense of accomplishment among the workers is proof to me that this work is some of the most powerful organizing that exists.

The struggle for the economic and political rights of immigrants also provides meaningful opportunities for social work students, in Community Organizing and other aspects of social work practice and education. For example, some social workers in child protective services find themselves embroiled in controversies when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids take place in workplaces, and parents of young children are detained or deported, even when their children are U.S. citizens. Several years ago in New Bedford, Massachusetts, an ICE raid in a textile factory produced just this type of

situation; social workers had to figure out how to assist these families and find temporary placements for the children while their parents faced possible deportation.

These situations call for social justice organizing campaigns in which students should or could be involved. Even when the issues aren't as urgent as the separation of family members in mixed-status families, there are plenty of economic rights issues to take up, such as wage theft, violation of worker safety standards, and other problems. Where immigrant worker centers or immigrant rights advocacy organizations exist, social work education, social work students, and social work practitioners have much to contribute and much to learn.

At the very least, social work students, particularly in macro areas of social work, need some basic economic literacy in order to function effectively in practice. They need some basic theoretical grasp of what is shaping modern economic conditions and why social inequalities have deepened in recent decades. Why are there so many undocumented immigrants who risk so much to come to the U.S. to work? What has led to such a weakened social welfare state and such an assault on workers and their organizations? Why are whole communities criminalized, marginalized, and shut out of the economy? Some basic economic concepts within social work education which needn't be made overly complex or technical are important tools for macro practitioners and community organizers and provide some grounding as our graduates move forward in their own careers.

Concluding Thoughts

These meandering reflections are meant to illustrate the centrality of economic justice struggles to the social work enterprise. Moreover, I have attempted to show how social work educators can take their own social justice activities and weave them into challenging and meaningful educational opportunities for students and useful research or scholarship.

I was fortunate to be invited to a very stimulating small conference on work and social work at the University of Michigan in 2006, organized by Professor Larry Root, where approximately two dozen social work faculty members from around the U.S. considered how to infuse work-related issues into social work curriculum and scholarship. This very issue of *Reflections* is an outcome of the discussions begun at the conference. Thus, I know that there are other faculty members and scholars who share these concerns. The conference itself introduced many of us to each other and generated some valuable relationships. For me, it was a validation that, although my interests are not widely shared across the breadth of social work education, there are kindred spirits with whom some meaningful work can be done.

Being involved with the labor movement and economic justice issues is not an issue of me being enamored of unions. It is the question of what means exist to achieve economic fairness for those who have very little individual power. It's exceedingly clear to me that it takes collective action, social movements and effective organization to achieve fairness for individuals. I don't romanticize unions or the labor movement and am deeply aware of the shortcomings that arise within these entities which waste resources and prevent progress. I also believe that other struggles need to be vigorously pursued, that other issues sometimes take precedence over economic issues, particularly social and political equality and matters of war and peace. Yet by and large, a society with a weak labor movement generally has many other social inequities and weaker social protections in numerous aspects of social well-being (see Rocha, 2009).

The social work profession has some of the most explicitly stated norms regarding social justice. Very few other professions present themselves so fervently and straightforwardly about justice issues. There is a space to enlarge the scope of work on economic justice within this framework. In the education of future practitioners, we need to use this space and prepare our students to deal with the agonizing economic inequalities of our time. I think this work is some of the best work we can do. It has enriched and given meaning to my life and my work and enabled me to see the courage of those everyday folks who have no choice but to struggle.

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Call for Papers

PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

A SPECIAL ISSUE IN CELEBRATION OF THE LEGACY OF PROFESSOR JILLIAN JIMENEZ

Social justice may be defined as the fair distribution of goods, services, rights, and duties. The social expression and societal mechanism for distributing resources, opportunities, and obligations are made manifest through interdependent systems of policies and procedures. Mediated by values and preferences, policies as specific expressions of the public will affect and shape the overall quality of life in society, the circumstances of living, and the nature of intra-societal relations.

Historically, the profession of social work has adhered to philosophical, ethical, moral obligations, and practice principles that bind it to social and civic activism as a means of promoting a society where all have access to the requisites of freedom enumerated in the constitution. The profession's mantra and call to action continue to be anchored in the promotion of distributive justice.

In celebration of Professor Jimenez's scholarly and practice commitment to principles of social activism and advocacy as means of promoting social justice, narratives are invited that:

- Demonstrate the efficacy of strategies that promoted programmatic and organizational changes that facilitated distributive justice
- Depict the self-determined involvement of students, service recipients, or practitioners as change agents
- Provide illustrations of how social and civic engagement may change and actively contribute to the process of educating social workers
- Provide illustrations and practice principles that facilitate the modification of agency/organization policies and programs to affect a just distribution of resources and opportunities

Mail manuscripts by June 30, 2010 to:

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The Role of Labor in the Transition to Social Worker

James H. Willliams, Ph.D., Savannah State University

In the following narrative, a trade unionist learns that social work theory is behind successful group work, with a little help from Florence Kelley and Jane Addams.

I can't remember when unions weren't part of my life. My home was a union stronghold. My father was a bricklayer, my brother a cooper, my uncle a furniture worker. My mother was a hotel worker with a tyrannical boss and no union. Union and workplace affairs were part of the dinner discourse. I remember as a grade school student, helping my uncle pass out leaflets for the CIO Later, I helped him with his local union newspaper.

When I started high school, we had to buy our own textbooks. To get money for this, I joined some friends who were "cutting" tobacco. We traveled down to southern Kentucky and worked the harvest back north. When I complained to one farmer that $4 a day didn't seem like a whole lot of money for 12 hours hard work, I got a valuable lesson in race relations. "Why should I pay you more," said the farmer, "when I can get a n——r for $3 a day?" From this, I learned one important use of racism by employers.

One of my jobs in college was editor of a local union newspaper at a G.E. plant in Louisville. This was right on the heels of the national strike against G.E. in 1960.

During college, I became an activist. I was a good activist, but a lousy college student. I was a founder of Students for a Democratic Society (joining when it was still the Student League for Industrial Democracy). In SDS, I always gravitated toward those who saw unions as a valuable ally in the struggle for social justice (Sale, 1973; Frost, 2001; Michel, 2004). New York's left-wing community was like a university to me, and I grabbed ideas and lore hungrily. From Dorothy Rose Blumberg (alum of Alderson's Women's Prison on a Smith Act charge; her fellow inmates were Claudia Jones, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Lolita Lebron), I learned about Florence Kelley, one of the pioneers in social work at Hull House, and how she and Jane Addams were founders of the Women's Trade Union League.

All my life I have tended to do things in a contrary way. Most sane people start at the bottom and work their way to the top. When I joined the labor movement, I started at the top and worked my way down. Here's how it went:

In February 1965, I became a full-time staffer for the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) as a writer and organizer. I wrote for the IUE NEWS, and began to write speeches for various union officials and labor-friendly politicians (Hubert Humphrey comes to mind.) My writing skills were needed in organizing campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, the plains of Ohio and the nascent delta of Memphis, Tennessee (Levy, 1994). Most of what I learned about organizing came from some seasoned organizers. My last organizing drive for IUE was in Memphis in 1967. We were trying to organize an RCA television plant that had "run away" from Indiana. The Ku Klux Klan had other ideas, however, and did not want a "n——r union" organizing in Memphis. We eventually brought in our own demolitions expert, whose job was to protect us from being blown up.

Steelworkers join other women's rights supporters urging the Illinois legislature to ratify ERA. Early 1980s. Capitol grounds. Springfield, IL. Photo by Jerry Harris

Itchy feet have long been one of my more prominent features. In 1967, I moved on to the West Virginia AFL-CIO as a writer and researcher. Part of this time was in defense of labor poet and organizer Don West, a founder of the Highlander Folk School, who was organizing a similar institution in south West Virginia (Lourence, 2007). Soon, I was involved in organizing drives and political campaigns being conducted in the hollows of Appalachia. I started teaching labor extension classes at West Virginia University. These classes were filled with steelworkers, glass blowers, chemical plant workers, and construction workers who never had an opportunity to complete their education. It was a joy to teach because these workers were genuinely hungry for knowledge.

Itchy feet caught up with me again, and I headed for Washington, D.C., in 1968 and a post with the Newspaper Guild as editor and researcher. There wasn't much opportunity for organizing there, nor much opportunity for travel. I did help organize Washington Labor for Peace, one of the first labor groups against the war in Vietnam. (Soon after we published a full page ad in the *Washington Post* opposing the war, my bosses discovered that I was incompetent and canned me.)

Then, in 1970 it was on to the National Education Association's Higher Education Division. There as usual, I was hired in as a writer, editing the National Faculty Association newsletter. One day, a faculty strike loomed at a community college in upstate New York. NEA needed to send an organizer to help the faculty run the strike, but none of the NEA staff had ever been on strike. I was drafted to travel to New York to help the faculty to prepare for and eventually to conduct a strike at a community college. Teacher strikes in New York State were illegal under something called the Taylor Law. (For all I know, the warrants for me are still active.) For the next four years, I was involved in faculty union organizing drives in many states, helping organize the faculty at SUNY, CUNY, the Pennsylvania State Colleges, and others. At Wayne State University, I was lucky to enlist the help of a social work professor, "Ike" Krassner. Ike was a well-known community activist and a shrewd teacher of group work skills. This was the first time I had encountered a social worker in a union organizing drive. (Most of my contact with social workers previously had been at the behest of the school's principal.)

By this time, in 1974, a profound sense of discouragement overcame me. I had hoped to help transform the labor movement into a more ardent agent for social change; but as a staff person, I was always subject to the elected leadership. I was frustrated having to carry out decisions and policies which didn't always seem right. While I would voice objections, I never prevailed. Feeling powerless, I decided on a new strategy.

I decided to start at the bottom, to go to work in industry and eventually seek union office. In that vector, I reasoned, I would be free to campaign for progressive causes (within the limits of my judgment). Following my tradition, I went to work for an independent racial labor newspaper in Chicago called *Labor Today* (Green, 1977). My time at it was mostly good. We printed stories from workers in the field about how they were fighting for better conditions. But, I still wanted to work in a factory.

So from there, my friends at the United Electrical Workers (UE) got me hired at a local steelyard. Now for once I was just another laborer in a factory. Moreover, what a factory! Virtually all of the workers were ex-offenders who had been placed by a social service agency. Some had spent many years in prison. To top it off, I was the only white guy working there. Nonetheless, they accepted me and, after a year, I was elected shop steward. I developed a reputation of talking back to the boss. Once on the night shift, we pulled a quickie strike over a contract infraction. I think part of the reason I was elected steward is that the workers thought the boss was more likely to listen to a white man. Or, maybe because they felt I was expendable!

As a union organizer, I had become familiar with group processes and had learned to work with them in forming organizations (see Ike Krasner, the Wayne State social work educator who taught me a thing or two about group work). Now, as a shop steward, I was also to help workers resolve personal grievances with the company. I was

unprepared for this, but I gradually learned good active listening skills. What I discovered was that sometimes workers just wanted to "vent" to get stuff off their chest. Frequently, workers would have a complaint or a gripe about some event or condition at work that the union could not help. The best I could do was practice "active listening" and "positive regard." I had never heard of Florence Hollis and "venting," but I developed the skills of "supportive therapy" in that shop.

In 1978, I jumped at a chance to work at U.S. Steel South Works, as a Millwright Apprentice. A recent fair employment case had obliged the steel industry to admit more minorities and women (and remove age barriers) to the skilled trades. This was a plant employing 4,000 workers and was one of the key mills of the basic steel industry. Furthermore, United Steel Workers Local 65 had a history of activism. I figured that if I could get elected to union office in such a union, I could begin to make a difference.

I became active in one of the several caucuses within the Local Union, hoping to be elected to union office and influence policy. I was eventually elected chair of the Apprenticeship Committee, but that was because nobody else wanted the job. I did learn a lot about hot, dirty, and dangerous work, however. Three workers were killed on the job while I worked there. I myself had worked previously on those jobs.

Heavy layoffs began to hit the mill in the early 1980s, as the steel industry reeled under the impact of foreign competition and an aging production process. Soon, the layoffs caught up to me and I was unemployed with little prospect of returning to work.

However, the positive aspect was that this provided opportunity for social activism. Members of the Local founded an Unemployed Committee as part of the union, and we began to service the many welfare needs of the unemployed steelworkers. While we became known in the city as a group of noisy demonstrators, we also began to develop a sophisticated network of social services. We developed a food pantry that distributed groceries on a bi-weekly basis to unemployed steel workers as well as others in the community. No one was turned away. We worked with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP—more social workers!) at U.S. Steel to expand counseling services to the unemployed, and with Chicago Community Colleges to bring college courses into the union hall. Members facing foreclosure could get financial counseling and some direct intervention on their behalf. I began to learn about managing service provision on a larger playing field, while interacting with a variety of community service providers.

In 1981, that chapter of my life ended. Now I had to make a living, and was able to land a job as a counselor in an alcohol and drug rehab facility. (Remember those EAP social workers I met at U.S. Steel?) I promptly enrolled in night classes in substance abuse at a community college. These classes were taught by social workers, and they had a specific approach to working with these disadvantaged populations. One day, my instructor suggested that I should seek a Masters in Social Work degree and become a professional social worker. Fortunately, in 1990, I landed a better job with the Adult Probation Department, which encouraged their employees to seek advanced degrees. Therefore, I enrolled at the Jane Addams College of Social Work.

I began to see how my trade union experience informed my development as a social worker. I had many skills, but now I had a theoretical framework for understanding what I did. As an indifferent student with poor grades in college, I was apprehensive about enrolling in a graduate program; but for some reason, this time was different. I loved the course work and did well. In fact, I liked it so much I decided to keep going. After I got my M.S.W., I promptly entered the Doctoral Program at JACSW.

As a probation officer and now a supervisor, I was challenged to assist workers who wanted union representation in the Probation Department. (I do not recommend this as a career move.) I recommended some persons for employment who I knew were pro-union and had experience in organizing. As a supervisor, I had to play a strictly neutral and "hands off" role in the union organizing drive, but sometimes, over coffee, I could drop a word or two of advice. One source of

frustration to the social workers in my union (Mental Health Probation) was the inability of the union staffers/organizers to understand some of the specialized issues experienced by social workers in large bargaining units. One of our issues was salary inequities. We figured that, as Masters-prepared officers, we deserved higher pay. However, in a large bargaining unit, the demands of our small band went unheeded.

As the strength of the now unionized officers grew, many of my supervisory colleagues began to wonder if they could benefit from unionization. They pointed to the advantages of having a seat at the bargaining table. Furthermore, supervisors had issues of their own which needed addressing. Therefore, we began a campaign to organize ourselves into a union. Now that I was not limited by "neutrality," I could be an activist once more! This involved a lot of "active listening" as I chatted up supervisors from all over the country. We were able to help supervisors "reframe" some of their concerns about unionization. Additionally, we began to understand some of the "dyads" and "triads" that comprised our groupings. (Thanks to Salvador Minuchin, et al.)

First, we had to find a union that would take us. In the end, this became the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). This choice seemed to satisfy those supervisors who were uncertain that other unions would be a good fit for us. I was elected a Steward, with a responsibility to organize at the main Probation Office, which was situated in the criminal courts building. As I approached individuals to solicit their support, I was glad that I had taken courses in active listening and interviewing skills. The courses in group processes helped me understand some of the undercurrents of our efforts.

The Probation Administration, while not thrilled at the prospect of having its supervisors unionized, did little to prevent organization. Occasionally, a word would be dropped here and there about how union support could adversely effect individual advancement, but that was pretty much the extent of it. After many months of organizing and labor board hearings, we finally had an election to determine if the supervisors wished to be represented by the union. We union supporters won this election, but we also knew that we faced some tough bargaining as we took our place at the bargaining table.

As this campaign concluded, so did my quest for a Ph.D. I had always wanted to try my hand at teaching, and now I had the credential that would let me have a crack at it. I took early retirement from the Probation Department, and began a career as an assistant professor at a small, southern university. Unfortunately, the laws in this state bar the unionization of public employees. Fortunately, in this benighted southern community, there are many opportunities to employ the lessons I had learned as a unionist and social worker.

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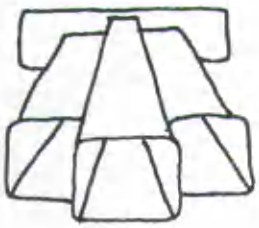
Debriefing September 11th through Managed Care: Balancing Ethics and Empowerment with Profit

Nan Van Den Bergh, Ph.D., Florida International University

This narrative has several story lines: a) responses of average Americans to September 11th; b) the value of critical incident stress debriefings; c) challenges in maintaining fidelity to the CISD model when brokered through a business model giving the employer "customized services,"; and d) ethical dilemmas faced when balancing managed care mandates of neutrality with social work imperatives for advocacy and client empowerment.



The context for this narrative relates to my work as a managed care-contracted provider of critical incident stress debriefings (CISD) for firms in the South Florida area subsequent to September 11th. Although that region is hundreds of miles from New York City, national companies having employees in South Florida requested their managed care provider to organize staff debriefings. Having been involved with critical incident stress debriefings since the early 1990's, my experience in offering these services, brokered by a managed care company, brought forth several ethical dilemmas. Specifically, working through a "for profit" health care delivery system required that procedural norms associated with facilitating a debriefing group had to be compromised including: a) the number of people within a debriefing group; b) lack of a "peer" co-debriefer; c) lack of privacy for the debriefing group; and d) no mandatory attendance. The social work values of the primacy of service to clients, as well as advocacy for their needs, needed to be abrogated so as to be "neutral" in the role of a managed care-contracted mental health professional. This led to compromising the CISD process in order to offer a "customized debriefing," which was a selling point of the managed care company to its prospective clients. This may have diluted the debriefing benefits for affected employees and raised ethical challenges for myself.

Through this narrative I will describe my balancing act in serving clients as a crisis debriefer and management as an appeaser, while at the same time attempting loyalty to social work values of advocacy and social justice.

Background on CISD

I received my training on how to be deployed within critical incident debriefing teams, as a mental health professional, through working with firefighter units operating from the "Mitchell Model." A former paramedic subsequently trained as a psychologist, Jeffrey Mitchell developed a protocol to follow for emergency response personnel who had responded to difficult "critical incidents" (Mitchell,1983; Mitchell, 1988; Mitchell & Everly, 1995; Everly & Mitchell, 1995). Based on principles associated with crisis intervention, group mutual aid processes, and stress reduction, the CISD process is comprised of several stages. The overall process entails taking a group of persons affected by a critical incident (ideally no more than eight) and having them share their affective, emotional, and behavioral responses to the event. The overall goal is for participants to have alleviation and remediation of stress-associated symptoms which are a normative component of the human response to trauma (Curtis, 1995; Dyregrov, 1997).

The CISD process entails members sharing, in round-robin fashion, their responses to certain questions which are designed to address thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that participants have experienced since their exposure to a critical incident. There is no cross-talk between participants. Although members are all encouraged to share, they are not forced to do so. Facilitators manage the group process and persons serving in this role are typically a mental health professional plus a "peer." The latter person would be within the same occupational group as the participants, however, not a member of that exact work unit. With a group of eight persons, the debriefing would typically range from 60 to 90 minutes.

The major questions posed by the facilitators are designed to take participants from cognitive to more emotional content, and then back to a cognitive level. This is done through questions representing the seven major stages of CISD: a) introduction, b) facts, c) thoughts, d) reactions, e) responses, f) education, and g) re-entry. Within the introduction, facilitators introduce themselves and ground rules are established. This includes the need for confidentiality, mutual aid benefits of all sharing, and the importance of neither interrupting or criticizing other group members.

When addressing facts, participants give information such as their role related to the particular incident. Pertaining to thoughts, members are asked to reflect on their thinking when they arrived on the scene. During the reaction stage, participants share their feelings about the critical incident and what has been most difficult for them. During the next stage, probing for responses, members are encouraged to share stress-associated symptoms which could be cognitive, affective, or behavioral. During the education phase, facilitators share information regarding typical stress responses and provide ideas as to how members could deal with any symptoms they may have. At re-entry there is a summing up of what has been covered, resources are shared related to mental health services, and an opportunity is given for questions and feedback.

Positive outcomes of participating within a CISD group mirror several aspects of the mutual aid process: a) being all in the same boat; b) strength in numbers; c) mutual support; and d) sharing information (Gitterman & Shulman, 1986). Basically, it assists group participants to hear how others have experienced the event, thereby providing them with a sense of normalcy. This can serve the purpose of solidifying camaraderie and *esprit de corps* (Van Den Bergh, 1992). Those within administrative roles have tended to support CISD based on the perception that it could reduce long-term negative impacts of traumatic stress for employees, hence, keeping them productive.

Management's interest in the latter point, having an optimally productive workforce, is strongly related to why managed care has begun marketing CISD services. It can be included as part of a health promotion and wellness continuum which can be sold to potential clients, in addition to the more traditional employee assistance program.

Context for 9/11-Based CISD Groups

About a week following the September 11th attacks, I received calls from several managed care companies asking if I would be willing to do CISD groups within my geographic area, since I was a "credentialed" CISD mental health professional. The firms requesting debriefings represented tourism, manufacturing, and security services providers. Although they had not lost employees, their organizations' products and services could have been negatively affected by the aftermath of September 11th.

The assignments as described by the managed care firms would be challenging, since I was to do the debriefings as a solo practitioner. The norm for CISD is that two individuals serve as facilitators; there are multiple reasons for this requirement. First, the model is constructed to be co-led by a mental health practitioner and a trained "peer" representing the same occupational group as the individuals being debriefed. While the mental health professional primarily orchestrates the group process, the "peer" can be helpful in underscoring the "normalcy" of

responses to a critical incident by members of a particular work group. In addition, it is helpful for the co-facilitators to debrief each other subsequent to the CISD group, in order to determine if it could be beneficial to suggest any additional follow-up or services. An additional aspect of the requested debriefings that proved to be challenging had to do with the logistics of service delivery, both in terms of group format and timing of the interventions. The organization representing tourism wanted a "drop-in" type of group beginning at 3pm on a Friday afternoon. My assumption was that this time was chosen because it represented a "down" time in the organization and work routines wouldn't be disrupted. I had some reservations as to whether this could actually be called a debriefing, since a drop-in format does not conform with CISD group process norms. It was unclear to me how I could create a sense of safety and confidentiality with employees wandering in and out. The managed care company noted that the format requested was what the company wanted; therefore, that was the framework I needed to follow.

The manufacturing firm wanted to schedule a series of groups throughout an entire work day to take place three weeks after September 11th. I found this request also odd, as debriefings should ideally be offered as soon as possible after the event. I expressed my reservations about the time lapse and how that could affect both group effectiveness and the willingness of employees to use the services. Another anomaly existed as this organization wanted the debriefings run in a series of one-hour sessions over the course of a single day. I suggested that what the company was requesting sounded more like an educational presentation than a debriefing. While I noted that information about managing stress can always be helpful, it would be inaccurate to market these one-hour seminars as debriefings. Thus, having questioned the managed care company about both the format and delay in providing the debriefings, I was told that the contracted firms had made those specific requests; hence, that is what would be offered.

A yellow caution light also began to flash related to the security organization debriefing request. I was informed that the unit's commanding officer was concerned about the stress levels of his officers, because they had invested a significant amount of overtime with little respite since the attacks. Apparently, one officer had been temporarily taken off duty based upon perceptions that his responses may have been a bit "extreme." In determining when to hold this debriefing so that all three shifts would be available, it was decided that it would happen after a teleconference with regional administration, as all officers are mandated to attend those sessions. I wondered, then, if there might be resistance to the debriefing since it was deemed mandatory and was to follow another "required attendance" event.

Consequently, none of these debriefings were being scheduled in ways that conformed to the norms of CISD. However, despite some reservations as to how well these groups could serve their purpose, I believed that offering some intervention was better than none.

Pre-Debriefing Work

A norm within the CISD business is to get as much information as possible about the work group, organization, and the particular critical incident in advance of the debriefing. So, having been given phone numbers of contact people within each organization, I proceeded to gather data. My contact within the travel company explained that management wondered how employees were affected by September 11th since the company's bottom line could be negatively affected by a downturn in tourism. Apparently, concerns had already been noted about possible layoffs, and management wondered whether employees might be negatively affected by that possibility. Hence, I got the impression that a reason this debriefing had been offered was for reconnaissance purposes; meaning that if a neutral person was brought in, perhaps they could discern a potential downturn in employee productivity related to the aftermath of September 11th.

The manufacturing company representative noted that her firm was national in scope and that the request to schedule debriefings had come from their administrative

headquarters in California. She had no idea why they were being postponed until the first week of October, and felt there could be no alternative to that plan; she was simply following orders.

The security firm's commanding officer noted that his agency's employee assistance program professional had been deluged with other calls for assistance and was not available to offer services to his work group. He stated that there were morale problems within the unit due to possible organizational downsizing. Additionally, he shared that regional administration had not been responsive to his work group's concerns on many issues, and that both of those pre-existing factors may have exacerbated his unit's ability to function optimally since the terror attacks.

This preliminary footwork was important as I realized that prior organizational issues could affect the employees' responses during our debriefings. It is not unusual for frustrations related to organizational dynamics to be aired by participants. For example, years earlier when I debriefed the patient escort service staff at an urban hospital where a supervisor had been murdered by a disgruntled former employee, participants vented their anger and frustration at hospital administration. They had not felt secure during the graveyard shift for a long time; yet it took the homicide of a coworker to finally get attention for their concerns and needs.

Consequently, one does not venture into CISD work assuming that there will only be incident-specific information shared. Because of that it is critical that the ground rules be shared with the group around confidentiality; the debriefer must be clear that no information can be shared with anyone outside the group without agreement of all CISD participants.

Tourism Industry Debriefing

I arrived on the scene early in order to get a sense of the organization as well as the space where I would do the debriefing. I signed in at the front desk, answered some security questions, received a visitor's badge, and was escorted to the area where I would do the debriefing. When we arrived at the designated space, I encountered an open area which was not properly closed off, which meant that passersby by would be able to hear everything that was shared. The chairs were arranged in a column and row lecture fashion, with a podium in the front. (Luckily, a flip chart and markers had been provided.) This kind of spatial arrangement is counterproductive to a CISD format where people sit in a circle facing each other, for the purpose of establishing trust and intimacy.

As time drew near for the debriefing, a few people began to stroll in. I greeted them and asked if they would be willing to help me rearrange the furniture. Soon we had a circle that could accommodate about 20 people. I had the extra chairs placed in a concentric fashion outside the smaller circle. It occurred to me that I could maintain some kind of order—and at least make an effort to maintain confidentiality—by posting information on the flip chart. Everyone who came in could see the "debriefing rules" and know what we were talking about.

Consequently, I started the debriefing by clarifying the need for confidentiality and no cross talk, and provided a general idea of what we would be covering. I wrote this information on the flip chart as I spoke, and then pasted it to the wall.

I altered the questions one typically asks during a debriefing to fit for participants' responses to September 11th. The following queries were addressed and noted on the flip chart:

1) Fact stage: "Where were you when you heard about the attack?"

2) Thought stage: "What was your first thought when you realized what was happening?"

3) Reaction stage: "What has been hardest for you about September 11th?"

4) Response stage: "What kinds of thinking, feeling, or behavioral responses did you experience at the time of the incident; and what have you been experiencing recently?

For the education stage I had prepared a couple of handouts dealing with normative responses to stress and loss. These described the typical ways people can be affected cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. Additionally, I suggested self-care and stress

management techniques which could be attempted.

Over the two-hour period, I was intrigued that approximately 80 people wandered in and out of the debriefing. As more people arrived, we simply widened the circle. As newcomers came in, I brought their attention to our "rules" and showed them where we were in the question and answer process. For those who left before the group was over, I gave them handouts as they exited.

It became clear through the initial content shared by the group that participants had not expressed their thoughts, feelings, or reactions to the attacks in any organized fashion. It was now 10 days after September 11th. Employees noted how helpful it was for them to hear how others had been responding. Clear demonstrations of caring and compassion for each other were apparent. Arms were placed around coworkers' shoulders, Kleenex was shared, and caring smiles were directed at those who became tearful. As an antidote to the sadness, many others teased their coworkers in order to bring some levity to the sharing process. An additional process dynamic I observed was a feeling of equality that pervaded the group. Many supervisors also participated, and were not averse to sharing their reactions and responses. Hence, a "we're all in the same boat" dynamic pervaded. Although I had initial concerns about confidentiality, it may be that the group camaraderie served as a protective mechanism in ensuring that "what you hear here, stays here."

Although some men participated in the debriefing, the majority of attendees were women. When facilitating the "first thought" stage, a predominance of female attendees affected the topics shared by the group. For example, many noted that their first thought was something like: "Where are my kids?" Many left the workplace as soon as possible to take their children from school, and noted that they had made it a priority to spend more time with family since the attacks. It should also be noted that some of the visibly distraught participants had recently experienced family challenges. For example, one woman noted that her estranged husband had absconded with their two young children right before September 11th, and she had no contact with them since then. Another woman, very tearful throughout most of the debriefing, shared that recent family changes had caused her to be alone; hence, she felt vulnerable, worried, and fearful of who would look after her if she were in danger. Clearly then, people's representations of family, what family meant to them, and the need to feel safe within a family were poignant themes addressed by attendees.

Other "first thought" content shared related to demographic realities of South Florida. Although many participants recounted initial thoughts of disbelief, horror, and shock—including confusion as to whether they were watching a made-for-TV movie—several group members who had the most visceral response were first generation immigrants. Fifty percent of this Florida city's inhabitants are foreign born, many having fled politically repressive regimes in Latin and South America. Employees who were émigrés spoke with great emotion, talking about how the incident re-stimulated for them prior experiences of fleeing terrorism. They were shaken, and experiencing fear as well as loss since coming to the U.S. meant that they were not in the safe haven they believed themselves to be. Tales of danger and courage were shared as many immigrants explained what they had gone through and given up by coming to America, so as to experience freedom and opportunity. Others spoke of hiding out, running for cover, and other acts of desperation they had gone through in leaving their country of origin.

It should be noted that the re-experience of thoughts related to prior traumatic experiences is not anomalous for CISD group participants. Therefore, it is preferable for mental health professionals to serve as the lead facilitators so as to be able to normalize this dynamic within the education and re-entry phases.

As I brought closure to the process, I remembered the company's interest in their employees' concerns about layoffs, so I broached that topic. When I asked if they wished to discuss concerns with a possible

downsizing, a resounding "NO!" came from the group. To me that statement arose from anxiety and fear, a clearly understandable and potentially healthy response.

In terms of process, there were several things that intrigued me about this debriefing. The value of group mutual aid, inherent within the design and function of CISD groups, cannot be underestimated. Despite the completely unconventional way in which this debriefing was run, the experiences of mutuality and commonality were approximated and ostensibly proved to be analgesic.

So although the actual purpose of this debriefing may have been motivated by management's desire to get some external "reconnaissance" related to employee concerns about potential layoffs, the outcome had more to do with creating a sense of workplace family. Many employees shared comments such as: "Gee...I never knew that about you..." Consequently, I left this debriefing feeling that the mission had been accomplished, although not as originally planned. Although motives for offering a debriefing may have been influenced by management concern that employee productivity could be negatively affected by fears of post-September 11th downsizing, the debriefing may have had a positive effect on the bottom line nonetheless. Participating in a mutual aid process whereby coworkers spoke from their hearts, shared vulnerabilities, established commonalities, and demonstrated group compassion, a resulting sense of camaraderie and esprit de corps may have strengthened convictions to help and support one another.

Manufacturing Company Debriefing

As I suspected, the nearly three-week time lapse between September 11th and the intervention negatively affected attendance for the serialized hour-long "debriefings." For the first group, only eight people attended (all female) and we met within a standard organizational conference room. Although attendance was sparse, some interesting content was shared.

For this group, their first thoughts were similar to the tourism industry participants. They worried about nuclear annihilation, were concerned with family safety, and experienced disbelief that this could happen in America. As one participant spoke of her emotional pain when viewing Palestinians rejoicing in the streets as captured on network news, she asked, "Why do they hate us so much?"

The content this group shared around their reactions to the terrorism was interesting. It was noted that since September 11th they had decided to "not sweat the small stuff." This meant that issues which might have concerned them in the past, such as what their kids were wearing, seemed to have lost importance. It was also the case that these employees found their coworkers more cooperative, and observed some ethos of helpfulness by individuals in multiple facets of their lives. It was also mentioned that drivers in South Florida seemed to be more courteous since September 11th. This was considered the sign of a miracle!

Substantively, what September 11th seemed to have precipitated was a reprioritization of their life's purpose. One woman told us that she had decided to change jobs; she wasn't happy with what she'd been doing, and felt some temporal nudge to take action and to be more in the moment. Many of them spoke of a sense of patriotism they had not felt previously, and when hearing the Star Spangled Banner, tears came to their eyes. A heightened sense of spirituality or religiosity was another theme; people shared about praying or meditating on world peace, something that perhaps they had never done before. It did appear that a pre-existing sense of spiritual perspective may have been a coping mechanism for some attendees. For example, one woman noted believing that there are no random acts in God's universe, that somehow, something positive would come from September 11th.

What I found interesting about this debriefing was potentially solving the mystery as to why it was scheduled three weeks after the attacks. One participant noted that she was involved with a work team on a national project of high priority which had a deadline of September 17th. This project included other units at different company locations around the country. Her workgroup was not allowed

to leave the company premises on September 11th, and were also requested to work through the following weekend. Therefore, this woman was not provided an opportunity to process any of her feelings around the event, and found her suppression to be exhausting. This was the primary reason she had elected to participate in the debriefing. Sitting in the group, she began to experience anger about her attempts to take care of her self and her family after the attack being thwarted. It suddenly occurred to her that perhaps the debriefings were delayed because the company did not want anything to interfere with completion of this national project. Participants then questioned the company's motivation for offering the CISD groups. It seemed to them that if employee well-being were truly of concern, the debriefings would have been held right after the event.

I left this debriefing with some misgivings. Although I do believe that each employee benefitted from participating, I increasingly questioned the role of managed care companies "selling" debriefings to employers. It was becoming clear that the commercialization of CISD could lead to its misuse.

Security Agency Debriefing

When I arrived at the security agency site, I went through the security screening and took the elevator to the designated area for the CISD intervention. When I walked into the room, I was greeted with quizzical looks by the officers, who were watching a teleconference. Their commanding officer invited me into his office where he began to share several concerns. The commanding officer stated that their work group may be "downsized"; consequently, morale had been low. In addition, the increased number and duration of work shifts with very little down time appeared to be exacerbating cumulative stress in the wake of September 11th. The commander worried that this dynamic could engender a security risk. It was agreed that neither the commander nor his second in command would participate in the CISD group, as he wanted the officers to feel safe in sharing their thoughts with me. When I asked him what he hoped would be the outcome of the debriefing, he said, "I want them to get some stuff off of their chests."

Despite the teleconference being scheduled to end at 9am, it finished an hour later. The commander then introduced me to his staff, and reiterated the purpose for the debriefing. Body language told me that these officers were not interested in being there; many had been on duty since the previous evening. We were seated around a large conference table, and some behaved as "outliers" by pushing back their chairs from the table.

I began the introductory comments and stated the rules about confidentiality, no cross talk, etc. We proceeded through the thought stage, and when I asked them what was hardest about the terror attacks, their defenses began to break down. I was quite taken back when someone asked me, "Who are you going to report this to?" I explained that their communication with me was privileged and that it would not be shared with anyone. This person said, "Then....this will not work for us." "That's right," chimed in another officer, "We want you to take this to the newspapers!" At this point I realized that I was not involved in a typical debriefing. "Yea," said another officer. "We've got two enemies, terrorists and administration!" There were loud guffaws by the other participants at this comment.

So now I had a dilemma: did I force them to follow the protocol, or let them express their frustration? Someone else piped in: "Lady ...you've been set up....we don't want any of this EAP stuff. They've been here before and nothing happens." An officer who had been quiet thus far said, "Hey ...the lady said no cross talk...that means YOU!" At that point, the officers began to share reactions to their September 11th deployments. What emerged were feelings of frustration and disillusionment. What concerned them was not *how* to respond to terrorists. Their concerns related to not having proper equipment or training to defend their jurisdiction. As it was recounted, regional administration had given "lip service" to their requests; no concrete actions had been taken. "Sure, we could get new uniforms if we wanted 'em..., but... What I really need is a field phone

that works if I have to call for reinforcements," stated another officer.

At this point I began to understand why they were so agitated and anxious. There was great concern about possible attempts to blow up buildings in their jurisdiction, and they did not want to be part of another Oklahoma City tragedy. I could sense, although not acknowledged overtly, that issue was a real worry for them. The need for additional staff was also mentioned, since many had been working 12 hour shifts with no down time since the attack. Several had already been on duty for 16 hours and needed to be back at 5pm that same day.

Since we were still in the reaction or "feeling" stage, I felt that venting their anger was appropriate, which allowed for feelings of loss to emerge. One particularly vocal officer spoke of a high school friend who had died at Ground Zero. A younger group member, quiet and somewhat tearful, noted that he had been going through a divorce. I believe he was the individual who'd previously been perceived as volatile, and whose gun had been taken away by his supervisor. However, most loss themes related to the potential downsizing of their unit as part of agency reorganization.

My ethical dilemma began to manifest itself when one older officer said, "You know what makes me mad....how many communication devices could they buy with the money they spend on EAP?" This comment brought up feelings of guilt for me as I thought he'd made a good point. Should I just be a neutral group facilitator, or did I have an advocate role to play by bringing their concerns to the attention of others?

I was required to give a report about my debriefings to the managed care company, which is typically factual in nature. Data presented include how many attended, how long was the debriefing, referrals made for mental health services needed by any attendees, etc. It occurred to me that in addition to addressing the normative information, I could possibly be an agent of change by advocating that their concerns related to additional training and equipment be addressed. Having done debriefings in the past when organizational issues arose, I knew that positive outcomes could potentially occur if, with the employees' permission, I shared their concerns with others. I then reflected back to them what I had heard, "As I hear it, your primary concern related to September 11th is that you feel your ability to do your best job is being compromised as you do not have adequate equipment, staffing, or training. Is that correct?" They resoundingly noted that I had gotten that right. I then suggested that with their permission—and anonymously—it would be possible for me to forward their concerns. At that point I gave an explanation of my reporting relationship as a contracted mental health professional through their managed care company, to which I would provide a report. It was the group's consensus that I should share their concerns within any report that I forwarded to the managed care company. At that time, I consciously forsook neutrality for advocacy by deciding to give voice to the group's perception that organizational management was not concerned with their own security needs. It was my concern that in their state of frustration and agitation, a potential security risk, could become compounded.

At this point, a supervisor (not the commanding officer) joined the group. His appearance caused me concern regarding how the group's level of honesty and openness within the dialogue might change. Since I was a guest, it did not seem appropriate for me to question whether the supervisor was allowed to be within the debriefing group. Whether or not management participates in a debriefing would be relative to the incident and how they may have been impacted by the critical incident. Hoping to minimize any disruption his presence might cause, I reiterated the debriefing group rules and noted where we were in our debriefing. Contrary to CISD protocol, which I had just explained, the supervisor made several comments of the cross-talk variety and was immediately chided by a group member. His presence seemed to serve as a kind of negative lightening rod for the group. They began to complain about being in a mandatory meeting, believing that attendance should be voluntary for those "who really needed it." This supervisor got defensive by justifying the

rationale behind making the meeting mandatory, but then acquiesced by saying that the meeting was now "voluntary." At that point, several jumped up and headed out. Needless to say, I was quite taken aback! "No reflection on you lady," they said as exiting, "You've been set up."

I was then left with a few security staff and the sergeant who had joined the group. It became evident that the people who needed debriefing and consultation the most were the sergeant and the commanding officer. After the group ended, each of these men asked for some one-on-one consultation time with me. For both of them, their primary concerns related to maintaining staff morale within an environment of limited support and high demands. While maintaining individual confidentiality, I spoke of staff concerns related to training and equipment. The commanding officer felt that these were very important issues and had no objection to me mentioning them in my report.

The group and individual consultations took about two hours. I exited the debriefing with mixed emotions; it certainly had not proceeded in a normal fashion. However, I did feel that it was good for the security staff to have been able to vent. This opinion was shared by the commanding officer.

After the debriefing, I sent a report to the managed care company noting employee concerns with inadequate equipment and lack of proper training to deal with a potential terrorist attacks. I also mentioned that any additional resources spent on EAP interventions might exacerbate the staff's existing anger and frustration with not having their more concrete needs met.

Having forwarded the report, I was now faced with an ethical dilemma related to whether or not I should share a copy of it with the commanding officer. Should I remain objective, or forego neutrality for advocacy? It was not clear to me what would be done with the report submitted to the managed care company. Since this debriefing was being offered via a business arrangement, I was not sure that the managed care company would give the contracting firm any feedback about employees' negative perceptions of their organizational management. At that point, my primary concerns emanated from the roles of social worker and mental health professional. I wanted to help the security staff receive the resources they needed to operate from their strengths, and I wanted the security unit to know that they had been heard and that I was giving voice to their concerns. Therefore, I decided to send a copy of my report to the unit's commanding officer.

Was that the right thing to do? Aspects of my personality that resonate with advocacy and concern for the underdog—both key factors related to my choice of social work as a career—were activated by the disillusionment and frustration of these security professionals. I was motivated to take a stand for them. I felt that my findings could provide positive ammunition in securing their goal of greater individual and unit safety, and enhance their capacity for emergency response. Was that an inappropriate response on my part? I only know that in good conscience I could not walk away from that debriefing, collect my check, and be done with it.

Aftermath to the Security CISD

A week after submitting the managed care report, I received a phone call from the security firm requesting information clarifying the work group's concerns. I felt good about this, thinking: "Yes...action will be taken!" However, a few days later I was called again with a request for clarification as to what I had shared with the security unit's commanding officer. When I stated that I'd sent him a copy of my report, he said, "We NEVER give copies of reports. You can't tell how they will be used." The managed care representative suggested that there may have been "axes to grind," and the report could be used as a vehicle for addressing long standing grudges.

I felt shamed, judged, and worried after that phone call. Although my advocacy had brought visibility to the security officers' concerns, I was not sure of the outcome and worried about negative repercussions.

Follow up can be part of the CISD process. Because of the multiple challenges with the security debriefing, I called the commanding officer at about 90 days post-intervention.

Several messages were left and none returned. Finally, I received a response from a new officer in that work unit. After explaining the nature of my call, this individual informed me that security staff had received both of their requests: new communication equipment and terrorism-specific training. What good news! However, when I asked if I could be put through to the commanding officer, I was given a vague response that he was not available.

I decided to contact the sergeant with whom I had previously provided an individual consultation. He gave me disturbing news: neither improved communication devices nor training had been given to the officers. Additionally, the commanding officer had been "relocated." When I asked why I'd been given information to the contrary, his response was: "Your guess is as good as mine." When I inquired as to why the former commanding officer had been relieved of his duty, the intimation of retaliation was suggested.

The sergeant asked if there was anything more I could do, as the group's morale remained low. He was at a loss as to how to rally his staff. I explained that my involvement could only be expedited by the managed care company. However, I did I suggest some strategies he might employ in getting his staff to recognize their strengths and to build upon them. He thanked me for my concern, and in his words, "professionalism."

Reflection

Reflecting upon these post 9/11 debriefings—again, brokered through managed care—leaves several impressions. First, CISD interventions are powerful and analgesic mutual aid interventions which can greatly assist individuals exposed to critical incidents. Regardless of the participants involved, the process of hearing others' responses to a critical incident can bring forth a sense of commonality and community which may have healing, strengthening, and empowering qualities.

However, it may be questionable as to whether CISD can effectively be delivered through a "forprofit" context. Using a solo mental health professional without a work role "peer" as a team member is not in conformity with the conceptual model and process of normative CISD work. It may be that debriefings altered from the original CISD protocol are compromised in terms of their benefit (Mitchell, 1983; Mitchell, 1988; Everly & Mitchell, 2000; Gist & Woodall, 2000; Everly, Flannery, & Mitchell, 2000; Regehr, 2000; Deahl, Srinivasan, Jones, Neblett & Jolly, 2001).

This raises the issue as to whether CISD services should be "sold" through managed care contracts. Apparently, in the interest of maximizing their competitive advantage, managed care promises to provide debriefing services that are "custom designed" for the needs of the purchasing company. But can you "custom design" a process which has a specific procedural formula and still say it is the same product?

Debriefing teams recognized by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation are co-led by a trained work group peer and a mental health professional. They are provided pro bono to the recipient organization. Companies, agencies, workgroups, and communities needing debriefing services can contact a regional CISD team in their geographic area, through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (www.icisf.org).

In retrospect, offering September 11th debriefings through managed care raised several questions for me regarding whether it was ethical to offer CISD through a profit-oriented context. Can managed care staff physically removed from the affected parties effectively determine what is in the best interests of client systems? Can social workers ethically provide client services when required to offer them in ways that break with the fidelity of an intervention model? Is it possible to remain true to core principles of the social work profession, such as advocacy and empowerment, while at the same time maintaining a stance of neutrality?

Social work is a values-oriented profession with a core practice principle of doing "what is in the best interest of the client." Perhaps because of the emotionally laden environment that affected so many Americans post 9/11 (including myself), I wanted to offer help to

"we, the people." In these situations, my attempts to balance having two clients (management and staff) may have been weighted toward those on the front line.

Being part of a profession which mandates advocacy and giving voice to those silenced can put one in conflict with managed care systems, which are motivated by profit. The best interests of the company may not serve the best interests of the employee/client, and vice versa. These 9/11 debriefings coordinated by managed care have suggested that the primary social work value of service to the client might be compromised when health care decisions are motivated by profit rather than ethics.

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The Many Hats of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Consultant

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As an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) consultant, the author plays an important role in supporting and maintaining a healthy and productive workforce. In the following narrative, the author reflects on her dual identity as a social worker and employee assistance professional. Social work and employee assistance share similar goals and standards of service - yet employee assistance has a unique workplace focus that is missing from social work, and social work provides treatment services not offered by employee assistance programs.

I put on my first EAP hat in my second year of graduate school at the University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work, when I studied clinical EAP. I was drawn to this field for several reasons. As an undergraduate psychology major I concentrated in both clinical psychology and industrial/organizational psychology; EAP allowed me to combine and utilize both fields of knowledge in the same position. I also found that EAP served a population that has always interested me: people that are generally well and need some guidance to stay on track. It also reaches clients that may otherwise fall through the cracks of our current social services and health insurance systems: the working poor. The many hats an EAP counselor wears (i.e. the diversity of the role) was probably the greatest draw to the field for me.

It is now Friday afternoon, and another week as an EAP counselor draws to a close. I wonder if what drew me to the EA field has manifested itself as reality. As I look back on my week, I see that I handled a lot of different matters; including thirteen client appointments ranging from first to sixth (final) sessions. Through my particular EAP, clients get up to six sessions of counseling used for assessment and referral and short term problem-solving and supportive counseling. This week I also had a staff meeting, crisis response team meeting, presented at a new employee orientation, presented a stress management training, provided a management consult, and attended an account management meeting. As I wrap up, I will reflect on some of the highlights.

The week started with Mr. B, a client I'd seen for the third time. Mr. B sought counseling for stress management after his colleague retired, leaving a vacancy that the agency did not fill due to budget problems. He reported working longer hours (including working through lunch and on weekends), eliminating exercise time, and increased irritability and fatigue. He also stated his decision to seek counseling through the EAP came after a heated argument with his wife over division of household responsibilities. Our first two sessions included an assessment and goal setting period, from which Mr. B did not meet the DSM-IV criteria for mental health diagnosis. He identified a goal of learning better work life balance. Our ongoing plan was for short term solution-focused problem-solving, and skills building counseling through the EAP. During our third session I provided him support, we discussed his new concerns, reviewed progress on his homework assignment (which was to review literature on stress management and work life balance), taught him a new stress management skill, and continued to develop his individual stress management plan.

My most intense case of the week was on Tuesday with Mrs. W, a client that reported a previous diagnosis of bipolar disorder as well as a generalized anxiety disorder. She presented with symptoms of a depressive episode, and said that a pending divorce as well as work performance problems triggered her call to the EAP. My assessment also

revealed recent suicidal ideation, including a general plan. Given her previous diagnosis and suicidal ideation, Mrs. W needs longer term treatment than can be provided through the short-term model of an EAP. Therefore my goal with Mrs. W is to foster her motivation to accept referrals to a psychiatrist and therapist.

My first three sessions with Mrs. W were focused on helping to stabilize her, safety planning, and reducing her resistance to treatment. During these first three sessions Mrs. W denied active suicide ideation, specific planning, and previous attempts, and described the presence of numerous protective factors. She also had an extensive safety plan in place including support from family, friends, clergy, and emergency hotline phone numbers as a back-up.

Tuesday was my fourth appointment with Mrs. W. I began the session by asking her about progress on her homework assignment, which was to set up an appointment with both a psychiatrist and a therapist. She reported she set up an appointment for the following week with a therapist, but has not called the psychiatrist. She expressed anxiety about her upcoming therapy session. I helped her clarify her expectations and identify coping skills and support networks that she can utilize to reduce anxiety about the upcoming appointment. I used the remainder of the session to reassess for risk factors, collaborate with her to update her safety plan, and continue exploring her resistance to seeing a psychiatrist. We set up a follow-up appointment to ensure that she successfully connects with her therapist.

Another case that stands out to me is Ms. K, a client who is a single parent with financial problems. She reported that she had always lived paycheck to paycheck because she does not make a lot of money in her support role at the company. She also said she had not received child support for six months because her ex-husband lost his job. She was referred to the EAP by her union when she asked them for help getting a pay advance, and began to cry as she talked about her pending eviction. (Maintaining a collaborative relationship with union leaders is another important function for EAP consultants.)

Wednesday was my first session with Ms. K. I spent the majority of the first hour doing a thorough bio-psycho-social assessment. Ms. K asked for help preventing her eviction. As a social worker, I know it's important to start where the client is, so after the assessment, I shifted my focus to identifying resources that may help her. I began by helping her identify her own personal networks (family, friends, community organizations she is a member of, etc.). Next, we reviewed community systems. As an EAP Counselor, I am armed with an understanding of community resources, ranging from local social service agencies to non profit agencies. Finally, we explored possible workplace options; including personnel resources, retirement benefits, agency/ company grants or loans, and so on. After exploring all the resources, I helped her prioritize and plan how to contact various groups.

Since Ms. K had limited time to follow through, I agreed to help her make the first few calls from my office before the end of our appointment. We also scheduled a follow-up appointment to provide additional supportive and problem-solving counseling if needed, as well as to reassess the needs for additional resources such as transitional housing.

My first two clients on Thursday morning did not show up and did not call to cancel their appointments - a frustration endured by most EAP counselors. I use the time to make follow-up calls to clients, as this is a key part of EAP work (Employee Assistance Professionals Association, 2009a). The first call I made was to Mr. S, a client I have seen twice in the past two weeks. Mr. S. came to the EAP to ask for strategies on how improve his concentration at work. He reported that he couldn't concentrate because he was anxious about losing his job since he was on probation for poor work performance. During our initial meeting, Mr. S. also stated that he had a diagnosis of major depression and a treatment plan involving him working with both a psychiatrist and therapist. Mr. S. allowed me to coordinate with his other treatment providers, and we identified goals for his EAP work to explore additional workplace resources for support (such as reasonable accommodations

program, mentoring program, etc.) and to explore strategies for improving concentration (such as changing work environment, teaching relaxation techniques to use at work to cope with anxiety, etc.).

At our last appointment, Mr. S. informed me that he had a review meeting with his supervisor and that he would call me afterwards. Since Mr. S had not called, I called to follow-up with him; he informed me that he was terminated from his position. As part of my termination with Mr. S., I provided telephonic supportive counseling to ensure that Mr. S. is still connected with his other treatment resources.

After hanging up, I took a few minutes myself to process this event. I always feel disappointed when one of my clients in terminated. There is a piece of me that wishes I could have done more and wishes that I had more power to change the situation. Sometimes I even question my own ability to make a difference and be helpful. This situation is one example of when things don't go as planned, and of my limited control over outcomes.

I ended my week with a new supervisory referral. A supervisor may refer an employee to the EAP when there are documented work performance problems. The role of the EAP is to do an assessment to determine if there are underlying personal problems creating work performance problems and then to help the employee resolve those underlying problems. The goal of the referral is to return the employee to full productivity, which saves the company, supervisor, and employee time, money, and additional stress. I prepared by reviewing my notes from talking with the supervisor. A supervisor—Ms. P—called the EAP after a supervisory orientation last week. Ms. P reported she was having a problem with one of her employees. She started by telling me that the employee is very good at his job and probably knows more about the job than anyone else in the entire department; the problem is with the employee's attendance. According to the supervisor, the employee has always used a lot of leave, but leave use had gotten more excessive in the past six months. The employee currently had no accrued sick leave, had forgotten to call their supervisor twice in the last month when not coming to work, and in the past two months had been late or left early on most days when he has come to work. Ms. P stated that she'd attempted to talk with the employee about the attendance concerns, and reported that his behavior hadn't changed since that conversation took place. During my consultation with Ms. P, she said she had no other concerns related to performance or conduct for this employee. We also reviewed her documentation, and I coached her on how to refer the employee to the EAP on the basis of work performance problems (specifically his attendance). I also encouraged Ms. P to consult with Human Resources regarding company policy and procedure when there are attendance problems.

Earlier that day I had my first session with Mr. R, the employee referred by Ms. P. I started by reviewing privacy and confidentiality laws and educating him about the voluntary nature and scope of EAP services. Then we reviewed why he was referred to the EAP. This was at least the second time Mr. R was confronted about his work performance problems (the first was by the supervisor, Ms. P, when the referral to EAP was made). The goal of dual confrontation is to break through Mr. R's denial and help him see that a problem exists. Next, I let Mr. R guide the session and provide some background about what may be causing his attendance problem. This is a useful approach to start where the client is and also helps build rapport more quickly. Toward the end of the session, Mr. R revealed that he relapsed about one year ago. He acknowledged drinking 12 or more shots of liquor each night for the past three weeks, a backlog of bills, a family history of alcoholism, weight loss, decreased energy, loss of concentration, impaired memory, and depression. He said he had no memory of the days his boss said he failed to call out and reported shakiness and excessive sweating when he tried to stop drinking one month ago. Based on my assessment, Mr. R is contemplating change but is not ready to commit to the change process yet. Therefore, I started the counseling phase with some safety education about alcoholism and withdrawal.

We then began to identify the barriers to change and addressed any misconceptions. Mr. R's homework is to write a list about the costs and benefits of his drinking.

My week consisted of more than one on one counseling. For example, on Monday I presented at a new employee orientation. This is part of the core technology of EAP (Employee Assistance Professionals Association, 2009a). By educating employees about EAP services before there is a problem, the employee is more likely to use the EAP at the onset of a problem, before it becomes a crisis. An employee orientation can range from a few minutes to an hour. The orientation I did on Monday was 20 minutes; so I only covered the most important topics, including a description of the various EAP services (short-term supportive, problem-solving and assessment and referral counseling, financial consultations, legal consultations, training, etc.), an explanation of confidentiality and applicable laws, eligibility criteria, and contact information for setting up services.

A separate orientation is offered to supervisors and managers. This training expands on the employee orientation and reviews with supervisors how to use the EAP as a performance management tool. The main goal of the training is to teach supervisors to identify employee's who are having problems (using work performance indicators) and then encourage managers to refer those employees to the EAP. If managers can identify and refer employees who are having performance problems, the EAP can provide the employee with resources for identifying and resolving underlying personal problems that may cause those work performance problems. In the end this saves the employee, manager, and company time, frustration, and money.

On Tuesday, I conducted a health and wellness presentation on stress management. I have also given presentations on managing change, communication skills, balancing work and family life, anger management, conflict management, and time management, among others. Depending on the setting and audience, presentations can range from a few minutes up to several hours (possibly days). This presentation was one hour as part of a lunch-and-learn series. To fit stress management into one hour, the presentation focused on teaching strategies and skills for managing work stress (including cognitive approaches involving changing one's perspectives, and physical approaches to reduce stress levels such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and exercise). I also provided a resource list (books and websites) for those who were interested in learning more about the biology and psychology of stress.

I was grateful that this presentation was such a success. The last presentation I conducted was titled "Dealing with Difficult People and Situations," and it was not as successful. The presentation was for a specific department and the supervisor had requested the workshop as part of a customer service training series. Despite my best efforts to do a thorough needs assessment and gather background information from the requesting supervisor, I had been misled and the workshop was not well received.

Throughout the presentation, it became apparent that the workshop was upper management's solution to reports of a difficult employee. I encountered resistance to the educational theory and workshop foundation, hostility to engaging in small group skills building exercises, and little to no participation in large group discussions. I did my best to change the layout of the workshop and focus on group assessment, but I could not gain the trust of the employees to be successful.

I followed-up the presentation with a frank discussion with the supervisor and recommend that they invest in an organizational development assessment. I also offered to provide referrals for such services as well. That workshop left me feeling drained, frustrated, angry, and questioning my own skill level. Tuesday's workshop did a lot to restore my self confidence.

Wednesday I had a conference call with the critical incident response team. This team consists of EAP consultants who volunteer to provide crisis response services. All team members have special training in critical incident response. The team has responded to industrial accidents, as part of hurricane and flood responses, workplace violence incidents,

and other traumas. The EAP's role is to support the company as well as their employees and families to cope with a crisis. To support the company, the EAP may provide consultation about the return to work process and educate management about normal emotional response and how to identify and refer troubled employees. To support the individual employees and their families, the EAP may provide one on one crisis intervention support, assessment and referral services, education about normal emotional responses, and healthy coping strategies. This was a quarterly meeting, and the purpose was to facilitate team building and provide training regarding recent research on response techniques.

Yesterday I got an unexpected call from a manager, Mr. D, who called to ask for help after being notified that one of his employees was killed in an automobile accident the previous evening. Managers often want quick answers, but I started the consult by gathering more information about the department (size, role in the company, history of grief, history of other internal problems, etc.), the employee who died (time at the company, job function, interaction with other employees, etc.), and details about the upcoming funeral services. The next step was to educate the Mr. D about normal reactions to loss, the possible impacts on the workplace, and his role as a supervisor. I also talked with Mr. D about his coping resources, and managing his own reactions. Next we talked about possible EAP assistance, including one on one counseling, additional management consultations, and grief groups that are educational and processing based. We also discussed the recommended timing of these services, and I helped him prepare to talk to his staff about this sensitive topic. Mr. D decided he would talk to his staff to determine their openness to a grief group. I had agreed to clear my calendar for next Tuesday morning (which is the day after the funeral service), if the service is requested.

Finally, I met with the EAP Coordinator at the company. We meet at least quarterly to review the EAP utilization report, discuss trends, and review anticipated changes or problems in the company. This is also an opportunity for program planning. For example, the utilization reports showed a rise in requests for relationship counseling over the past 2 quarters and a decrease in the number of management consultations. I proposed a multi-faceted marketing and training initiative to address both trends. Neither trend can be successfully addressed through EAP training alone; collaboration with other company leaders, union leaders, and other departments is needed.

My meeting today and the proposed plan are all part of the account management function of an EAP consultant. Account management functions may include program evaluation and data analysis, organizational needs assessment, promotional material development, implementation of marketing campaigns, planning educational and wellness programs, developing key relationships in the company, assisting in company policy development related to EAP, and reviewing employee satisfaction with the program.

As I reflect on my week, I also reflect on my dual identity as a Social Worker and an Employee Assistance Professional. To be a successful EAP consultant, one must build skills and draw from multiple disciplines including social work, mental health, consulting, and business. There is both overlap and difference between EAP and social work. One area of overlap is "the goal of enhancement and maintenance of psychosocial functioning of individuals, families, and small groups" (National Association of Social Workers, 2009a). In an EAP setting a group includes individual work groups, departments, and the company at large. Another commonality is "the perspective of person-in-situation" (National Association of Social Workers, 2009a). An underlying focus of EAP work is to look at how the work environment is impacted and the reciprocal influence of work on the client and client on the workplace. EAP and social work also provide overlapping services including assessment, client-centered advocacy, consultation, and evaluation. A point of difference is that EAP includes a work focus that is often missing from traditional social work. Also, clinical social work services provide diagnosis and treatment not offered by EAP.

Furthermore, there are numerous overlapping standards set forth by NASW for Clinical Social Work Practice and set forth by EAPA for EAP Practice (Employee Assistance Professional Association, 2009b). Similarities include being familiar with and making appropriate community referrals, providing emergency access to clinical care, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of clients, providing supervision of clinicians, requiring ongoing professional development, and requirements for record keeping.

Confidentiality is another common theme between social work and EAP, but poses a unique challenge in the EAP field. As an EAP consultant, I have dual clients at all times: the company and the employee or individual in front of me. Federal laws (such as HIPPA and 42CFR) protect the confidentiality rights of the individuals who seek counseling or consultation through the EAP. However, it is up to the EAP to position itself and to remain a neutral workplace resource. EAP consultants should not align themselves with the agency, management or the individual employee.

A good example of the dual client is the supervisory referral I mentioned earlier. As I work with both clients (supervisor and employee), I work hard to remain an objective and neutral third party. Additionally, the consult I had with the supervisor is confidential; that information cannot be shared with the employee client or others without the permission of the supervisor. The information I gather during the initial assessment session with the employee client is also confidential and cannot be shared with the supervisor who referred them (or others) without the client's permission. In order to follow-up with the supervisor about their work related concerns for the employee client, I may ask the client to grant permission for the EAP to follow-up with the supervisor. If permission is granted, then I may let the supervisor know that the employee is attending EAP sessions, is complying with EAP recommendations, workplace impacts, and discuss workplace changes that would further facilitate successful recovery. The client is not obligated to allow this and does not face disciplinary action if they choose not to grant permission. Furthermore, if permission is granted, they client can specify exactly who the information goes to, over what period of time communication is allowed, and specifically what information is authorized for release.

In this narrative I've given an account on a week in the life of an EAP social worker. Although the week I've shared is atypical in that I don't normally wear that many hats in one week, I would say the week is probably more reflective of all the hats I wear in a month's time frame. However, there are occasional weeks in which all of my hats are worn. To answer my own question, I think what drew me to the EA field meets what is my reality.

I have also left out some of the more mundane tasks in my week, such as record keeping, case closing, staff meetings, clinical supervision, responding to telephone calls and answering questions about the EAP, among others. I've also shared a couple of the struggles that I have faced as an EAP counselor, but there are many more. Learning to keep my own nerves calm and be flexible to deal with crises that arise is one set of challenges. Examples of challenges left out of my story that are more routine for many EAP counselors include responding to workplace violence incidents, workplace recovery following hurricanes, mining accidents, and other traumas.

As with other types of counselors, I have to be on guard for counter transference. Any client can trigger unresolved issues for EA counselors. A few examples may include a relationship break-up, credit card debt, or problems with our own children or parents. An especially trying time for me has been helping grieving clients in the year after my father passed. I have had to learn to set boundaries, ask for help, and say no to referrals, which was a challenge for me.

Self preservation has been my greatest challenge. In trying to create the best EAP possible, I have found myself often overwhelmed with service requests and easily slipped into poor habits such as working late at the sacrifice of exercise, family, rest, and friends. I am lucky enough to have a strong support system that wasn't afraid to confront me and help me regain my perspective and

priorities. It is easy to know on an intellectual level that I must take care of myself if I want to continue to help others, but it is a much harder concept to put into practice. This is something that I focus on and work toward on a daily basis.

I've also shared some observations about the various roles I play and some of their implications for social work and EAP. This was an especially important section for me to include. I have often struggled with my own identity – do I identify myself as an EA Professional, or do I identify myself as a Social Worker? There were times in graduate school and throughout my career when comments by other social workers had me questioning if I was truly a social worker and times when other EA professionals had me questioning if I was using my social work training. Writing this article has helped me realize that I don't need to pick one or the other. I am both a social worker and an EA professional, and I see now that the professions are congruent in many ways.

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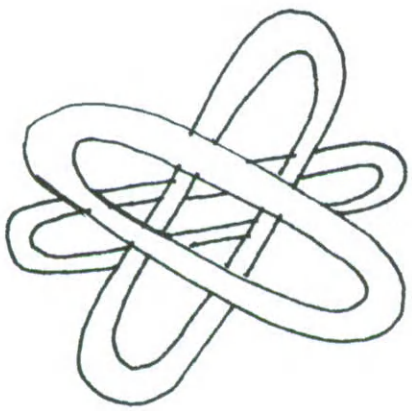

Shared Reflections on Transformative Practice: From Challenges to Client Empowerment in Workforce Development

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Program directors, practitioners, and researchers are constantly confronted with the dilemma of navigating the responsibilities of effective program implementation while trying to meet and evaluate performance outcomes stipulated by funders. Sometimes, what is requested by funders does not necessarily reflect the realities of the ground level, day-to-day work with clients. The reflections presented in this narrative describe the challenges experienced by the program director, practitioner, and researcher in their quest to provide informed practice in workforce development. These reflections shed insight on the dialogues that should be fostered with funders and questions to be asked among service providers who help low-income individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency. While transparency with funders is often confronted by ambivalence within these tough economic times, it is necessary for transformative practice in workforce development. As helping professionals, advocating for client-centered empowerment practice in employment services is an ethical responsibility.

Program directors, practitioners, and researchers are constantly confronted with the dilemma of navigating the responsibilities of effective program implementation while trying to meet and evaluate performance outcomes stipulated by funders. Sometimes, what is requested by funders does not necessarily reflect the realities of the ground level, day-to-day work with clients. The reflections presented in this narrative describe the challenges experienced by the program director, practitioner, and researcher in their quest to provide informed practice in workforce development. These reflections shed insight on the dialogues that should be fostered with funders and questions to be asked among service providers who help low-income individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency. While transparency with funders is often confronted by ambivalence within these tough economic times, it is necessary for transformative practice in workforce development. As helping professionals, advocating for client-centered empowerment practice in employment services is an ethical responsibility.

It is Friday morning and I am sitting at my desk preparing for two very important meetings scheduled for Tuesday with one of my major funders (Foundation X). My contract with this funder requires that I, as a program administrator (PA) in workforce development, move low-income individuals toward self-sufficiency through employment. I am bewildered because there are so many variables that come into play when I think about the tasks I have been charged to accomplish.

In preparation for the meeting, I meet with my two employment specialists (ES) to inquire about the number of "placements" for the past two months. This will inevitably be the funder's main concern. This is how the meeting unfolded with my employment specialists:

PA: Okay you guys, how are we looking with our number of placements?

ES1: Well, it is rough. We have placed ten individuals.

PA: That's not good, our target is 100 by the end of the contract year (July 31, 2009) and we are four months into the contract. What is going on?

ES2: For one, the economy is bad, and also it is challenging to find placements.

ES1: We have completed two two-week long intensive pre-placement job trainings, but the supply (jobseekers) outweighs the demand (employers).

PA: What about the two gentlemen you placed in construction four weeks ago?

—Silence—

ES1: One gentleman had a verbal altercation with his co-worker and was fired. The other gentleman quit because his car broke down and he was unable to obtain reliable transportation.

PA: Wait, something does not sound right. First off, were you guys following up with these gentlemen to head off these problems?

ES1: We try to talk with the clients at least bi-weekly, but the first guy in our conversation gave no indication that there was a problem. When he came in looking for another job, I asked him why he didn't talk to me about being fired. He said he felt he could handle the situation himself. The second guy's phone had been disconnected and when the case manager went to make a home visit, he was never home.

PA: What about the employer? Did you reach out to the employer?

ES2: Yes, and he said he does not want to work with our agency because the last two guys did not work out.

ES1: So there is a good relationship with an employer being destroyed.

PA: Did we screen these guys?

ES1: Yes, these were two of my better candidates. They had successfully completed the skills training for construction. They also successfully completed our job skills pre-placement training and they genuinely seemed motivated to work.

ES2: Our clients have serious challenges regarding employment, and it takes a lot of work to get them past the interview stage, to be considered for employment. Once they are placed, that is only half the battle. The next challenge is keeping our clients employed.

PA: You know guys, I hear you and I truly understand your frustrations. But ultimately, our funders are going to want to see our numbers. We need to come up with a better strategy in screening and getting our best clients placed.

ES1: If we are going to focus primarily on our best clients then we are creaming. What happens to those who require more assistance?

My journey in the field of social work has evolved into multiple roles as a social worker. I have worked as a case manager, therapist, consultant, and currently as a program administrator. I must add that my work as a program administrator has been, as I have begun to describe above, by far the most rewarding and challenging. My responsibilities consist of managing the day-to-day operations of a program designed to serve low-income individuals who once lived in Chicago's public housing developments. These public housing developments have undergone a massive overhaul. Families have transitioned into newly built or rehabbed housing. In light of this change, programs have been designed to assist families with their transition by providing services that will help them maintain their housing and move toward economic self-sufficiency. My social work values of self-determination, empowerment, and genuine concerns for the betterment of humankind have girded my commitment to workforce development for the most vulnerable population. In this narrative, I will write about the transformative nature of this work as part of the collective reflections.

Along with my responsibilities of making programmatic decisions regarding the implementation of services, I am responsible for meeting performance outcomes required by various funding entities. Here lies the challenging component of my job. The challenge is navigating the needs of the populations served while meeting the requirements of my funders. First, I would like to preface my comments with the clear understanding that without our funding, we would not be able to provide services to our families so desperately in need. I also want to add that I wholeheartedly endorse the need for program accountability and evaluation. However, I digress by saying that when dealing with the lives of individuals who have

"complex" needs and issues, meeting performance outcomes also become a "complex" task. I claim that it is complex because our performance benchmarks required by funders are often not reflective of the realities of the time and efforts needed to assist families.

The reflections presented here describe the challenges faced by each of the authors, including the administrator's perspective (Vorricia Harvey), a direct service worker's perspective (Keweli Kwaza), and a social researcher's perspective (Philip Hong). These reflections denote the need for transparency when communicating with funders, and the bridge between practice and research to inform funders of best practices from the client perspective. The reflections are presented in the context of the collaborative work that is being done to empower low-income individuals in their paths to achieving economic self-sufficiency through employment.

Employment Specialist's Reflections

I have worked with low wage workers for five years and have experienced some good times and some disappointing times. There are many stories in which I have helped change the lives of families. It is so rewarding to see an individual change from a once hopeless person to one who exudes confidence and hope.

One of my clients, Kathy Smith (name changed for confidentiality purpose) says she never had a place to live; in fact, she was born in prison. She has never worked a legal job. She has no high school diploma. She also has a number of felonies including drug sales/ possession, armed robbery, burglary, and prostitution. When she first came to my office she solicited me (prostitution). I explained to her that I am married and I would feel as if I were disrespecting my wife, myself, and most of all Kathy herself if I took her up on her offer. I explained that I understood what it was like to not have money to provide for my family. I made an agreement with her that I would help her find a job if she would go to school to take up a trade.

I asked her, "When you were just a little girl, where did you see yourself working?" She said that she used to love watching her grandmother cook and thought that she would cook in the kitchen as well. She also explained that she has never been a good cook. I referred Kathy to Chicago Christian Industrial League (CCIL), to learn hospitality and cooking. I stayed in touch with the case managers at CCIL. The case managers at CCIL stated that Kathy had a negative attitude at first, but that she turned it all around. The longer she stayed in the program, the more her attitude improved. Before graduating from the program, the students operated the CCIL café. My coworkers and I went there for lunch and Kathy was very professional and courteous.

To tell the truth, I didn't expect Kathy to complete the program, but she did. Now it was time for me to make good on my promise to find her a job, even with the lack of a high school diploma and all of those felonies. None of the employers I have relationships with would hire her. One day, I got into my car and was determined to not come back to the office until I found something for her. I parked my car and began to walk down Madison Street, stopping at every business on Madison. I got all the way to Austin (Chicago city limits) finishing the north side of the street and began calling on all of the businesses on the south side of the street until one business woman said, "Okay, I'll give her a chance. But if I have any problems, I am holding you responsible." I rushed back to my office to call Kathy with the good news. She was so excited that she went and aced the interview.

Kathy worked at the restaurant for about a year until they closed down. Kathy did not let this deter her. She was so happy that our program helped her, and her confidence had risen so that she decided to go back to school for her GED. Kathy is still attending school.

I can go on and on talking about clients who turned their lives around. Unfortunately, I can go on and on about many disappointments as well. Many of my clients have dire circumstances but not all of them have the same self-determination as Kathy. Recently, I had a client who told me that she doesn't want to work because she doesn't like going out in

the cold. Others with no high school diploma and multiple felonies often complain about taking low-wage jobs. Often clients will quit their jobs after a short period (less than 30 days) because they don't like the manager or they feel that they are being treated unfairly. I also get complaints of too much work or comments like, "I was only late four times," or "I only missed one day."

My biggest challenge is that I never have enough time to adequately work with clients to prepare them to interview and to work in a professional environment. The pressures of meeting contract goals can sometimes become overwhelming. Many times I have to skip parts of the preparation process in order to meet deadlines that are established by someone who doesn't understand the needs of the clients *or* the needs of the employers. I have to convince employers that my clients are ready but just don't interview well, so that they will hurry up and hire them. This rushed process has cost me relationships with employers. Although I have been recognized as one of the premier employment specialists in Chicago, I don't feel that I am truly helping most of my clients to achieve self sufficiency. I often feel that I am part of the poverty pimping game.

Program Administrator's Meeting with Foundation X

Today is the day I meet with my funder. I am concerned because I am sharing my performance. I want to share the challenges we face on the ground level without sounding as though I am making excuses. However, I feel I must be transparent with my funders to provide a clear understanding of the impact we are having with our clients on the ground level.

Foundation X: Well, PA, how is the program coming along?

PA: Well we have some successes and we have some not so successful outcomes.

Foundation X: Tell me about your successes and what are you doing programmatically.

PA: Well, we have had success in placing some of our clients. However, these are the individuals who have some work history and skills comparable to their new employment. We have tried to enhance our assessments to place individuals in jobs they are interested in and have skills that are comparable to the work required. Examples of various employment placements are: Home Health Care, Janitorial, and Landscape. For those individuals who are not ready to enter the workforce, we have been successful in enrolling them in either GED program or other vocational training programs.

Foundation X: Sounds promising. Tell me more about this process.

PA: Well, as you know, we have case managers who work closely with our employment specialists. They have done a fantastic job in building relationships with their clients. Their work is critical and complements the work of our employment specialists. However, my case managers have been working with these clients for some time and they state that it is not an overnight process. For some, they are ready to take advantage of the resources. For others, it takes some time to click, and when it does, it happens internally. We are still learning what works.

Foundation X: Are these the unsuccessful ones?

PA: Yes, but maybe I should not label them as unsuccessful, rather those who have multiple issues we are trying to address. With this group, it is trial and error. *(I share the stories about the two construction workers).*

Foundation X: What do you think went wrong?

PA: That is the magic question. I have some thoughts on what we can do differently. We can tighten up our follow-up process with clients and employers, and screen more thoroughly. However, we thought we were doing this well. *(I share the story of Trudy whose name is changed for confidentiality purpose).*

Trudy has called me consistently for the past three weeks requesting assistance with employment placement. My employment specialist luckily gets her a job working in a hospital at $10.00 an hour, with the opportunity to get benefits after 6 months. Trudy has excellent computer skills because she completed a computer training program through a referral from our office. I later

learned that just two days before she was to meet her 30-day retention goal, she quit her job due to a verbal altercation with her supervisor. Upon learning this information, I inquired as to what went wrong. Trudy reported that she did not like the way her supervisor talked to her. I asked her why she didn't report this to the employment specialist. She stated that she felt she had the situation under control. The employment specialist is concerned because after following up with Trudy, she gave no indication that she was experiencing a problem.

Foundation X: Is there anything that could have been done differently programmatically?

PA: This particular example raises multiple issues for me as an administrator. One, did we as the provider screen Trudy thoroughly enough? In our mad-dash to meet our performance outcomes, did we move too quickly in our placement? In our efforts to place, are we not paying enough attention to follow-up, even though we try to talk with our placed clients bi-weekly? Did we communicate enough with the employer? These are the questions I have pondered.

I feel this dialogue with funders is imperative because sometimes, in our rush to make placements and meet our numbers, we lose sight of the core mission of our work. Are the clients' lives truly transformed? Are we making an impact? What are we seeing in those clients that allow them to succeed despite multiple barriers? What are we not seeing in those who are still struggling to navigate life's challenges?

You see, I have a program in which I am required to assist individuals with multiple barriers (i.e. limited work skills, limited soft skills, low literacy rates, some criminal backgrounds, etc.) find and retain employment. When we work with these individuals, we began to uncover layers of underlying issues (i.e. low self-efficacy, low self-esteem, and hopelessness). As we begin to uncover these layers, we find that the time and efforts needed to effectively address these challenges conflict with the time constraints imposed by the requirements.

Herein lies where I have had the privilege of collaborating with a researcher who shares my commitment to truly impacting the lives of my clients. This researcher's work on psychological empowerment and employment has been invaluable to me and my team of employment specialists and case managers. His work on employment hope, in particular, addresses the very issues that surfaced during my meeting with Foundation X and it resonates profoundly with the work I am doing. I requested a meeting with him along with my employment specialist team to discuss ideas for evidence-based, bottom-up program development to better serve the needs of our clients to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

PA: I am so glad that you are able to work with us on how to grapple with the idea of economic self-sufficiency for our clients.

Researcher: Thanks for inviting me to be part of this discussion. I have worked with some workforce development agencies before and helped them understand why they were only able to meet low rates of the funders' required benchmarks on employment success. What were your experiences?

PA: We have been blessed to have many funders provide us with the resources and plans to achieve success with our clients. Some clients have achieved their employment goals and have moved in the path toward upward mobility, but many remain caught between multiple barriers to obtaining and sustaining employment.

Researcher: What is your performance benchmark? What determines success for you?

ES1: If I may, it has to do with putting people to work. And many of these folks are labeled as hard-to-serve and they want us to get them out of the system of dependency and get them on the path toward self-sufficiency.

ES2: Our job is to work with our case managers to formulate the best success strategy for each individual who has had a long history of no work or very little labor market attachment. They tend to have various employment barriers that limit their ability to keep a work-life balance.

PA: Our overall numbers are pretty good to the funders, especially considering the fact

that we're working with the "hard-to-serve," who don't believe in themselves or the system. Yet I really worry about the ones who don't quite make it. Because people are not numbers. Their situations are real yet we tend to be bounded by what we're told to achieve.

Researcher: This is exactly the challenge that many agencies are facing. I suggest working with the clients' inner strength to motivate them and then to build individualized goal-oriented path for their success. This empowerment process would not only help your agency to increase future performance benchmark, but also develop 'employment hope' for individuals and families in the community. What's most important is that this approach requires a renewed commitment to investing in human development to better their lives and well-being, and not just 'regulating the poor' for social control.

Social Researcher's Reflections

My research has revealed over the years that a top-down approach to pushing low-income individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency may have good intentions policywise, but it does not adequately address the realities of our clients. Human capital development in the form of education, job training, and health is reported to be less than helpful for low-income individuals to leave poverty (Hong & Pandey, 2008). These traits tend to be deep-seated, structurally vulnerable characteristics among low-income populations (Rank, 2004) rather than simple variables to consider in policy and program development.

I have been involved in a program evaluation of a local workforce development initiative monitored by a national foundation. When approached with a question of how to deal with the issue of low success rate in achieving self-sufficiency for participants in a job training and job-readiness program, I could not help but ask how self-sufficiency was measured. The agency's definition was that one becomes self-sufficient when he or she finds employment and stays in the job for one year. This practice was justified by research that people are more likely to stay in the jobs longer and make economic advancement when they keep their jobs at least a year.

This made logical sense; but why were people not becoming self-sufficient with all these support services and training? These clients have to deal with many structural and personal employment barriers: lack of job opportunities, discrimination, lack of access to transportation, work disincentives built into social policies, limited education and job-related/soft skills, lack of work experience, criminal background, lack of affordable childcare, substance use and abuse, domestic violence, etc. It is no wonder that programs find it challenging to help clients find and keep jobs, with their overly ambitious programmatic goals given a whole host of barriers to consider in the equation.

It left me to believe that there is something that we're all blinded to by only sticking to our mainstream theories and logic and not asking the clients themselves. I proposed to conduct a series of focus groups with program participants, graduates, and some staff members to see what they believed to be the definition of self-sufficiency from their own perspectives. I recall one of the focus group participants voicing his frustration in thinking about the term self-sufficiency. This incident has had a lasting effect on my work on workforce development from a bottom-up empowerment perspective.

Researcher: I am a university faculty member and researcher and would like to learn about your thoughts on the term self-sufficiency. In your own words, what does this mean?

Participant A: I believe it is having enough money to pay for your bills.

Participant B: I also think it has to do with not being reliant on government, state, churches…and other people period. No free checks.

Participant C: Hold on, I don't mean to be disruptive, but let me ask you this. Do you believe you are self-sufficient? Don't you get help from other people?

Researcher: Um…(pause)…you know, in the strictest sense, no I don't think so.

Participant C: Then why do only poor people have to be self-sufficient? Who is really self-sufficient in this world?

Participant C's point triggered responses from other participants to move away from the outcome-based definition of self-sufficiency and imagine a rather process-oriented alternative definition. Clients commonly conceptualized self-sufficiency more as a psychological process and not an economic outcome (Hong, Sheriff, & Naeger, 2009). It is an empowerment process by which people are transformed on the path to building inner strength and developing a sense of goal-orientation and acquiring job-related skills. I call this a process of developing employment hope.

Like what Participant C suggested, economic self-sufficiency is an unrealistic goal for anyone in our society and subsequently marginalizes people, particularly the low-income groups with lack of resources. On the other hand, employment hope is what everyone in our society ought to share in our quest to achieve upward mobility. This may seem common sense to many practitioners on the ground level, but it was a significant revelation that has shaped my research orientation. This is evidence of best practice in workforce development based on how staff and service recipients together perceived success within transformative processes.

My suggestion to the agency was to measure what they actually do well—building employment hope and job skills—and break out of the dependency on job placement as the undeniable truth to success. Job placement is a function not only of program effectiveness but also of multiple employment barriers experienced by these clients and whether there are enough employers who are willing to hire them. Practice-informed research has emerged from this work and I continue to work with various workforce development programs to measure employment hope as a new concept of success for our job-seeking clients.

At present, research-informed practice is being advocated for by suggesting key foundations and notable agencies to redefine success and work toward a bottom-up change. This would involve monitoring of such empowerment process as an intermediary success measure which would ultimately lead to economic success. As employment hope is a reflection not just of individual psychology but also of their perception on what opportunities the society offers them, the social change effort would also need to involve the business community to embrace our clients as they move into the workforce.

While a few agencies tend to be committed to this work, it remains a challenge when the current policy context continues to drive many foundations and agencies to adhere to the behavioral change strategy and rely heavily on the tangible outcomes rather than psychological empowerment. Here's what I typically encounter when talking to foundations (represented by Foundation Y) for potential research funding:

Researcher: Thanks for talking with me to discuss the potential funding opportunities for conducting research on client empowerment in workforce development.

Foundation Y: I have glanced at the material that you had sent me. So, help me remember what it is that you want to study. You say employment hope?

Researcher: Yes, prior research has revealed that self-sufficiency as commonly known is not something identified with by people directly affected by the policy reality. They see it more as a process rather than an outcome. It is a process of building employment hope which is a function of psychological empowerment and developing future goal orientation.

Foundation Y: Oh, I remember now. It is a very interesting topic as a research project but…sorry about being so direct…I think it is too wishy-washy a concept when it comes to putting this into practice. You can measure employment hope all you want, but it is not something tangible that the foundation can rely on as a concrete goal.

Researcher: But you know it's real. This is the story told by the very clients and many workforce development agencies agree that change starts from the inside and gradually moves to forming consistent behavioral patterns that lead to employment outcomes.

Foundation Y: I like the idealist in you, but when someone has to put a lot of money on something, there better be something visible

reported as a result. I believe that's what most foundations want to know.

Researcher: We all know that change doesn't happen that quickly for anyone. Why are these top-down changes expected to happen in such a short time interval for low-income jobseekers? Would it be possible for funders be the change agent supporting non-traditional, innovative ideas?

Foundation Y: One day, hopefully, but we currently have to go with our commitment to partners whose interest is to build on prior successful programs and continue to see improvement in the numbers – more people finding jobs and becoming economically self-sufficient.

Researcher: I understand and I truly hope that "one day" can arrive soon. All this is not about anyone else but those who live the realities of employment barriers and harsh economic conditions. I hope new collaborations will emerge to build employment hope for our clients and to restructure the economic environment in which this hope can grow. Thank you very much for your time.

Program Administrator's Final Thoughts

In my work as a program administrator, I have found that there are a group of individuals that seize the opportunities and take advantage of the many resources available. A common theme in these individuals is their sense of hope. Their family structure may be dysfunctional and chaotic, however their self-confidence and self-efficacy are intact. They have the internal strengths that propel them to achieve. Then, there are those who are struggling internally. Their struggles are often manifested in various ways (i.e. depression, apathy, and substance abuse).

I have found that all the trainings and pre-placement employment services are not enough to help individuals gain and sustain employment. I was talking to a young man who stated that he was heading down the wrong path. However, it was not until something clicked for him internally that he was able to move forward. I inquired as to what specifically caused the transformation. He stated it was a combination of things; particularly he felt the change had to occur on the inside. He also stated that his case manager was a catalyst in the sense that she encouraged him to take advantage of some of the resources available to him.

This all may sound cliché to many, but for me it has been a consistent theme throughout my 15+ years working in the field of social work within distressed communities. The challenge I have experienced when talking with funders is, "How do you operationalize this concept programmatically?" I strongly believe that until this is done, a critical element will be missed. If we do not address this issue, we will easily succumb to the quick fixes. This is where the bridge between practice and research becomes vital to informing best practices, for which the success could be measured up against its contribution to the transformative processes for many who have been socially and economically excluded. Investing in employment hope will have a long-

term effect on helping low-income individuals and families achieve economic advancement.

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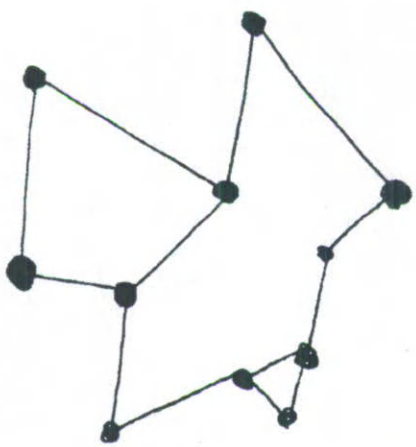

Fire Department of New York City Confronts Gender Integration:

A Tale of Minor Success and Major Woes as Organizational Change Meets a Culture of Resistance

By Sheila H. Akabas, Ph.D., Columbia University

After a federal court declared the test for the Fire Department of New York City (FDNY) to be discriminatory, women were able to pass the test to be appointed to the department. In this narrative, the author reflects on her experiences leading a team of social workers and other social scientists hired to help the department overcome the unwelcoming and treacherous behavior of the male labor force to the employment of women. Using an organizational change model based on Kurt Lewin's work, the team tested a variety of participative interventions to which the culture reacted in hostile and unreceptive ways. The disappointing solution hinged is described below. The experience confirmed the value of social work advocacy and the importance of federal law and court enforcement.

Introduction

It is rumored to have been a chance occurrence that caused gender to be written into the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a protected class. The Act was sent to Congress by JFK, who sought to provide and protect the voting and other rights of individuals of color in the United States. It was debated fiercely in the Congress and, at the time of his assassination, appeared to have little chance of passage. Southerners were thoroughly opposed to providing such protections to those of color. But after JFK's death, President Johnson pledged to carry the battle forth. With his unique competence in legislative maneuvering, Johnson was able to move the law toward likely passage. At that point, reportedly, Representative Howard W. Smith, a Virginian Democrat, moved to include gender in the protected classes, hoping that enough fellow legislators would be opposed to giving women such protection so that the law would go down to defeat. Instead, almost no debate occurred around gender prior to its acceptance, and years later the Supreme Court would complain that there was no legislative history to refer to in trying to understand Congressional intent on the issue of gender.

Presenting Problem

The law opened many previously barred opportunities for women, in everything from expanded choices for participation in college athletic teams to reduced occupational ghettoization. Traditional male activities became gender neutral in principle. The question became, "How could such neutrality be accomplished in practice?" In many cases institutions abided by the new mandate, or even welcomed it, as an occasion to achieve fairness for all by establishing responsive structures and policies. But in other situations, the seats of power were determined to avoid adherence if at all possible. It turned out that the FDNY (Fire Department of New York City), convinced that women could never perform the firefighter job competently, fell into this second category. The department implemented a physical test that was beyond the capacity of any woman (and most men) to perform, and thereby effectively eliminated female candidates from passing. Those women who had taken and failed the test—

led by Barbara Berkman, a newly minted lawyer among their ranks—filed a class action law suit in federal court in 1978. Years later, Judge Charles Sifton ruled in their favor, declaring that the physical test "relied too much on upper body strength tasks that weren't job related." The FDNY was required to provide a new test to those (women) who were parties to the class action suit. (Although the women had reached out to the men who had also failed the test, the men unanimously rejected joining in the women's action.) Forty-two women passed the revised test, and became the first women appointed to the FDNY. Instead of being praised for their accomplishment, they forever carried the stigma, in the male firefighters' definition, of having been appointed by passing a test specifically designed to "assure their appointment."

Nor were their troubles over following their ordered appointment in 1982. During training they were confronted by equipment that did not fit, e.g., boots and turncoats that were too large, and techniques that did not take into account the differences in female physiology (e.g., requiring carrying that utilized male upper body strength rather than pulling, which would stress women's strength in the lower body). Even after overcoming these difficulties (which sent them back to the courts several times for reaffirmation of their rights), the women were then assigned to firehouses, one to a house, with no support structure in place. The men ostracized them and had their wives picket the houses where women were assigned, with the wives claiming they did not want females sleeping in the house dormitories with their husbands. The men harassed the women with verbal threats (e.g., women reported being visited by undertakers who solicited burial contracts mentioning that they had been referred by a coworker), and by such physical acts as violating the women's privacy by entering the restrooms and pulling the curtains open when women were using toilets (fire stations each had one restroom that used only a curtain on bathroom stalls, so that if a fire call arrived no time would be lost leaving the restroom). Some women found that someone had defecated in their boots, or let the air out of/slashed their car tires. Actual fights were reported in some houses; one of these altercations culminated in a male and female firefighter slashing each other.

These incidents were featured in the daily press, embarrassingly informing the whole world of the FDNY's difficulties. The then mayor of New York told the commissioner of the FDNY that he did not want to see another newspaper report about trouble in a firehouse. Confronted with a challenge to bring peace to the firehouses, the commissioner asked a deputy to arrange for "sensitivity training" in the belief that hostility could be reduced by such an intervention. The deputy commissioner, a Columbia law graduate, turned to his alma mater for help in finding a trainer and was referred to my office as Director of the Workplace Center of the Columbia University School of Social Work. He arrived conveying a sense of urgency and asked whether we were immediately available to offer sensitivity training to the 12,000 firefighters in New York City's 425 firehouses. I responded with doubt that "sensitivity training," which identified a particular type of training, was an appropriate choice for a group that had to continue working together after the training. I shared my belief (and concern) that the openness required by the training protocols to help individuals "get in touch with themselves and communicate their feeling," as prescribed by the "sensitivity training" model then extant, would expose individuals in personal ways that would interfere with future comfort in their interactions. Furthermore, I indicated that any training had to be tailored to the culture of the work environment and the trainees, and that since we (the team I envisioned) knew little about the FDNY or firefighting, we would require a six month period to study the culture and prepare an appropriate training response. This was a hard position for me to take because I saw this request as a great opportunity to fulfill some of my own imaginings. As a feminist myself, I felt that I would never have a better chance to influence the playing field! But I also thought that I understood the complexity of the situation and knew I needed the time to get it right, or not be involved at all.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated his need for an immediate training effort and left my office stating that he would find trainers elsewhere who would be able to meet his time mandate. How surprised and delighted I was when he returned some months later and asked that we undertake the assignment with a commitment that we would have six months to fashion what we would deem an appropriate intervention. As an explanation he reported that he had interviewed many potential trainers in the interim and was unimpressed with their capacity to do something meaningful in light of the situation.

The remainder of this narrative will look at the ensuing, exciting two years as we trained 90% of the City's firefighters and served as consultants on gender integration to the FDNY in its struggles to assure safety and fair treatment for its personnel. The focus will be on the difficulties we faced and the important learning that took place as we utilized the knowledge and skill of social work to try to generate solutions to the presenting problems. A caveat is in order. The City's firefighters are an exceptionally brave and committed group. One need only recall the image of firefighters walking up the 100 flights of the World Trade Center on 9/11 as everyone was rushing in the other direction. The hundreds of firefighters who lost their lives in that horror confirm, if any confirmation is needed, their courage and dedication. Nothing in the description of their behavior and responses recounted here should be interpreted as denying their record of valor and achievement in the face of disaster. But neither can we understand the experience without accepting that not all their motivation is equally selfless.

An Action Plan

Within days of the Commissioner's commitment, I assembled an expert team of three faculty colleagues augmented by a lawyer, two social workers with knowledge of gender integration and a project coordinator. Each was chosen not only for the expertise they brought to the team, but also for his or her commitment to the goals of the effort. Our planning was based on the use of Kurt Lewin's force field analysis, in which we regarded the present standoff as an equilibrium situation that needed to be rebalanced at another position, and that could be achieved by increasing the forces promoting gender integration and reducing the forces restraining gender integration. We understood the assignment as an opportunity to put practice principles to the test of organizational application. Our goal was to be agents of social change. We viewed the charge as a great opportunity to use social work's knowledge and mediating skills to help change the organizational culture of the FDNY, to support women at the frontier of job development and to promote the social work profession's agenda of human rights and social justice.

We drew on our knowledge of power and of the potential for power sharing, of the significance of transparency and the value of open communication, of the importance of leadership commitment to a vision of change and the contribution that participation could make in achieving buy-in for organizational change. We were determined to use all these social work insights to affect the culture of the FDNY. Our approach was based on an expectation of rational thinking and behavior on the part of the firefighters. Throughout we had constant and strong support from the commissioners at the FDNY and their immediate aides. Since we viewed the FDNY as closely resembling a military organization, we believed that this support would be sufficient to assure that orders, passed down through the hierarchy, would be universally accepted and obeyed. After careful analysis, we agreed that we would count ourselves successful if the women would report significantly reduced harassment, if more women followed the present cohort into the department successfully, and if the men's sense of bitterness was reduced so that they could accept and welcome the women as their co-workers. We believed strongly that we had the knowledge, skill and talent to realize these outcomes. However, as we dug more deeply into the culture, we came to realize that our assumptions were incorrect and suggested smug arrogance. Little from our collective knowledge or experience prepared us for the fury, determination and polarized behavior we

were to experience from the firefighters. We did all the "right" things, but success eluded us.

Our first steps as a study team involved self-education. We conducted an extensive literature review, interviewed individuals regarded as key informants, contacted other cutting edge gender integration programs in comparable settings, gathered information from multiple sources including study of departmental programs, policies and procedures with regard to gender integration, and regularly met as a team to review findings and develop consensus on how to proceed. Each team member did a 24 hour shift at a working firehouse during which we talked, ate, and slept with the firefighters and accompanied them on inspection rounds and fire calls. I, as the leader of the team, had perhaps the most unusual experiences. Wherever I went I was introduced as the team leader and treated with great respect but with great caution that precluded my hearing what I hoped would be honest discussion of the issues from the men's point of view. When I did my 24 hour "duty," a chief (highest ranking officer) was assigned to accompany me (but really to shield me from any misconduct), and I rode everywhere—not on the engines as other team members did—but in the chief's car. His constant presence censored the situation. This circumstance made it hard for me to get a handle on the reality of the situation until it came time to go to bed. That experience confirmed for me the difficulty faced by women. Fully dressed, we lay down on cots in one big room. The Chief took the cot next to me and I found my sense of comfort severely challenged. It was the first time I had gone to bed in the presence of any man other than my husband; having the Chief continue talking to me after we were on our cots, with lights out, gave me a small but emotionally charged inkling of the lack of privacy and potential for harassment that living in a firehouse presented to women.

The team's strategy evolved out of these activities and observations. The more interaction we had with the men, the more obvious their bitterness became. We returned to our theory that we had to "unfreeze" the situation before change could occur. In response, we developed a questionnaire to distribute to all firefighters to measure their general attitudes, experiences and behaviors. The concepts we covered included not just gender integration, but also firefighting traditions, competencies and skills. We viewed the questionnaire as our message to all members of the force that we respected their opinion and wanted to provide them with an opportunity to offer feedback, so that the men would feel they were participating and see themselves as influencing the outcome. As a planning team we viewed the questionnaires as a friendly, first step in the change process by providing each departmental employee with the chance to think about the gender integration issue and offer his feelings, ideas, and evaluation of the situation..

We felt proud of our impeccable research methodology. All questionnaires were distributed to individual officers in each firehouse, with specific instructions from the Commissioner to distribute to all uniformed individuals assigned to four consecutive tours of duty starting 9 A.M. on November 24, 1987. For any firefighter assigned, but not on duty during the four consecutive tours, the officers were directed to mail them to the firefighters' homes. Each questionnaire, whether distributed or mailed to a home, was accompanied by a postage prepaid envelope addressed to the Workplace Center of Columbia University to provide a neutral depository, thereby hoping to avoid the possibility that respondents might doubt the commitment to anonymity of response. Participation was completely voluntary, but the distribution method was expected, based on reports in the literature of other such efforts, to yield a response rate of at least 50%. Additionally, we invited all departmental personnel to participate in any of ten widely publicized focus groups where a more in-depth exchange of information and ideas would be encouraged.

Findings

We were deeply disappointed and humbled by the results of these carefully laid plans. Our conscientious planning was met with an almost universal boycott. The culture sent out a clear message that anyone cooperating would be shunned. Attendance at the focus groups was negligible. The only focus group that actually took place was one for female firefighters, with most of the 42 women attending. The return rate on the questionnaire was less than 18%; unless one were to count the blank returns, the returns with obscene pictures or poisonous messages written on the otherwise blank paper, or incomplete responses. We even received threatening telephone calls at the office.

We also received friendlier, more informative calls with useful information. Such calls identified that persecution of women was part of a larger closed system which advocated stripping the bed of any African American firefighter who might sleep in a house, made gay firefighters afraid to "come out," and allowed an officer to be applauded for continually and laughingly reporting his plans as, "I'm going coon-hunting this weekend." We came to understand the men's hostility as psychological and economic. Women doing firefighting was a threat to their core values concerning the role of women, and was an affront to their manhood. Firefighting was by far the best middle class job these high school graduates could access in relation to pay, working conditions, and benefits, and they wanted to protect the positions, as they had always done, for their sons, brothers, cousins, and best friends. The brotherhood of New York City firefighters had closed ranks, and let us all know that they did not want to hear or learn anything that might change their minds

The process we had gone through to come to this understanding was arduous, often painful, sometimes frightening, and deeply discouraging. We were also angry that our heroes—these bold, dedicated, often cordial and always courageous firefighters—were also narrow minded and capable of bullying in the interest of what they viewed as their hereditary rights and privileges. We had certainly confirmed that "sensitivity training" would not have been a suitable intervention for the target audience. And we still had a charge, a goal, and set of objectives to accomplish and a workplace system to move in the direction of greater safety and improved working conditions for all its members. We had incorrectly hoped and planned to achieve these outcomes by participatory cooperation and coordination.

We regrouped as a team and realized that our process to date had accomplished a good deal of what we had hoped to achieve in this preliminary period. We had everyone's attention. We had the support of the department's top administrators. We had a clearer picture of the culture of the FDNY. We felt righteous, knowing that our actions were backed by the order of the federal court. We recognized that our preferred approach was, as one of our trainers would remark, an "inappropriately premature intervention." We had learned a great deal and realized that we needed a new strategy. How could we help the workforce change their mindset and catch up with the times? What incentives or threats might be available to us? How could we fulfill our commitments to ourselves and accomplish the goal and objectives of the contract?

Recommendations

The research literature on change suggests that to change, the candidates have to be aware of the need to change. Clearly, there was no felt need on the part of the labor force to change. Change also requires that leadership at all levels be dedicated to change. Although the top administrators were supportive, the officers were as opposed as the rank and file to any women in the service. It was apparent that in a system as complex as the FDNY, intervention was needed at multiple levels. The firefighters needed to understand that their harassment was a violation of law. Since the FDNY by its very nature is an authoritarian bureaucracy, we felt that the employees could be required to hear that message and be warned that they stood to lose their jobs—or worse, to be charged with criminal action—if they did not behave in a respectful manner to their co-workers regardless of gender, race or other personal

status. We designed a training that carried that "educational" message. All houses were taken off duty four times so that every shift heard the same message. The commissioners informed the officers that they would be held responsible for assuring attention to the trainers and enforcement of the policy and that no deviation was acceptable. Placing their jobs at risk certainly gained the attention of the force, as well as their reluctant adherence. We realized that the strong culture within the department was a positive in that it shields and nurtures most of its members, but it does so at the price of making entry difficult for groups that are different from the race, ethnicity, religion or gender of the majority. Drawing attention to the cost of this closed culture was important to the protection of women. We felt that through "educational" training we had scored a victory, small though it might be.

Furthermore, there were structural and organizational changes that could be made to help assure the safety and reduce the stress being experienced by the women. Gender integration required strong, assertive, affirmative action both in recruitment and the enforcement of policies and procedures; intense support through varied trainings targeted at different groups concerning their responsibilities; and, returning to the bureaucracy, control that had been usurped and misused by the informal system. Throughout this process we were led by insights from social work concerning organizational change strategies. We developed a series of thirty one recommendations that reflected our experience, ideas culled from other locations struggling with similar issues and information in the social science literature, particularly in relation to tokenism in work groups. These fell into several broad classifications.

Communication: The commitment of the top administrators was insufficient unless it was constantly and consistently communicated to all levels within the department. This required both increased communication and clarity of message. Recommendations suggested a top flight administrative committee to oversee the entire effort. That committee would be charged with assuring that all information reaching firefighters was factually correct, indicated support for women, helped the media receive a constructive image of their qualifications and competence in service, supported a convincing recruitment campaign and showed women's potential contribution through exhibits in the department's museum and other milieus.

Physical Plant: Firehouses are of varying age, and the department had a policy of benign neglect concerning maintenance which allowed firefighters, many talented at construction tasks, to fashion repairs and undertake remodeling. While this had many advantages for the department including cost savings and supported individual comfort, it acted to turn public space into a private reserve which was accompanied by feelings of ownership by the men with regard to the house. Thus, the women became "intruders" in private space rather than employees in a public facility. It was important to reverse this trend: to make the houses public space, to create personal privacy for both men and women in the physical plant, and to define the house itself, as a public domain where the department had a right and responsibility to establish the rules of behavior and the uniform nature of departmental facilities. Recommendations suggested an inventory be made of all firehouses, starting with those that had women assigned to the force, and that plans be drawn for the department to make needed repairs and to construct space that would allow for locked toilets and separate sleeping and dressing quarters for each gender.

Human Resource Management: The court had questioned the relation of the physical dimensions of the firefighters' test to the tasks required by the job, but we believed there were many reasons to reexamine all aspects of the job description in relation to testing procedures. Firefighters need to be able to work in teams for their own safety and success in putting out fires. Yet no effort was made to examine the psychological capacity of candidates to excel at teamwork. Nor were firefighters tested on what has come to be known as cultural competence. Yet they needed such a skill to relate positively to the varied ethic, racial and religious groups in the neighborhoods of the

City to which they might be assigned. Recommendations suggested that the skills and job description of firefighting be defined more broadly, and that they be reflected in testing procedures. All officers within the department, furthermore, came up through the ranks and reached their positions by passing promotional exams. This appointment process gave them a kinship with the firefighters that had definite advantages in their understanding and support of the men, but caused many to lack conviction about rule enforcement and made them unable to supervise and especially to discipline their "brothers." With no performance appraisal system in place, the department lacked a means of making these shortcomings visible and requiring corrective action and behavior. This became starkly obvious when women were assigned to houses lacking the presence of an effective officer. Recommendations suggested the implementation of a systematic performance appraisal system throughout departmental ranks, clear timetables for remedial accomplishments, and penalties for lack of follow through.

Training: Most departmental training focused on performance of firefighting duties. This left vast gaps in the knowledge and skills necessary for exemplary performance in any alternative roles that fell to firefighters. It also left a breach in the department's ability to convey new information to those in service, as became obvious when new information was needed at all levels in relation to gender integration. For example, probies (new firefighters appointed on probation for their first year) as well as rank and file members needed information on the requirements of the law, the definition of sexual harassment, and exposure to information concerning how other departments throughout the nation had succeeded in introducing gender integration. Officers required knowledge about conflict resolution and skill in conducting performance appraisals as well as a duplication of the training for the ranks. Ability to mentor women became another opening for training throughout the department. Administrators lacked knowledge of successful outreach procedures as well as understanding of possible revisions in policies and procedures that could be used to achieve more effective affirmative action outcomes. Recommendations suggested that significant effort be devoted to develop training curricula, that all departmental personnel, at all ranks, be scheduled regularly for training that introduced and reinforced new content selective to their roles and responsibilities including expectations around professional behavior and that trainees be required to demonstrate ability to utilize the new knowledge conveyed by behavioral tests applied as part of the semi-annual performance appraisal.

Catch-all Issues: As the reader is aware by now, we had indeed become expert on issues faced by the FDNY. We felt our mandate included license to evaluate and make recommendations concerning all aspects of the FDNY operation. In this belief we were encouraged by top administration that regarded us as consultants on a wide range of department policies and practices. Although good physical condition was certainly a requirement for passing the test for entry into the department's firefighting force, the department made no specific effort to encourage physical fitness and never re-examined the force members in relation to their strength and physical well-being. Observers pointed out the absurdity of the women's strength being questioned when there were some firefighters who were so obese and out of physical shape that they represented a danger to themselves and their crewmates. It also became apparent to us that the predominant culture was organized, not just against women, but against all individuals who were from groups other than those viewed as part of the predominant culture, e.g., African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Jews, other immigrants, gays, and even Protestants. It was also clear that passing the firefighters exam, as it stood, was measurably aided by being privy, through the informal network, concerning appropriate pre-testing conditioning. Recommendations suggested attention to each of these matters: to establish a pre-testing training facility, to check regularly on the physical condition of firefighters and make continuing physical well-being a condition for

continuing employment, and to take all action possible to encourage the recruitment and integration of a diverse force for the FDNY.

Conclusion

At the close of our two year contract, we had observed many positive actions being undertaken by the FDNY and hoped that they would continue to move toward the diverse force we envisioned. However, if we fast forward for almost a quarter of a century, it is apparent how intractable the FDNY is in reality. Of all the governmental agencies in New York City, the FDNY has the least diverse labor force. There are fewer women on the force than when our contract ended in 1990. Representation by women, African Americans and Hispanics in FDNY is lower than the proportion among the top ten fire departments in large urban areas of the United States. The FDNY has recently been cited, once again, in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In July 2009, federal Judge Nicholas Garaufis, responding to a suit claiming discrimination brought by the Vulcan Society (a fellowship of black firefighters in FDNY) and joined by the United States Justice Department, found that the written tests offered by the FDNY in 1999 and 2002 had a discriminatory effect on black applicants. Part of what was remarkable about this decision is that it is one of the few court decisions that found racially discriminatory intent, rather than the usual simpler disparate-impact in the department's testing procedures; i.e., purposeful action rather than unintended difficulty. When the FDNY did nothing, the same judge found, in January 2010, that the department has intentionally discriminated and ordered that FDNY hire "2 blacks and 1 hispanic for every 5 applicants who pass the test until there are 293 minorities added to the FDNY." Sadly, the City of New York has moved to appeal this decision.

I feel sad that my devotion to this effort brought such modest results. I feel affirmed, however, in my commitment to social work, a profession in which social justice and human rights are a mandate. I learned the value of advocacy, the significance of social legislation and government regulation, and the importance of enforcement by the federal courts in accomplishing the social goals of a democratic society. I believe that the continued struggle for these outcomes is a worthy fight and that we are fortunate to be part of a profession that seeks social justice and human rights as its goal.

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Call for Papers
Special Issue:
Mentoring in the Helping Professions

Mentoring is a keystone of social work education, professional development, and training. However, there are few forums whereby social workers can reflect on and share guidance on seeking out, developing, and managing productive mentoring relationships. In this special issue we seek to begin to fill this gap in literature by publishing narratives that explore the diversity of formal and informal mentoring relationships in the social work and helping professions. We encourage submissions from social workers and other human service professionals in a broad array of practice and research settings and across various stages of professional development.

Topics that may be addressed by narratives include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What does mentoring look like in social work education? In social work practice? In social work research?
- How have you identified, initiated, and nurtured mentoring relationships across the lifespan of your social work career?
- Why did you select the mentors or mentees in your career? What set them apart from all the others?
- What are the challenges that you have experienced as a mentor or a mentee? What are some successful strategies that you have employed to address challenges in mentoring relationships?
- How have your mentoring relationships impacted your development as a social work researcher? As a social work practitioner?
- How do you understand your role as a mentor? What has motivated and shaped your understanding of how to engage in mentorship?

If you would like to submit a narrative on these or a different mentoring topic or perspective, please submit an electronic copy in .doc, or .docx format to both guest editors by July 16, 2010. We look forward to receiving your submissions. Mark J. Hager, Menlo College, California: mhager@menlo.edu; and Jennifer Bellamy, University of Chicago: jbellamy@uchicago.edu.

A Tale of Two Jobs: When the Body Is the Workplace...

What this social worker learned about breastfeeding along the way as a working mother

By Mica Slaven-Lamothe, M.S.W.

This narrative describes the socio-cultural enlightening of a social worker from her personal experiences as a breastfeeding worker. It locates breastfeeding as both a workplace issue as well as an issue of labor in itself. The lessons she learns about breastfeeding as a work-based issue are organized into three broad areas: the reframing of breastfeeding as unpaid labor; dialogue and education on breastfeeding issues as they relate to women's ability to remain engaged in the workforce; and development and dissemination of laws and policies that support breastfeeding as a work-based practice.

Within all the attention that breastfeeding garners, the most central issue seems to get lost in the fray. We talk about a woman's right to breastfeed in public. We talk about the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) findings of the superiority of human breast milk. We repeatedly counter Puritanical discourse that frames breasts as sexual objects instead of being designed for feeding infants. We even talk about breast milk as a frontier of environmentalism with the high levels of toxins now affecting women's breast milk. But the central issue of breastfeeding is almost never addressed: breastfeeding as labor.

Breastfeeding is hard work. Mothers can burn over 600 calories a day from breastfeeding and must consume more food and water in order to produce an ample supply. Breastfeeding women also need rest. The most common advice received by a woman trying to increase her milk supply is to get in bed and keep from doing any other work. Breast milk is also produced by stimulus and response so the more one nurses or "expresses," the more one produces. And this takes a lot of time - another element of work besides physical labor. Mothers can spend well upwards of four hours breastfeeding around the clock daily. This nursing time tapers off, but pumping or expressing breast milk is a slower process; so a net gain of time may not ever be achieved throughout the span of lactation. Thus, breastfeeding is a physical, necessary *job* that is often difficult to maintain within the context of paid employment.

I came to write this article specifically about its labor force implications so that I could reach out to men and women, parents and non-parents alike, and to acknowledge a gap between work and breastfeeding. For while there are many exhortations from the health sector promoting breastfeeding, few are the policies or laws that would support it as a work-based practice. From my own experiences at work I encountered many of the taboos and socially fraught arguments about where breastfeeding "belongs" while learning about becoming a professional social worker and a working mother. I want to discuss some alternative ways to frame breastfeeding that might bridge some of the gap between what's good for babies (feeding them) and the perils of being a person who tries to do so and maintain employment.

In my case as a job-attached new mom, I found myself after eight weeks of family leave back at my old desk with two jobs: my old job as a teen education worker, and my new one as a human milk lab. Anyone unconvinced that breastfeeding is not a job should know a few facts. First, the sheer work of breastfeeding was only comparable to the time I worked as

a deckhand on a salmon tender, when I could throw 500 pounds of fish in one day. I was all muscle and always hungry that summer in Alaska, and I joked that there was a neon sign in my brain demanding a steady flow of protein and anything else that could be turned into energy. Yet I have never wolfed down meals with the kind of gusto that breastfeeding produced. I wasn't standing on deck hauling fifteen-pound fish under a cold midnight rain but I may as well have been for the exertions of my calorie-consuming body.

I had been bracing myself and strategizing how to balance my "two jobs" in part because I didn't have a private office, yet was determined to breastfeed after my maternity leave. I was the only full-time employee in an office consisting of one small room with three desks and no partitions and several part-time employees and colleagues who came and went as needed. If it had seemed inevitable since my first day back at work that I would be "walked in on" at some point, it had not occurred to me that this would not be an isolated event, and that no where would be safe from interferences from nursing, pumping, or some other act of lactation. Yet before long, I was being interrupted regularly: signs were ignored, keys used in locks, forgotten side-doors used, you name it. I had scoped out every private hidden or underutilized spot at work in a rambling neo-gothic building from attics to turrets to closets, and found none that would suffice.

Work is a communal setting which makes privacy seem almost ridiculous to plan for, so with this newfound need for—if not privacy a lack of interruption—was simply trial and error. I could sometimes arrange to close my office door, but some people would just enter without warning, and that was always a shocker for all parties...like a handshake with one of those trick buzzers. After that I started to hang a sign, but it wasn't always seen and this had ways of backfiring. Once I called my department head at home to ask her a question and she asked, "Are you still at work?" As it turns out she had closed the office early and sent everyone one home, everyone but me, because my office door had been closed, and it was assumed I was not there. (Fortunately that was not the day we were evacuated because of structural damage due to earthquake activity).

I also thought that public restrooms would be an adequate place to pump while sizing up my options, until the director of my department pointed out: "Ever notice where the electrical outlets in bathrooms are?" That was when I noticed they were by the door, which is exactly where I didn't want to stand while I was pumping breast milk. In fact, whether you are pumping breast milk or nursing an infant, you don't want to stand at all. And even if you cared to stand, no one wants to linger in a public restroom, let alone produce food there. In fact, the more time I spent expressing milk in bathrooms the more perturbed I grew about the sights and smells of the only place where I could privately pump, and the more I knew I was going to write about it.

Over time I became a sort of "lactivist," not because I think everyone should breastfeed, but because I think everyone including breastfeeding mothers should be able to work. And as a social worker, I became a person who thinks everyone should care just a little bit more about feeding babies. Even and especially coworkers and professional helpers.

In an interview, Marrit Ingman has noted that parenting is its own form of activism (Greenberg, 2005). Birth style, vaccination, sleeping arrangements, childcare plans, and many other choices (and non-choices) in parenting become the minefield of social politics in which I—leaky and sleep-deprived—began the tender and brutal foray into replicating the human species. Furthermore, as I dared to take all those messy needs and feelings to work, I soon realized it was not only a burden for me to make breastfeeding work; it could have a confounding effect on others, as well. Colleagues and strangers alike became unwittingly involved in lactation when they least expected it.

The first time I was walked in on in the restroom at work, it started out like any other lactation break. I walked down the hall to the bathrooms, a matching set of single-use rooms with one toilet and sink, and no stalls. The women's bathroom was occupied and had

been several times that morning already, so I went into the men's room; identical, except that the doorknob was installed upside down. Without my knowing, I hadn't latched it properly. Shortly thereafter, a man opened the door while I stood there expressing milk. I looked at him: a tall man in a baseball cap, Carharrts, and western style boots with his mouth agape in confusion. He looked at me: a small brunette with one large, veiny breast attached to a handheld breast pump. (On second thought, maybe he didn't notice my haircolor). It felt like the mental equivalent of ripping a Band-aid off my face. Even if I could have known what to say, I would not have been capable of getting words out. And although nothing was said, I have a feeling it was no less horrifying for him. I felt shocked, ridiculous, and determined all at once; unlike him, I had been bracing myself for that moment. By necessity, choice, and preparation, I had studied breastfeeding. In my efforts to learn it, I had become utterly at home with it and everything it required of me, including inserting body parts into whooshing contraptions. Because breastfeeding is not framed as a public or social behavior (Wolf, 2008), no one but breastfeeding mothers ever sees or hears a whirring electric breast pump, or a squeaky handheld. They don't see what an infant latching on to a breast looks like. In fact, we don't see much breastfeeding at all. Images of infant feeding are often presented as bottle feeding (Frerichs, et al, 2006), even sometimes when paired with messages that are about breastfeeding.

Naturally, some of us are squeamish to hear such details laid bare, and are perhaps relieved that there is not more breastfeeding going on at work. Yet the absence of breastfeeding images is a disservice if it preserves the expectation that mothers should wait to be alone to feed their infants and somehow keep their milk supply going despite these limitations. I have been in the workforce for 22 years, and in this time I have seen only two people breastfeed at work. One of them was my haircutter, and we were at her job.

If I could go back to that moment standing in the bathroom, I think I would throw a sweater over my pump and try to normalize it for us both, laugh it off and tell this stranger: "Whoever thought up this way to feed humans is a nut job, am I right?" It might have spared him years of wondering if he had witnessed a sexual act or some kind of perversion. He might have been able to think: "Wow, what would I do if I had to feed my kid in the john?" Maybe not, but I think we can all agree that as both nursing workers and involuntary witnesses, everyone could benefit from workplace lactariums in the way that everyone currently benefits from workplace restrooms: toilet, sink, mirror, door. It's not that radical, is it? And no one needing to wait 8 hours to perform basic, necessary biological functions, either.

Breastfeeding may look effortless and serene and private—and it can be—but it is also a unit of labor that benefits society in myriad ways. Breastfeeding provides better health outcomes to mothers and infants alike, and the long and short term benefits are many; so many that the American Association of Pediatrics recommends that mothers breastfeed exclusively for six months and continue breastfeeding for a minimum of six more months. The World Health Organization recommends breastfeeding for two years. All of this suggests a picture of a social breastfeeding culture that I have yet to experience. We don't have what I have come to think of as "supported lactation" in any of our public spheres, and I spend most of my time in the one that is the workplace, yet I have never seen a sign saying "lactation room."

I did hear of one once, which is why I know this story doesn't have to end with me persuading the young cowboy to forgive me for holing up in the restroom and then giving him an eyeful (and a heart attack, I'm sure). During my son's first year I participated in a collective blog of women who wrote about the political and personal intersections of mothering, and when I wrote about my bathroom experience, we received this response:

> *"Ah yes, the 'potty pumping' experience. My sister had to do that after each of her pregnancies, too. But for her there were at least*

multiple stalls. She had an office with a locking door, but since interruptions were routine there, the bathroom was really her only option. I happened to luck-out because I work at a progressive medical research non-profit in the Pacific Northwest. Here, we've had on-site pumping stations (that's right folks, plural -more than one on-site), since the mid 1990s.

Let me show you how much more humane it could be - if others followed this lead. These pumping stations are single use rooms, known within our institution as 'The mom's rooms' equipped with sinks, paper towels, soap, a mini fridge for storage, cupboards for accessories, and a trash can (that housekeeping empties regularly). We sign up monthly to use certain time slots, based on our various schedules. They also provide hospital-grade breast pumps on a pedestal with wheels (because they're proven to decrease the time it takes to pump and thus in the long run saves the institution money). In addition, there's a small table provided so you have a place to put your water bottle and whatever scatter-shot meal you're munching as you pump. They also recently added two magazine subscriptions so there's something relevant to read while you pump, one is Working Mother. My sister says I'm spoiled and I agree.

I would think that such conditions as you've described would really challenge your commitment to the breast feeding while working (which I'll add can be challenging even under good circumstances). I wanted to describe what was possible here and now and today, not gloat about my good luck. And I want employers to do more for their working mom employees - and the on-the-job lactation facilities (or the lack thereof), is one place to start. There's a major return for such an outlay on their part: almost inexhaustable job loyalty, and that's money in the bank of our capitalist system. There's a core of hardworking full and part time moms at my job - and we aim to pay back our bosses for putting up with us at our most biologically challenged."

Her description was so different from anything I had experienced or even imagined, that I nearly memorized the words as I read them. They still remind and inspire me now of the sense of possibility that, as a social worker, I am charged with providing to colleagues or clients alike when solutions are few and hope is dim.

Due in part to my own experiences and those of women I have worked with or at other times on behalf of, I have needed to reflect upon the purpose and the challenges of breastfeeding, to respect the sheer determination it takes in the current slice of time, and begun to challenge how I think and behave, and to actively promote the change needed. Even when I felt frustrated or out of options in that period of my working life, I always felt a strong sense of resolve in my decision to continue breastfeeding after returning to work. This resolve made me both willing to risk and capable of coping with humor, rather than feeling fear or shame or resentment. My resolve was also due, in part, to working in a supportive environment. There were no breastfeeding policies or practices (supportive or otherwise) at my job, but I did feel an ongoing sense of support and collegiality that I can easily imagine lacking in jobs commonly held by women, and in many high-demand and high-wage careers, as well.

At its most simple level, breastfeeding is feeding babies, and no human endeavor can follow without food. Yet there is much that can be done to improve the limited perspectives of breastfeeding offered to us. An understanding of breastfeeding as a public

benefit rather than a private behavior would do much to facilitate the kind of change at work and in our professional lives (where we spend the most time and have the most opportunity for dialogue), that we all need in order to produce a society that nurtures and empowers its most vulnerable members: infants and mothers of infants.

Finding a way to preserve the ability to breastfeed and to work is only one of several of the obstacles women who choose to breastfeed face, although many of them are beyond the scope of this discussion. It is worth mentioning in many of the 44 states that have breastfeeding laws, several of those frame breastfeeding as an issue of public nudity and include it under public indecency laws, rather than an issue of public health or basic human rights. Twenty-four states have workplace breastfeeding laws (fourteen of them specifically rule out bathrooms or toilet stalls as acceptable accommodations). But only a handful of states back up their lactation laws by making it illegal for people to interfere with the right to breastfeed publically (Cruver-Smith 1998). As of today, there are four states that explicitly prohibit anyone from interfering with the right to breastfeed in public or give a mother the right to sanction such prohibitive behavior (Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire). There are roughly three other states that indicate this more broadly by framing breastfeeding as a protected human right or subject to discrimination. The other thirty-seven states offer a more flaccid declaration that public breastfeeding is legal, when one might say that the act of feeding a hungry infant has always been "legal." Such laws aren't likely to generate practices and policies that endow mothers with much confidence to breastfeed, and indeed, women are routinely escorted from restaurants and other public establishments because of this lack of explicit license. I think of it this way: eating in public is legal for adults and children, but no law is needed to state this because there are no significantly negative social ideas about the meaning of feeding oneself, and so no one requires that act to be protected.

All of this means that if this person who walked in while I was breastfeeding had misunderstood the meaning or the purpose of my breast pump—as most laws tend to do by framing breastfeeding as a private and personal act to be publically *tolerated*, rather than social behavior that is performed for reasons of basic biological survival—and had he complained or protested, I would have had no recourse and no legal foundation to sanction him. Nor did any policy of my public employer protect my actions.

I called around, finally getting a public health nurse who had recently conducted a survey of public employers to see what the state of workplace breastfeeding was in my home state of Montana (interestingly, she was not in our capital city). It wasn't good, she told me, but she said they were headed to the state house with a new bill to that would require public employers to provide lactation spaces for employees.

That bill passed almost two years ago, and I have never seen a public service campaign or heard a PSA disseminating this news. I had to dig, but I did find a very good work-site breastfeeding promotion tool developed by the Department of Public Health and Human Services and heard of a "license to breastfeed" card that our WIC programs disseminate. In fact, I now work in a public employment agency where breastfeeding has just made it onto the pregnancy workplace rights and discrimination materials. Since only public employers in the state of Montana are required to offer accommodations, the Human Rights Bureau has not released new materials, although they are closely following the laws as they arrive, and they currently direct private employers to that law as guidance for their own practices.

Through some of the dialogue created while writing this narrative, I was able to find and to share models with some of these agencies such as DPHHS's "How To Become a Breastfeeding Mother Friendly Employer," and to recommend ones such as California's all-in-one brochure: "Five Key Laws for Parents: These California Laws Allow You to Take Time to Nurture Your Child," that overviews the rights of parents.

As with so many human rights, the laws tend to follow rather than to precede the need

for them. They grow out of awareness raised by people living the practices as best they can, as if the needed laws already exist in pen and ink. Until these evolving breastfeeding rights take hold and dissemination of breastfeeding policies become common knowledge, I just have an old Word document in which I have cut and pasted our state breastfeeding laws from the Montana Code Annotated, just in case someone asks. It's not much, but I have to start somewhere.

Since writing this narrative, the controversial Federal healthcare reform has passed which includes a provision requiring workplace breastfeeding accommodations for all employers with more than 50 staff members. With the stroke of a pen, we go from 24 states possessing workplace breastfeeding laws to, well, *all* of them, at least as it affects large employers. Just yesterday I called the Human Rights Bureau to ask when Montana will adopt its own law. Suddenly, it feels like an end is in sight. Until then...you might want to think about knocking before you enter the bathroom at work.

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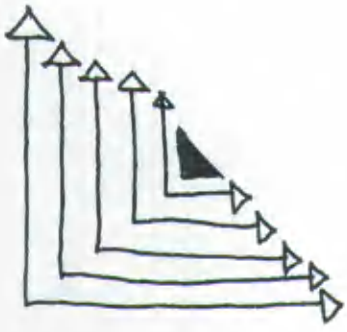
Social Work at Sea

By Daniel J. Molloy, D.S.W.

This narrative focuses on five critical themes the author has abstracted from his 30 years of work with U.S. Merchant Seafarers at the National Maritime Union. The themes are illustrated through case presentations and commentary. The author concludes with a discussion of how relevant these themes are beyond the time and place from which they emerged. The work strongly suggests universal applicability.



Introduction

Attending to the panic and courage of a dying former client and friend in February, 2010, brought back a flood of feelings and memories about the population and organization I served for almost 30 years. I directed a social services program for American merchant seafarers, both active and retired, all of whom had affiliations with what was then the National Maritime Union. My dying friend was James M., who led an extraordinarily active life up to his mid 80s, when respiratory issues profoundly affected his stamina, energy, and mobility. He felt that sailing in the engine rooms of countless vessels over 40 years, with exposure to toxic pipe insulation materials, was a contributing if not causal factor to his condition.

In the last decades of his life he would have an annual winter bout with pneumonia, but always bounced back. He continued to be a bit of a community activist in the Chelsea section of New York City. He grew up in the Great Depression and sailed through American's conflicts from World War II through Korea and Vietnam. He was proudest of three components of his life which he felt were intimately connected: he was a trade unionist, a seafarer, and Irish. In his own mind, each of these bound him in solidarity with all marginalized people who would struggle in a world that tried to exclude them. Jim was, of course, his own unique person, but he did capture much of what propelled and energized many of the men and women I met and served all those years.

Like many retired social workers, I have a long parade of clients marching through my heart and mind who raise smiles of appreciation and affection, as well as memories of frustration and disappointment because together we could not quite get it going or sustained for long. However, serving a discrete occupation with a heightened consciousness of itself with its own heritage and tradition has something unique and important to offer social work. In my years of serving this population, I became increasingly aware that it had generated its own sense of what is most compelling about work and life. From my academic days I remember—and am still motivated by—an adage from a good social work research class. It went something like this: If there is a good and rich story to tell from practice, then find a way to tell it. Well, here it is. I hope I do it justice.

It is challenging to present both clients and the reflections on practice they elicit covering an extended period of time in a coherent and organized fashion. To help both the reader and myself, I have elected to do so around a series of themes emerging over many years of both interviewing and relating to many merchant seafarers. Although I may illustrate a theme by presenting one or several clients, I assure you that each person presented stands for a

host of others who expressed similar feelings, hopes, frustrations or disappointments. A social worker in a union or occupational setting has a dual role in that one must both blend in and stand out. The highest compliment I ever received at the NMU was when after about ten years some seafarers asked when and if I had ever sailed with them. They conjectured I must have been a seafarer who came ashore to study social work. I was not. On the other hand, seafarers came to me with the expectation I had the skill to render competent, professional service beyond the natural help that members of the maritime community often generously exchange with each other.

The themes from this discussion are presented as five critical elements a social work practitioner needed to weave and incorporate into work with this occupational community. The first theme is the need to note and accept the client's bottom line and appreciate the reason for its centrality. Second - the need to master the work setting's occupational welfare framework. Third - the need to identify with the client's individual and collective sense of mission. Fourth - the need to cultivate the *occupational community's* natural helping and healing capacities. Finally - the need to recognize the importance of work in life.

The Bottom Line

I still remember my first client at the NMU. It was late summer 1976. I was a social work student in my second year. Francisco was a retired seafarer who had sailed in the Steward's Department. I can still see his large, brown, clear eyes and was immediately put to ease by the sense of comfort he had with himself, coupled with a friendly, nurturing quality. He told me he sailed with the NMU since the 1950s and before that with another union. He came to New York in the '40s from Puerto Rico. His presenting problem was an extraordinarily large utility bill, which had climbed over the last few months to several hundred dollars. Since he lived a somewhat austere life residing in a low to middle income housing complex across the river in New Jersey, I agreed quickly that something was wrong.

By this time several other seafarers had arrived outside the door to my office, and would knock and stick their heads in to indicate that they, too, were waiting to see me. Up to then, the National Maritime Union's Personal Service Unit was a demonstration project and joint venture with the Hunter College School of Social Work, staffed exclusively by student interns. The office had been closed for the summer and union members were eagerly waiting the reopening. Francisco offered to leave and come back at a more convenient time. I was tempted for a moment to accede, but decided that would not be a good way for either of us to begin.

I asked Francisco two questions: first, did he contact the utility company himself to ask why the bill was so high; and second had he brought the bill with him. The answer he gave to both inquiries was yes. He had called the company and quickly got frustrated by what he felt were irrelevant questions and hung up. Then he showed me the bill. The charges were extreme. I reviewed the fine print which gave phone numbers for making billing reviews. I contacted the appropriate department, identifying my client as a union member and myself as his union social work advocate. It was clear to both Francisco and me that our leverage in questioning the bill had gone up exponentially. The company agent quickly agreed to arrange a visit to the meter site to explore the validity of the charges the next day. A few days later both of us were notified that the investigation had determined the lines had been crossed (accidentally or on purpose) and that Francisco had been paying for his own electric as well as for several other residents. His rate had been adjusted to customary use and the wires connected correctly. There was an apology and entitlement to a substantial refund or credit. Well, I could not have had a better P.R agent than Francisco. Word spread quickly after our triumph. Even union officials stopped by to express appreciation. Most importantly, though, my relationship with Francisco was on a strong foundation that would allow us to go much further and which would become instructive for hundreds of relationships to follow.

My relationship with Francisco continued for many years. In a trade union setting there is no termination strictly speaking. Both active and retired members have frequent contact, especially at the NMU in those days with a Hiring Hall, Benefit Plan, Upgrading School, Cafeteria, Gymnasium, local and national union offices all housed in two connected impressive buildings at the same site on the corner of W. 17th St. and 9th Avenue on the West Side of Manhattan. Francisco in the years to come would share with me many details of his life that were troubling to him. Estrangement from an adult daughter and granddaughter was a primary concern which we were able to work on and plan some overtures toward reconciliation. The separation was fueled by alcohol abuse when he was younger, but by now he had been sober for many years. His daughter ultimately proved responsive to reconnecting with him. Since he stopped drinking he lived a somewhat isolated life, but with mild encouragement he was able to connect with a group for retirees at the NMU started by Joan Barron and Kathleen Mulligan, who were also social workers. There was also a Senior Center across the street from the Union Hall, and a group of other active retired Latino seafarers who were also in recovery from addiction used the union's facilities to hold meetings. Francisco taught me a critical lesson. The key to working with and relating to him and many union members to follow was to take seriously their overwhelming sense of living on a financial margin. In Francisco's mind, an unpaid utility bill could lead to turned off energy, garnished pension, or possible housing eviction. Real or imagined, working class people live with constant apprehension about their financial vulnerability. They live on a margin where, if even one domino falls, they will tumble into poverty. That would mean they had slipped into an even deeper realm of vulnerability, one that they had constructed their whole life around trying to avoid. Once Francisco felt I recognized that fear, took it seriously, and would work with him towards reestablishing some financial insulation, he was willing to unlock the doors to past disappointments in his life. This client—who also became a friend—gave me the outline to a story that would be repeated hundreds of times over for years to come.

My work with Francisco and others put me in touch with other important elements of a backdrop in serving this unique population. As mentioned, the union buildings were impressive and state of the art for this day. There was a school with the capacity to deliver advanced maritime engine, deck, navigation, and food preparation courses for students from across the country. Students had their own rooms, far superior to college dorms even today, in an upscale residence section of the building which was very much like a hotel. There was a Medical Unit, Benefit Administration and Data Processing offices, gymnasium, swimming pool, and spacious auditorium. There was also a large cafeteria and dining hall, which was the major gathering spot in the building, outside of which our Personal Service Unit was located.

It was a facility to be proud of, and they were. Since every seafarer knew that some combination of negotiated employer contributions for his/her work built all this, my clients were really welcoming me into their homes. They wanted me to take note and appreciate that I was being welcomed into a family that had made something of itself; if I took note of how they had struggled to build this home, I could be part of their family. And so they came to me on an even footing, with none of the meekness sometimes associated with a client to professional relationship. The other impression I had from these early days sadly turned not to be true. Like all humanity, NMU members believed that the sturdy organization they had built would live on for the ages. It was transgenerational survival. It was here to stay and get even better. That would not be. Even in the 70s there were gathering forces which would lead to the decline and ultimate dissolution of the NMU, which merged with the Seafarer's International Union early in the 2000s.

Through my years at the NMU I encountered many seafarers who had achieved or were on the way to establishing financial security. They sailed in advanced ratings and were compensated adequately for job skills in demand. They would come to me

with a large variety of issues they wanted to work on like declining health, addiction, possible disability, marital-family issues, landlord-tenant complaints, and a whole host of paralegal concerns. They came steadily enough, and I was glad to see clients who weren't in acute and pressing crisis, though they were not the bulk of my work at the union. The seafarers who came in greatest numbers and whose situation demanded most time were those in high magnitude stress from living on the financial edge. Such seafarers for the most part fell into two categories: those trying to break into the industry, and those trying to maintain themselves in the industry until they had enough sailing time to claim full union book status for advanced skill ratings and/or sit for Coast Guard administered exams for advanced skill ratings. Sailing time led to many more opportunities for work at much higher pay in the union hall's hourly job calls and rotary shipping systems. Since many seafarers came to me looking for help in climbing this mountain, it soon became clear to me that I had to find a way to help them stick around until things began to break their way. I was also aware it would not be easy. Entry rating jobs were few in number. The small amount available were sometimes clung to by established seafarers who because of language or reading difficulties could not pass upgrading and retraining courses needed to move up the job skill ladder. And yet, I had an intuitive sense that a considerable number of these more recently arriving seafarers had the potential to be skilled and dedicated workers. Certainly it was not true of all, but it was true of many.

Two seafarers in particular come to mind as dramatically illustrating this point. Both were black; one from New York by way of the south, the other from the West Indies. I first noticed Fred sitting in the job hall day after day and shaking his head and sighing after he was outcompeted for job after job. He had been laid off from jobs in building maintenance, which seemed to be a shrinking market at the time in New York City. Noting his frustration, I made eye contact with him one day saying it looked like things were getting rough. He told me it had gotten so bad that was now living in a shelter. He wanted to give the maritime industry a good shot, because he thought that running a building boiler room was transferable knowledge to a ship's engine, and that if you were able to break in you could find steady work. He did not realize it would be this hard, but he was not ready to give up. He exuded a sense of decency, a capacity for hard work and, although I was hardly one to judge, a mechanical aptitude. He also seemed to be growing more desperate by the day.

By the time I encountered Fred I was able to connect with and influence the development of certain resources which could ease his dilemma. His Unemployment Insurance had run out some time ago, and Fred made it absolutely clear to me he could never pursue public assistance. While it was in the back of my mind that we should never say never, I told him we were not necessarily to that point yet. Up to then the little cash he had was supplied by a daughter who was in a troubled marriage and facing job loss herself. I contacted two agencies on Fred's behalf. The first was a maritime agency associated with the Episcopal Church. In shutting down a residence for seafarers they'd once operated, they had set aside and created a fund for seafarers with housing issues. We discussed ways of accessing that fund that would underwrite lodging and short term cash needs for seafarers who had some real chance—with emotional and fiscal support—of making it in the maritime industry. I was able to secure about six month's lodging and a weekly stipend for Fred to keep him going. I met with him almost daily, working with him to keep his body and spirits up. I had advised Fred, as well as other seafarers in these circumstances, not to leave the hall after the last job call, but to wait until the Union's Port Agent Office actually closed down. One day it worked. An employer contacted the Agent after closing because of a personnel shortage due to a seafarer's sudden illness. No one else was in the Hall. It turned out to be a long voyage. The captain was thrilled to get him. He was gone for months.

Fred went on to become a very successful seafarer in high demand. One year I was shocked to learn he had accumulated about 330 days at sea between steady and relief

work, which must have been a record for that year in the U.S. fleet, but had one bump in the road. Like many in the maritime industry, but perhaps no more than other occupations, success was celebrated with the chemical most associated with mood change: alcohol. Fred was thrown by this and very willing to take a good look at it. He had enough sailing time for full health care eligibility, so we were able to get him in to a residential rehab and aftercare group, which I ran for a consortium of unions in New York for many years. In the 12 or more years I still had contact with Fred he maintained his sobriety post rehab. He was now able to help his daughter and grandchildren financially. I should add that two years after my initial intervention with Fred, I received a call from a Lutheran Church agency also dedicated to assisting seafarers, which ran a hotel for them. It was the place Fred had stayed when I was first able to secure lodging. The agency told me Fred had returned all the financial assistance extended to him and had made a substantial donation to the fund in my name for seafarers in need.

The other seafarer who stands out as someone who just needed a boost to get himself overt a hump was Dexter. He already came to the NMU with a strong maritime skill base, as he had sailed in the British Merchant Marine when living in the West Indies. While he had the skills for better jobs, he needed help to get by until his union book status allowed him to compete for jobs in a higher grouping. He was also separated from his wife, who had greatly exaggerated his income to the courts in seeking child support for their two children. I was able to find a lawyer who ultimately helped him prevail before the courts and NY Department of Social Services, but it took his attorney years to reach a determination in his favor. Meanwhile, Dexter feared that he would go under from the financial stress, and even had some concerns of incarceration after hostile court bouts.

Like Fred, Dexter held down the Hiring Hall for months and put some time on his shipping card. This is time, accrued while a member is registered at the hiring hall, is time which moves a member up in terms of ability to be hired off the shipping board. He also picked up enough relief work to be eligible for Unemployment Insurance. However, even this was no easy matter for merchant seafarers. The NMU had contracts with many shipping companies scattered across the nation with employers located down the East, West, and Gulf coasts; even along the rivers and lakes. Inter-state claims and claims combining several states could take weeks and even months to establish in those days. Before the NMU Personal Service Unit studied, grasped, and organized to address the problem, most seafarers gave up in frustration unless they had a simple claim against a single employer residing in the same state in which they lived. Further complicating the matter in those days was that the computation system for establishing eligibility differed from state to state. Even beyond that, some states insisted that wages be spread over two or more quarters of a work year, with different percentage equations between high and lower quarters. It took us a while both in New York and in New Orleans (where the Union had approved engaging another social worker, Michael Dover and later Henrietta Porter) to tame and understand all these variables. Once we did, we had another meaningful resource for maintaining seafarers who were less senior in the industry and even for more established workers, whose vacation benefits had run out and whom the industry needed to be available for work, but was not yet ready to hire. This became critical in winning the full confidence of the membership. They felt we took seriously and could address the absolute base issue in their pyramid of concerns: the financial insulation keeping them from falling into poverty.

When the time arrived to file Dexter's first Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim, the usual complexities arose with several employers each in different state jurisdictions. Beyond that, employers had reported his wages in the payoff quarter and had not demonstrated that his earnings from actual work were spread more evenly over time. He was depressed and panicking as he showed me the ineligible determination. I assured him it was not the last word and helped him file and fax all the documents necessary for a

redetermination. The process took three months from start to finish, by which time he was already back to sea. He did return home, though, to UI back payments in addition to wages to satisfy his debts. He also had a valid UI claim established to help him piece together income over the coming months for periods he was not working. Dexter went on to be a seafarer in high demand and able to secure steady work, with diminishing to no need for unemployment benefits. He was able to resolve issues with the court and happily remarried. He joined a growing cadre of skilled seafarers I would see in the Hiring Hall whom I knew whom would not be there if social work intervention had not begun by taking their bottom line seriously.

At times the income stability apprehension was centered not around the presence and absence of work, but on the viability of retirement as seafarers aged and confidence in their ability to keep up with the rigorous demands of their occupation waned. Many also felt it was time to try to make up for all the time spent away from home and family. Hassan comes to mine as both typical and unique in illustrating this point. He was from Yemen, sailed in the steward's department, and was considered a fine chief cook. Culinary skills are highly prized at sea, as on long tedious voyages food is an important form of gratification. Hassan was in this mid-60s and had over 20 years of sea time. Several weeks earlier we had arranged for an S.S. retirement estimate, as well as a union pension review. He came in with the figures for both and was clearly disappointed, saying that some of his life's hopes and deepest aspirations seemed dashed. He shared with me that he had always wanted to make the once in a lifetime Hadj to Mecca. I knew that he supported a spouse and children back in Yemen, and was in the process of bringing his family to America and helping them secure work and citizenship. He could not work forever, but his retirement income fell short of expectation. In reviewing his work history, I could see that it was well documented from his mid-30s on, but there was nothing before that. I asked where he lived and worked as a young man. It turned out that he had worked about 10 years in Great Britain in the steel industry and road construction projects. Like many workers he had saved documentation of those years as a history of and tribute to his work life. I was able to copy them and send them to the U.K. for an eligibility inquiry, along with application forms that British Social Security had forwarded to me. I responded to a few telephone and letter inquiries over the next few months while Hassan went back to work. I began to feel it was not a lost cause. Finally, when Hassan returned he came in with a document he'd received from the U.K. but was afraid to open. We did so cautiously together. He had been awarded a pension and back payments not only for himself, but for his spouse as well. Hers would go directly to her in Yemen, which was fine with him since she and his children were the main drive for his efforts and affections. The money would be most helpful, but he seemed even more pleased that this portion of his work life would also be recognized and appreciated. He left work content that all he had done truly mattered; not only to himself, but to those he loved.

At times advocating for a seafarer with income, work, and retirement issues was actually done within the union's organizational framework itself. Such was the case with Albert. He was an extraordinarily tall black seafarer from Alabama who sailed as an electrician. Shipmates would joke about his ability to change light fixtures without the assistance of a ladder. I had first met him years earlier when he came to me about having to leave the union and the industry. Within two years his wife and later his sister had died. The sister had been assisting him with child care after his spouse's death so he could continue to go to sea. Now he was alone and had no option but to return home, work ashore, and raise his two children. It was a sad parting but in his mind, as well as mine, it was the right thing to do. We exchanged occasional notes, but I did not expect to see him again. However, when his children were grown the notion of returning to New York and going to sea gained increasing ascendency in his mind. He contacted me telling me he had decided to return. He indicated his child rearing had

known both peaks and valleys. His oldest child, a daughter, was in college and would go on to medical school, while his son had been in and out of the criminal justice system and was presently incarcerated. He felt he had done what he could for them, and that it was time again to make a better living.

As it turned out, there would be some obstacles to deal with that would make it more difficult to return to work through the NMU. Since he had not been to sea for years his grouping status had slipped. Additionally, he would have to start anew in accruing pension credits. By federal law (the ERISA statute), he had been out of the industry for a longer period then he had been in it. Therefore he had incurred a break in service which would disqualify his prior work time. In spite of these disappointments Albert still wanted to return. Since he did have a key job rating he did obtain some work. Meanwhile I helped him formulate an appeal request explaining his history to both the Union's Governing Board and the Pension Plan trustees. While I anticipated some flexibility in regard to his grouping status, I was much less optimistic regarding his pension, since breaks in work service were hardly ever tolerated. In the end Albert prevailed on both fronts with, his worker and pension status fully restored, much to my relief and elation.

Albert did have one other bump, which only he and I knew about. He, too, was held captive by a long association of celebrating the end of a long voyage with heavy drinking. While he had been sober for some time, he seemed to have progressed well along the course from abuse to dependency even through his shore side period of abstinence. Once he picked it up, it was as if he had never stopped. He had enough sailing time by now to be quietly sent off to rehab. Fortunately, like many seafarers I worked with, he needed just one convincer. With rehab, aftercare, and 12 step participation, he maintained sobriety. He put together a life where work achievements and aspirations were in proximity to each other. Through his recovery group he was able to express and seek support with a remaining deep sadness in his life: the pain his son was in and that no one had been able to reach him.

While the union, benefit plan, and employers were almost always overwhelmingly supportive to social work's efforts on behalf of seafarers, at times that relationship was strained. I recall one intervention that was particularly difficult. It concerned Jose, a Cuban seafarer in his late 50s, who claimed that he'd been detained for many years and pressed into the Cuban Merchant Marine when he had returned for a visit. Even though he had been gone from the industry for many years, he wanted his shipping and pension rights fully restored. He had an angry edge to him and struck a militant pose. In interviewing him I thought that years of deprivation and limited capacities to communicate in English were the source of his frustration. The Union, on the other hand, thought he was engaged in a hoax and hustle, feeling his years in Cuba had been voluntary. I contacted the Benefit Plan's Claims Director, sharing my take on it as well as the Union's apprehension. She was more sympathetic and suggested I compose a memo to her describing the situation, which she would present to the Trustees. She warned me that the appeal was not likely to have much success if the Union trustees opposed it, as the Employer trustees would almost certainly be less sympathetic. He was my client, and I felt ethically obligated to do my best, so I constructed a memo presenting his side in the best possible light. The appeal, as expected, was denied. My client and I were informed. Upon seeing me, he indicated my effort was weak and I was just part of an unjust system. I responded by telling him I disagreed. It did not seem wise or appropriate to share with him that I had already taken some grief about representing him. Frankly, he did not seem to care. He was locked into his hostility, and I was certainly not going to be the person he trusted to ease him out of it.

So we parted, at least shaking hands, and I said was sorry for the rejection. I thought that was the end of it until a few months later when I was called into the Plan Administrator's office. He was not happy. He informed me that my memo in the seafarer's file had been the basis of overturning the Trustee's determination in a lawsuit filed by

my client. It was also quoted by the judge in a somewhat humiliating lecture he delivered to the attorneys representing the Trustees. It was obvious that he had taken some flak for it, and in this case he was glad to share it with me. We parted not quite on the same wave length as to what I should do when my obligation to clients ran contra to my organizational client. Such conflicts through the many years at the NMU were rare. I had developed a strong positive relationship of mutual respect with the Plan Administrator and many union officials, which got us through this and other bumps. I remember this incident, though, as a tension which could never be completely resolved. One day I saw Jose and told him I had heard of his good fortune. He acted aloof, intimating that his attorney had put me and this whole organization in its place. I left it there, shaken, but still believing I had done the right thing.

Occupational Welfare Framework

The next point or theme I wish to draw out of the cases I've already presented is that a social worker in a union or other work setting must become expert in connecting clients to an extensive occupational welfare system. Work based entitlements involve every major human and social service need. These include issues like health care, unemployment, disability, retirement, job retention, and behavioral health problems, to name just a few. Programs addressing these needs are based in an extensive continuum ranging from federal, state and local government, through a host of voluntary and non-for-profit agencies, all the way to religious and faith-based institutions that may have a stake in assisting a particular population. Social workers in an occupational setting must come to move over this whole horizon with care and make the appropriate connection at the right access point for their clients. I sought to cultivate and develop liaisons with all the departments and agencies to which I referred our members. The places to which I referred our members appreciated the information I had already gathered for them, as well as the pre-screening which assured eligibility or the identification of the issue that would need to be worked through to try to get there. I frequently wrote accommodation letters for good service which insured that my clients would get good service when they arrived.

As a social work student in a world of work track I remember being encouraged to pay special attention to this occupational welfare framework surrounding work and employment. It took some time to master a system that, until the day I retired, I was still learning. The system itself is not static; in its entire network there are hundreds of access points and mazes to negotiate. Later when I had exposure to the then emerging world of Employee Assistance Programs, its literature stressed this same theme, but in the more concentrated focus of job performance. As part of the EAP core technology, the ability of practitioners to make micro-macro linkages for clients was stressed as a key competence. EAPs are more rooted in work performance issues per se, but they stress a point certainly akin to an industrial social work concern. For me that is a critical point. The more skillful I become in negotiating this system, the more confidence my clients had in me. Even more importantly my welcoming of clients was deeper, fuller and more genuine because I was convinced I could shed light on situations and circumstances in their lives. Together we could see better where we could go.

The Occupation's Sense of Mission

As mentioned earlier, many seafarers I worked with—especially in the first half of my years at the NMU—had lived through the Great Depression and the Second World War. Mingled with that life experience was their own sense that in establishing their Union they had succeeded in raising a stigmatized occupation into the very mainstream of American work life. They had come from virtual indentured servitude to become workers with quality health care, progressive and generous retirement benefits for their day, and had become major players in the American labor movement. Presidential candidates, Cabinet secretaries, and movers of social change all addressed their conventions. With all of this the central metaphor for many of them, both individually and collectively, was that they were advocates and participants in a

Cause. They felt they were playing their part in a grand march of formerly marginalized people in the drive to achieve social justice and fuller participation in the American economy. Bertha Reynolds did pioneering work with merchant seafarers in the 1940s while the war was raging, and first noted this theme (Reynolds, 1975). Reynolds saw clients who were NMU members of this same union under the auspice of a voluntary agency (United Seaman's Service). In her book she reflected on her own practice and felt that every social work intervention in this occupational community was orchestrated around the theme of social justice. I caught on pretty quickly that seafarers saw social work as a natural ally in this proud heritage. It contributed strongly to why I was increasingly well received and welcomed warmly into the fabric of this occupation. The more I aligned myself with this overall sense of Cause the more I was accepted as an integral part of their organization. The Personal Service Unit I directed was not an appendage, but in large measure a part of whom they were.

George was a seafarer whose personality and life story captured much of this phenomenon. By the time I met him, he was in his early 70s and already retired. As a younger man in the war, his ship had been torpedoed in the South Atlantic. He was the only survivor able to mount the launched lifeboat and spent some 30 days at sea trying to make landfall. He came ashore on the West Coast of Puerto Rico. He could still produce (with little prompting) a picture taken by a local newspaper of him emerging from the sea with a long flowing beard. My initial contact with him was around a drinking episode which had left him badly shaken. Detox was arranged at the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital, which then was still open and at which seafarers had the highest priority patient status. George's reputation as a rough, tough, and ready drinking seafarer was legendary in the Chelsea neighborhood. However, he had curtailed his drinking in more recent years as he came to the realization that it was destroying any chance he had at having some good years in the remainder of his life. This binge would turn out to be his last, and he would spend the last 12 years of his life in quality sobriety.

George and others came to rely on the Personal Service Unit as a new bar. He would drop in each day to discuss his life, politics and the news in general. He became increasingly arthritic and the frustrations of aging were also increasingly on his mind. Like most seafarers and working class people, he needed to tell his story. The way he told of his life, past and present, made it clear that he saw his life as orbiting around a cause. The cause centered on the generational achievements of seafarers and other working people and the fashioning of America into a nation that would be more responsive and appreciative of workers. As a young man, he had become a socialist; Marxist ideas had gotten him in trouble and helped him wind up in jail. As an old man, his heart went out to some of the young immigrant families in his neighborhood trying to find work, and he would slip them a few bucks when he could. He was generous, but was never taken advantage of. George was a great patriot who loved America, but each day he would come into our office ranting and raving about the Reagan budget cuts and insensitivity to people trying to make it.

George was certainly unique, but many of his views on life matched those of hundreds of men and women I knew and worked with in those days. The depression, war, and the extraordinary journey of their own occupation instilled in them a sense of solidarity with all people who were excluded and struggling to hold on. Surviving all that and even advancing their cause gave them a sense that we were all on the march to someplace better. As a social worker I had to make it clear that I was glad to be a partner on the journey. In that time and place, it was an easy choice.

Perhaps the best illustration of social work involvement in a major effort to secure just participation and access to a benefit system was the drive by the American maritime labor community to secure veterans status. Seamen had played a crucial role in supporting the nation's military in every overseas conflict. This was especially true of World War II when they formed the supply line for troops and

machinery, and at times were even the conveyers. In fact, merchant seamen had the largest per capita rate of mortality in World War II, going down with their vessels in both the Atlantic and Pacific fronts. Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower issued proclamations praising the American merchant marines, stating frankly that the war effort would have failed without them. Yet, almost forty years after the war, they had not received the recognition that mattered most to them: U.S. Veterans status.

The Personal Service Unit helped its clients organize, kept generating letters to elected officials, and even obtained some support from state legislators urging the Congress to act. Meanwhile, the unions in their own lobby efforts presented the case for veteran status in the more formal and higher level policy departments and military secretariats actually responsible for making the decision. It was argued that while it was true that merchant seafarers were paid civilians who had not directly participated in combat, other civilian groups much further removed from imminent danger had long ago been recognized and awarded such status. Finally, the effort prevailed, with recognition and status granted in the mid-1980s.

And so a long effort was initiated, of carefully documenting each and every seafarer who actually sailed for at least 90 days during the period of conflict (1941—1946). This meant documenting service which had taken place 40 years earlier. To our delight and surprise, more than half our clients had actually saved all their discharges throughout their entire careers. We helped each of these seafarers fill out the appropriate forms and attached copies of the documentation. Within a month or two, honorable discharges and veterans status designations began returning to each seafarer who applied. Over these many years though, many seafarers had lost their discharges and all evidence that they had sailed during this period. In these cases, many strategies had to be employed. It was a shot in the dark at best. The Coast Guard's own records had been destroyed in a fire at the Federal Depository. We learned from the U.S. Maritime Administration and War Shipping Administration records that the logs of vessels participating in the war had been dispersed to various National Archive Record Depositories around the country. From the seafarer's memory of where he sailed from, we could make an educated guess as to what Archive branch to contact. They considerately agreed to waive fees for such searches and were often able to locate and send us crew lists with our client's name documenting that he sailed on a ship registered with the War Shipping Administration during the time in question. It was an exciting time to work with these men in this grand pursuit, as every time a door would close we would find our way to another we could unlock. Veterans Status allowed access to the Veterans Administration health system, which was not insignificant, because in 1981 the federal government had dismantled the United States Public Service hospital and clinic system. Yet it was never about actual benefits; it was about long overdue recognition for contributing to our nation at great cost in a dark hour. It meant a great deal that service be honored. This was brought home to me again years later. I was in the Battery Park Water Front for the dedication of a memorial to World War II seafarers. The memorial was set out in the choppy tidal waters and depicted a seafarer on a raft reaching into the ocean to a partially submerged shipmate about to go under. It was based on a photo taken during the war. In spite of the temporary rescue, I was told the seafarers represented there did not survive. The crowd assembled was made up of government, labor, industry, and church officials, along with many retired seafarers. They liked the memorial, gazing on it with a sense of triumph and moist eyes. Once again, I was glad to be there as a social worker who had played some small part in their lives and the telling of their story.

Assisting 2,000-3,000 seafarers through their discharge application process also had an unintended beneficial consequence. Most of them were retired by the mid 1980s, but the interviews gave us a chance to see how they were doing. Most seemed to be doing well enough, but there were a number who had not quite gotten used to the loss of work or were having difficulty stretching fixed income

dollars. By now we had a social worker on staff, Joan Barron, and later Fiona Lamb, who concentrated their efforts almost exclusively on retirees. They ran reminiscence groups, didactic focused senior health education groups, a women's group for female retirees, and support groups around aging and mental health. They also started a retirees club. In addition our Alcoholism Counselor, Carmine Guastella, organized three 12-Step meetings a week, two in English and one in Spanish, in which many retirees also participated. We were also able to align ourselves with Sailors Snug Harbor, which had a healthy two hundred year endowment to assist retired seafarers. As fewer and fewer seafarers sought admission to their residential retirement home, which had moved from Staten Island to rural North Carolina in the early 1980s, they began an initiative to assist seafarers in their own homes and communities. They became interested in financing one discrete element in a seafarer's life that could move income problems from being marginal to being manageable. This could be rent, a health care insurance premium, dental problems, utility bill, mortgage, etc. The NMU Personal Service Unit became their primary finder and intake provider for eligible candidates. Through the program many retired seafarers moved from life on the fringe to a sense that they could now live with some security and contentment. The best part was the real connection this benefit had to their life and work at sea.

The Occupation's Natural Healing and Helping Capacities

Any full relating of my time at the National Maritime Union and work with seafarers would not be complete without taking up one of our most consistent concerns, the various threats to the work itself. These concerns included chemical dependency, disability, and various mental health issues.

For seafarers who were otherwise in good health and who had successfully maneuvered themselves into the industry, the most persistent threat to work was the progressing illness of chemical dependency. There were many reasons why the maritime industry was a high risk setting for problem drinking. Two of the most consistent factors that occupational literature associates with heavy alcohol use were both present in the seafaring workforce of the 1970s and 80s. Since the Union was under contract with multiple employers, there was inconsistent supervision. Dysfunctional seafarers could be passed from one employer to another. Some literature suggests that workers interested in supporting a long-term drinking pattern actually consciously or unconsciously seek such occupational settings. Also, fairly or unfairly, the maritime industry is almost universally associated with a culture of drinking. The unfortunate stereotype of the drunken sailor speaks for itself. Again, some research suggests that workers who value work settings with such a heritage and folklore will gravitate towards them. Many industries have similar high risk factors, some of which I have worked with as well. My own sense through the years was that the maritime industry was not better or worse in regard to this issue.

What became increasingly clear to me as I studied and reflected on the issue of chemical abuse and dependency in the seafaring community, was that while there were many seafarers falling victim to this illness, there were also a significant number in stable, long term recovery. Here I had the advantage of collaborating for many years with a seafarer who was both an alcoholism counselor, and who was in recovery himself. He introduced me to a steady stream of seamen, both active and retired, who had maintained and grown in quality sobriety over extended periods. It dawned on me that they could be a great resource for both intervention and support with seafarers still actively and destructively drinking. Of course, these seamen were already doing this as part of their own 12-step activity and traditions, but I began to look for ways to formalize it and implement it as a programmatic strength for identification, intervention, and support. The long standing conventional wisdom in the Employee Assistance field had identified supervisory intervention applying the coercive force of constructive confrontation as the most promising strategy in identifying and assisting workers with performance issues. While some

of this applied to the maritime industry, the nature of work in this setting would not allow this to be the central strategy. I knew that seafarers were strongly and deeply invested in each other for reasons of solidarity, camaraderie, and practical safety. And so, in chemical dependency and beyond, we moved toward the other side of the continuum from supervisory intervention: peer concern and the occupationally appropriate ways to express it.

Thus, we began to conceive and plan a Peer Training Initiative; the details of which are covered in much more depth elsewhere (Molloy, 1986, 1989). It combined features of didactic presentations and group exploration. Three sessions, each a day long, took up chemical dependency, stress and mental health at sea and the helping traditions of the seafaring community. It combined elements of planning, implementing and evaluation. Participants were selected through a screening instrument that aimed at measuring interest and enthusiasm for the project. We also tried to have participants represent diversity along racial, ethnic, gender and job responsibility divisions (deck, engine and steward department employment).

In brief, it quickly became evident to all of us that what we were trying to do was to create a strong alliance and productive bond between the formal helping program (the professional helpers) and the potentially hundreds of seafarers with a high sense of shipmateship (the nature helpers). Could it work? Or could formalizing the relationship impede it in some way?

I had developed a brief curriculum to work through with the Peer Committee participants around a variety of alcohol, drug, and mental health topics. The group found this engaging, but it soon became clear they had a great deal to teach me. What was most intriguing was how working people watch out for and reach out to one another. Many had embraced and cultivated some helping strategies and incorporated them deeply into their work persona. Jack, a white seaman in recovery, would watch out for shipmates when ashore. He knew when drinking was going out of control and checked to see if that person was leaving money around, losing his wallet, or being cheated and price gouged. He would make sure the seafarer got back to his ship. The next day he would approach him while he was still a bit hung-over. He would return lost money and possessions to his shipmate and gently suggest that putting yourself in such compromising situations should be looked at to determine if drinking was moving from recreation to danger. The seafarer, relieved at getting back crucial identification and money, was usually ready to take a look at himself. If daring returned, at least a seed was planted.

Santiago was a Hispanic seafarer also in recovery. He had made it a habit to volunteer to take food trays to an ill or ailing shipmate's room when he was too sick to get to the ship's mess hall. Frequently, a shipmate's feeling-out-of-sorts had to do with a rough night before or even closet drinking, an absolute prohibition aboard vessels. Again, it was a vulnerable moment touched by an act of concern. Alex, a senior seafarer of Slavic background who was well respected and skilled, now had many years of recovery. He was looked up to by many who had seen him rise, fall, and rise again in the industry. He told the Committee his passion was to help shipmates see that chemical dependency was a descending elevator stopping at many floors steadily downward. He wanted to create a work setting where, on every floor down, someone was there to suggest you could get off. The Peer Committee group was roughly divided evenly between those who had had episodes of problem drinking and those who had not. The non-chemically dependent, though, had a new appreciation of the progressive nature of alcoholism. They seemed to intuitively grasp Santiago's sense that drinking moved for many seafarers from a celebratory agent to expand camaraderie, to a medication agent to treat disappointment, to the very air one needed to breath.

When the Peer Committee turned its attention to mental health concerns, the plots of the stories changed, but the themes remained very much the same. Carol sailed as a Chief Steward, with the responsibility of planning and overseeing the preparation of every meal throughout a vessel's voyage; complicated by the fact that a ship is in 24-

hour operational status. The job requires culinary knowledge, heavy lifting, and being highly organized. She was valued highly in both the union and industry, and had the reputation of consistently providing both tasty and healthy meals. She also took pains to be sensitive to ethnic and cultural diversity, attempting to accommodate a wide range of food preferences and to make everyone feel at home. She made it a habit of sitting down with shipmates in the mess hall after they read their mail from home. She knew from years at sea that it could be a tough moment. An ill parent or spouse, a truant child, a threatening family crisis, etc., could leave a person with a sense of powerlessness while heading for the middle of the ocean. She wanted to be supportive and, if desirable, help devise a strategy for getting through it. She was also in a good position to help mediate conflicts when seafarers had a misunderstanding. Harry, who sailed as a Deck Engine Mechanic, had suffered from bouts of anxiety and depression for which he had gotten help and was now feeling better. He frequently saw similar symptoms in others, especially on long, tedious voyages. George would try to put such a shipmate at ease, suggesting that such feelings do change, and that if they linger he should talk to someone about it at the Union's Personal Service Unit or at the Public Health Hospital. Miguel sailed as an Able-Bodied seaman and he was particularly sensitive to the one person on a vessel or voyage who seemed to be scapegoated for everything that went wrong. He was such a person once, and he remembered feeling terrible about it. He did not like to see someone else in that position, and would reach out to the individual and try to get others off that shipmate's back.

In taking up the helping traditions within the maritime community, the Committee confirmed what I was virtually assured was the case. Many of the Personal Service Unit referrals already came from these and other natural, informal helpers. The link I was formalizing was already there, but certainly could be cultivated further. This was best expressed by a young, black seafarer from Brooklyn, who said that he already considered himself a Personal Service Unit scout trying to bring us to those we might be able to help, or bring them to us. The relationship between the natural and professional helpers in the NMU was based on deep, mutual trust. The group felt it had actually been informally operational for quite some time. Nothing would be lost and much gained by deliberately cultivating and organizing program activity around this occupational strength.

The Loss of Work

The final issue I want to raise in these reflections on practice in this unique occupational community is that of serious, long term disability. Seafaring is a dangerous and demanding occupation where serious injury or illness precludes the possibility of work. There is no such thing as reduced or light duty aboard a ship. Seafarers need to be physically strong, mentally alert, and perform demanding job tasks while being tossed about on the high seas. They also need to be healthy. They can be thousands of miles and many days away from medical care. In serious cases of disability, social work intervention comes down to managing what has been lost, not what one can be helped to gain or regain. At times, I could help a seafarer toward a career change. The Personal Service Unit also got better and better in its effort to protect income. We were able to help clients gather and present their evidence to support disability pension awards from the Union's Benefit Plan and from Social Security Disability Insurance. Often we did this in collaboration with the Union's Medical and Legal Department. Still, it came down to managing loss, not gain. In addition, there was the real clinical dilemma of helping clients dramatically present their limits to others while encouraging them to embrace and articulate their strengths to themselves. Of course it was gratifying to help such men and women see that economic disaster need not follow, but an overwhelming sense that only a shadow of their former selves remained. Retirees faced this sense of loss too, but they left on their own terms, often with a sense of triumph and accomplishment. It was different to be forced to retire due to disability. I never resolved this issue beyond just being there to note and support my clients in the real grief of loss of

work before one was ready to throw down the anchor.

This dilemma came to mind whenever I think back to Roberto, a diabetic, disabled, Honduran seafarer in his early 60s who had been turned down for Social Security Disability. He and his wife were struggling to make it on just his union pension plus part-time work as a night guard, which he was having increasing difficulty performing and which I felt hardly met the substantial gainful employment capacity of the statute. His diabetes had advanced to early renal failure and had attacked his legs so that he needed to walk with a cane. The cane was the major assault to his sense of self, perhaps because he saw himself as having lost his sea legs. Working with him around why he did not need to see himself in this way, I was taken aback at a disability hearing when a vocational rehab expert suggested he could continue to be a night guard. I had to decide between letting the suggestion stand, or asserting that I did not feel a man with a cane would scare away too many intruders. My client looked at me with a smile to see which way I would go. We both knew he needed income to survive. I reluctantly chose to re-assert his disability, with the issue of his loss of sea legs to be dealt with between the two of us at a later time.

Conclusion

As I bring this narrative to a close, an intriguing and legitimate question arises. Do the five themes I have extracted from practice stand up over time, or were they conditioned by and locked into that unique time and place, the seafaring occupational community in the last three decades of the 20th century?

My first thought is that social work was an almost perfect match with this world, as a profession well suited to serve the needs of this special population. Its environmental, situational perspective, plus its commitment to match strengths with needs in all program planning, was exactly what membership organizations of working people require. It was a natural alliance, and it worked well in both New York and New Orleans for a long time.

As far as the first theme, appreciating the socio-economic bottom line as a point of access, I still contend that is a valid concern and principle for social work to address. True, my clients emerged from the universal socio-economic catastrophe of the Great Depression and World War, but many potential social work clients are struggling to emerge from their own particular worlds of horrors and apprehensions. Today, immigrants, those caught in the present economic downturn, and those without healthcare are just a few populations coming to mind. They all have much to deal with, but their hierarchy of need dictates that their bottom line must be addressed first for healing to commence.

The occupational welfare system is as important now as it was then. As our nation still struggles with its backward health care financing system, it is the absolute foundation of the delivery of almost all health, mental health, and behavioral health care in the United States. It appears it will remain so for some time. Toward the end of my time at the NMU, I was able to influence the Union's Benefit Plan to adopt all features, in the spirit and letter of the law, of the Mental Health Parity Act. As a private Benefit Plan, there was some wiggle room, which I helped convince the Trustees not to take. The Personal Service Unit was also assigned the utilization review function for all mental health and behavioral health claims submitted to the Benefit Plan across the country. It would seem that helping clients negotiate this system is now more critical than ever in days of managed care, increased deductibles, co-payments, and worker contributions. Affordability, accessibility, and exclusions are even bigger issues now than they were then.

Identifying with a cause or movement (I would think) is a diminished concern today. In maritime work life and in all work in general, the mindset has shifted from poetry to technology. The modern seafarer goes on board a vessel with laptop and manuals, after hours of training on simulators and consoles. He or she has had long training and mastered a sophisticated set of skills and is paid adequately for a competence in demand. Of course, the size of the crews and the industry have been dramatically reduced, making strong technical capacities even more necessary.

There is a still a place for social work here, but a better model would be a worker who had industry based skills along with social work skills. More technical competence would be required to marry both worlds together successfully now. Education and re-training are so intermingled with human service in the world of work today that a helping professional in the workplace must know both how to motivate workers and also have a strong hold on the inner workings and competencies the workplace demands.

Indentifying and cultivating natural helping capacities in work organizations and membership groups has been addressed to some degree in network theory and self-help literature. However, I think it has been underappreciated and utilized as an organizational program strategy. My work with Peer Committees at the NMU was exploratory, but it did offer tentative promise. I had hoped it would be more utilized across the world of work. Work life, of course, dramatically changed, moving toward fluidity instead of the stability that characterized the 1970s and 80s. I still believe that cultivating natural help is a viable strategy in stable work communities, and is well worth further exploration.

Finally, the importance of work itself has been well noted in social work literature as well as in other professions. Within social work literature on work and disability, the publications stemming from research and study done by Sheila Akabas and Paul Kurzman are particularly noteworthy and helpful in this area. I would single out for further consideration the dilemma of helping clients forcefully document their disability on the one hand, and re-establish a sense of wholeness on the other hand. As the earlier example of my work with Roberto shows, this is not an easy task and, to my knowledge, not sufficiently attended to.

Let me end by returning to my friend Jim. We put him to final rest on a sunny, cold, breezy, February day, 10 years into the new millennium. Knowing him, he would encourage all to look forward. While gazing over the horizon though, he would insist just as strongly to never forget. He wanted people to honor their past and the struggle to get to their goals. In these reflections I have tried to honor what he and others did and stood for. I have tried to incorporate their legacy into my own sense of practice: to look ahead while valuing what you have passed through. It is good advice for life and key to a lifelong reflection on practice, which always rests on an ongoing capacity for reconfiguration.

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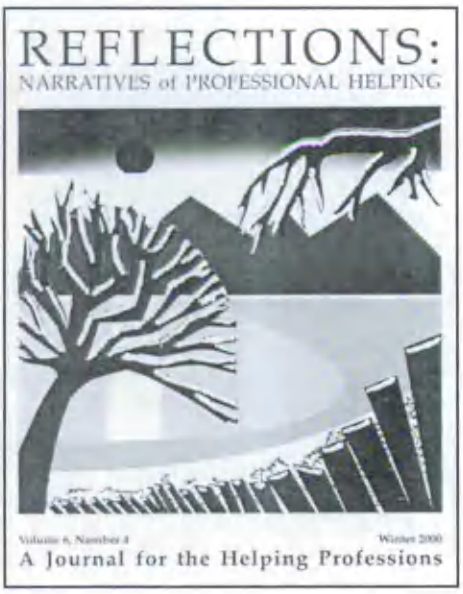

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