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ABSTRACT

There are three characteristics of the New Left which had impact on social and human service professionals. Egalitarianism produced distrust of orthodox professional detachment from and power over poor and minority persons. The movement also gave expression to guilt, for some, over their "privileged" backgrounds. The New Left's decentralist views about power produced an orientation to local insurgency: the organization of neighborhood and community activist organizations. In combination, for those influenced by the movement and entering the professions, a characteristic type of new professionalism arose: advocacy for the interests and organizations of the oppressed. Illustrations of this process are found in city planning and the academic disciplines, as well as other traditional and social service professions.

Introduction

This paper presents an interpretation of the impact of the New Left on the human service professions. This interpretation had its genesis in a study of city planners who had created a new role in that profession by becoming resource and/or spokespersons for community organizations, usually located in poor or minority neighborhoods. Influenced, early in the Sixties, by the civil rights movement, they called themselves *advocate planners*.[2] They thereby indicated their view of the city planning process as a partisan contest of class and racial interests.

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[2] For descriptions of the role of advocate planners consult: Thabit, 1969; Davidoff, 1965; Corey, 1972; Guskin and Ross, 1971; Ross, 1975. For critical discussions see also Peattie, 1968; Piven, et al,

This contrasted with more orthodox concepts of planning for a "common good," which the advocates saw as serving the interests of the well-to-do in general and local real estate interests in particular.

The contrasting concepts among the planners accompanied contrasting practice. The advocates in planning usually worked with and for neighborhood level citizen's groups. Their more orthodox (and numerous) colleagues worked in official city (or state) planning departments, or private firms under contract to such departments.

It is of course a sign of the times I am writing about that in this "strategy of intervention" (some may prefer "political perspective") i.e., advocacy for the interests of the underdog at a neighborhood level, there was a more or less general convergence of radical or otherwise dissenting professionals throughout the Sixties and on into the Seventies. That the diffuse influence of the New Left was among the forces propelling that convergence is the business of this essay. But two caveats are in order. First, the domestic context in which the New Left acted was created by Black protest and heavily influenced by the politics of the Black movement. Though elements and periods in the Black movement interlaced with the New Left, the present focus on the dynamics of the largely white, college-based movement should not imply analytical neglect of the overall importance of Black militance for the issues here discussed. The second caveat is this: full treatment of developments in the helping professions engaged in psychotherapy or counselling would provide yet another level of conceptualization, concerning, for example, socialization, sex-role stereotyping, the meaning of madness, and so forth. Though the general interpretation I offer should be valid for practitioners in these fields, a more adequate discussion would have to be supplemented by discussion at that level.

Egalitarianism, Guilt, and Community Organizing

There are three important ways in which the New Left of the Sixties

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1974; Mazziotti, 1974; Ross, 1977. For a description of the background of a sample of such practitioners see Ross, 1976. For a discussion of professional advocacy's place in liberal democratic theory, see Kasperson and Breitbart, 1974. The standard history of city planning itself is Scott, 1969; an accessible sociological analysis is Gans, 1968.

contributed to the atmosphere of change which effected the human service professions.[3] The first of these was based on the New Left's early emphasis on participation in decision-making as the definitive democratic act (SDS, 1962; Hampden-Turner, 1970; Keniston, 1968). Stemming from its egalitarian ethos, the positive role of participation was cast as a rejection of what the New Left saw as the harmfully impersonal and arbitrary nature of bureaucratic hierarchies of all kinds. This produced a frequently populist rhetoric as embodied in the SDS slogan "Let the people decide," and the Black Panther slogan, "Power to the People." These views also produced distrust of representative systems, and favored direct responsiblity to popular assemblies (cf. Rothstein, 1972; Flacks, 1967; Hampden-Turner, 1970; Keniston, 1968). In turn, egalitarian and protosyndicalist ideas produced distrust of technical expertise per se (cf. McDermott, 1969; Potter, 1971, pp. 100-120). Grounded in an oft repeated theme of having been lied to about the nature of American society (cf. the Port Huron Statement, 1962; Johnson, 1968), the movement's early years echoed with Jacobin-like respect for the citizen role, and emphasized democratic experience as intrinsically enlightening, apt to cultivate a wise citizenry. As the movement matured the language concerned with these matters became more Marxist; and the bourgeois interests and loyalties of social researchers and would-be social engineers were depicted as an inevitable contradiction to the just demands of the poor and black and the working class in general. (e.g., Horowitz, 1969; Goodman, 1971; Ross, 1970) This element can be summarily described as radical egalitarianism.

The second contribution of the New Left to the proximate atmosphere which had sharp impact among the professions was its sharp, poignant perception of its own class position, the voluntarist nature of its (hoped for) alliance with various underdogs, be they defined as blacks,

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[3] The interpretation rendered in this paper is a brief summary of what is, after all, a voluminous body of research, commentary, polemics, and declaration. It presumes that the reader is somewhat familiar with the history of, and sociological work on, the New Left. A reader wishing to pursue the matters raised here, or desiring to check my interpretations, should consult the works cited in the text. A highly useful volume is Keniston (1973), which abstracts some 500 studies of student activists. Sale (1973) is definitive on Students for A Democratic Society (SDS), while Teodori (1969) has the best collection of documents. Flacks (1971) has a good overview of the youth movement, and touches upon some of the themes of this paper.

minorities, or exploited third world nations. The options open to
these "inheritors of modest affluence," as the Port Huron Statement
put it, made them particularly sensitive to issues of personal or
collective "cooptation." The sellout, the failure of group interests
to overcome selfish pursuit of career, haunted the nightmares of
SDSers and members or sympathizers of similar groups. The New Left
added to its distrust of bourgeois experts and ideologists, a tendency
to condemn the choice of any career--any stable progression, within
established institutions, of increasing responsibility and status. A
mandate--in Hughes (1958: 78) sense of professional prerogative--could
only be won from a concrete group of participants. Dependence, by
affluent professionals, on the support of the capitalist state, or on
fellow professionals' criteria for advancement (such as publishing
among academics) was viewed as the path to certain desertion of the
Movement. In the 1964-67 period of SDS growth, for example, an amtos-
phere prevailed which induced deep personal guilt among those members
who chose graduate or professional training. The more prominent lead-
ers of the group were, at that time, engaged in community organizing
projects in slums and ghettos; or in full-time agitation against the
war in Vietnam. (Weinstein, 1975: 129-133). Among young professionals
who nonetheless continued their training and careers, compensating and
justifying doctrines arose. These called for humility before the
"people's" will, and service to their cause--generally seen as
oppositional to American culture and capitalist power in the state.

This constellation of personal guilt combined with a prevailing inter-
pretation of the failures of social democracy and other leftist move-
ments as "sell out" had powerful implications. Among them were a
persistent tendency, in Marxist-Leninist terms, to "tail" other move-
ments--to look to other social forces for leadership and cues for
action. Since large proportions of these youth were in fact bound for
human service careers, their anticipation of future occupation freq-
ently entailed the contemplation of being in an occupational niche
which constrained its occupant through some bureaucratic structure to
behave oppressively. One way to avoid this, but still to justify pro-
fessional status, was to redefine professional roles so as to literally
put them at the service of those forces seen as liberating. The idea
of the professional as an underdog advocate meshed neatly with this
desideratum.

The third element of the New Left ethos which helped produce the
advocate idea and a new interpretation of professionalism was its
orientation to conflict outside of the orthodox political channels of
electoral or legislative politics. Combined with a decentralist

normative orientation to the distribution of political power, this outlook produced a typical New Left prescription: grass-roots--i.e., neighborhood--organizations of militant advocates of the people's needs.[4] The major parties--especially the Democratic Party--were seen as "misleaders" of the people, who deflected the people's anger into meaningless channels of compromise (cf. Zinn, 1964). The development of inner city community organizations had, after a few years of War on Poverty policies, proceeded beyond New Left organizing projects. There were many young city planners, attorneys, social workers and community practitioners of all kinds, either directly or indirectly influenced by the New Left, who were prepared to place themselves in the service of what they saw as the emerging interests and organizations of the poor.

These interactions between class background, education, ideology, and perspectives on careers were not obscure to the participants themselves.

The New Left and the Professions

From the earliest period of New Left activity the eventual impact of the movement upon social service and other professions was anticipated by its leadership. Robert A. (Al) Haber, the first President of SDS, wrote on the importance of professional activity to radical movements in an SDS document as early as 1961--before the Port Huron Convention (1962) and the eventual growth of SDS.[5] Paul Potter, SDS President in 1965, had written and spoken on "The Intellectual and Social Change" quite often. Tom Hayden, Haber, Potter, and the other leading spokesmen of SDS's founding period had been heavily influenced by C. Wright Mills' jeremiads directed at intellectuals (Hayden, 1967; Mills, 1962).

In July, 1967, a project initiated by and associated with SDS--the Radical Education Project (REP)--sponsored a conference on "Radicals in the Professions." Approximately 150 persons attended, and discussion covered a variety of topics. One emergent theme of the conference was the perceived necessity to "politicize" one's professional

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[4] See descriptions of the Economic Research and Action Project--ERAP--as described in Sale, 1973; Rothstein, 1969; and Potter, 1971, especially pp. 136-152; Gitlin, 1967.

[5] This document is not cited in Sale's (1973) encyclopedic work, or anywhere else of which I am aware. When I asked Haber about it, he could not recall it. My own memory of it, however, is certain; I served as a member of the National Executive Committee at the time.

role, and one's professional association. Conflict over hitherto
accepted definitions of the common good, the client's best interests,
and the norm of value neutrality was seen as a positive good. Such
conflict would ventilate the dusty corners of professional life,
revealing the injustice done to oppressed people, and indicate possible
solutions to persistent problems in education and medicine, and so on.
One proposed way to do this was the formation of caucus-like structures
in each field. They would serve as meeting grounds for like-minded
radicals. Through mutual criticism and support such groups could aid
their participants in the difficult maintenance of a movement identity
and political morale. Such formal or informal groups could also coll-
aborate in attempts to aid militant groups among their clients.
Students, poor and working class medical patients, community residents,
persons in need of legal assistance, cultures which had become the
objects of anthropological research--these are examples of the groups
of "clients" seen as beneficiaries and allies of the new radical pro-
fessions.

The conference participants had no planned follow-up. The participants
were not all SDS members. A newsletter, "Radicals in the Professions"
was founded but had fewer than six or eight mimeographed issues before
it folded. Yet, although it did not "cause" the developments it dis-
cussed--many of which preceded it--it indicated the explicit and grow-
ing sphere of leftist activity directed at the dilemmas of radical
persons who worked in the service professions. For example, the News-
letter of Planners for Equal Opportunity (PEO), the group among city
planners committed to advocacy in that profession, carried a notice of
the conference (PEO, 1968) and a discussion of planner dissent within
official city planning departments.

In the period between 1966 and 1970, groups of people with similar
concerns organized Radical Caucuses in a wide variety of professional
and academic fields. And a new left organization of academics--The New
University Conference (NUC)--had a short period of modest success.
Between 1968, when it was founded, and 1972, when it disbanded, NUC
had had chapters on approximately fifty campuses and had had important
influence in at least three radical caucuses in academic societies:
The Modern Languages Association, The American Sociological Assoc-
iation, and the American Historical Association.

In anthropology a radical caucus was formed which issued statements
defending the integrity of primitive cultures and former colonial
countries against the influence of American domination, and criticized
researchers who were seen as the agents of that domination. As was

also charged in sociology, the bourgeois orthodoxy of theory in the area was scorned. Among historians (Bernstein, 1968) and political scientists, (Green and Levinson, 1969) caucuses appeared to argue for the revision of conventional definitions of the Cold War, to support Populist-like respect for the role of the underdog and the socially invisible objects of research, and to muck-rake conventional wisdom about the allegedly benign impact of American culture. In economics an especailly talented group of young new leftists and Marxists formed the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) and founded its Journal which has published major criticisms of the classical paradigms of classical economics.

In medicine, the Medical Committee on Human Rights (MCHR) initially formed during the early days of the civil rights movement--attracted a wave of new students, including some groups who obtained, through OEO for example, funds for community health projects. (Resnick, 1976) Other young medical doctors formed Free Clinics in the bohemian centers of youth culture, while still others (often associated with The Student Health Organization-SHO) opened clinics in poor and working class communities and helped organize lay boards to share control of them. (McNamara, 1972)

The national Community Mental Health Program, providing funds for neighborhood mental health outpatient centers, attracted a new generation of activist social workers, clinical psychologists, and radical psychiatrists. Increasingly influenced by the community control rhetoric of black communities and black professionals, some of these centers became resources for black militants in their new phase of action.

The National Lawyer's Guild, a leftist organization, experienced renewed growth in this period, and poverty law programs became common on cosmopolitan campuses where law students were influenced by the general ferment. (Kidder, 1976). The Modern Languages Association was the scene of disruption by an angry left caucus in 1969; and in the Mathematics Association a radical caucus sponsored a march[6] in Chicago at its August, 1968, convention, against the Vietnamese War and in support of the protestors assembling for the coming democratic Party convention. A radical caucus appeared at the American Orthopsychiatric Association meetings and tried to create a permanent structure--SSWOC--The Social Service Workers Organzing Committee.

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[6] It was called the "Bourbaki Brigade" in honor of a group of anti-Nazi French topologists.

A tabloid began, called the Radical Therapist, and it adapted the
increasingly prevalent Maoist rhetoric to a demand for the "liberation
of the insane."

The advocacy oriented Planners for Equal Opportunity was founded in
1964. In 1968, as we noted, its newsletter took note of the "Radicals
in the Professions" conference; it sponsored a panel scoring the Viet-
nam War for its negative impact on funding urban reconstruction. And
PEO became a visible participant in meetings of the American Institute
of Planners, pressing for the need and legitimacy of advocate planning.

The New Professionalism and Advocacy

PEO, and advocates generally, were responding to the themes raised on
the New Left and in the Black Movement, as well as to the internal lines
of argument within each of their professions. And the influence of the
Vietnam War on the moral climate of the time cannot be ignored. In
particular, the war provoked a good bit of thinking about the problem,
as a social psychologist has put it, of "petite Eichmannism"--acquies-
cence to the everyday orders of one's agency which cumulatively des-
cribe a policy of oppression or other harm to a whole people or some
definite group (cf. Michael, 1968). Conventional city planning, urban
development, and other planning related agencies were seen to demand such
acquiescence. So, some among the new group of planners interpreted
their responsibility as speaking out for and joining with the underdog.

One young planner in Chicago, for example, working for the Department
of Urban Renewal, publicaly wrote an attack on design features and the
lack of low-income housing in a South-side project. He was fired; he
obtained financial support from a liberal Chicago organization of
rabbis and went to work for a community organization in the black res-
idential area he had discussed. Another planner, interviewed in the
advocate study, opposed the location of a highway in a Chicano community
near San Diego. Fired by the city agency for his opposition, he was
hired by the Model Cities area board as their consultant on planning
issues.

PEO expressed its desire for advocates to "satisfy" the community. In
the context of the times this usually called for conflict with the
established city-wide agencies. In such a conflict the planner, in
much the same sense as the lawyer, was an advocate for his clients'
interests. In this sense, the advocate planner represented a revival,
even an intensification of professionalism in planning. When the con-
sensus view of the common good collapsed, the planners, along with many
other activist professionals of the period, looked to an identifiable

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client for their mandate. Rein, for example, (1969) called this the
"Search for Legitimacy" among those attracted to social planning per-
spectivies.

The definition of who the client is when one works "for the community"
is not, to be sure, an easy task. (Peattie, 1970) A voluntary organ-
ization claiming to represent "the community" may or may not express
views endorsed by most residents. And it will be one's implicit or
explicit political outlook which dictates one's estimate of whether an
organization's substantive position stands for the "interests" of the
community as a whole, or any segment it claims to represent. But even
with its difficulties, defining the client as a group or specific
neighborhood is a step toward commitment to a more identifiable, dis-
crete ground of accountability. However, the political commitment
frequently embodied in the advocates' motives made them appear to some
of their colleagues, as "unprofessional." The rhetoric of conflict in
the inner city of the latter Sixties was not particularly polite, and
indeed, demonstrations and other actions frequently had as much sym-
bolic content as coherent programs. Nevertheless, for many of the
advocates, and other young professionals in other fields, this thrust
to direct responsiblity to an underprivileged or mistreated client had
many overtones of a renewal of the service ethic which historically,
is appealed to as the "moral pivot" of professionalism. (Wilensky,
1964) The context of egalitarianism, populist ideas, and fear of one's
own betrayal constrained this new version of the service ethic in ways
shaped by the new practitioners' critique of orthodox professionalism.
(See Haug and Sussman,1969; Dumont, 1970; Friedson, 1970)

For the new professionals or "semi-professions" (Etzioni, 1969) in
policy related fields, service to the common good was superceded by
service to those heretofore excluded from potent roles in policy-making.
For those in the free professions, service to the poor or working class
was valued over that to the rich or affluent.

The norms of objectivity and detachment which were supposed to protect
clients from hasty or personally distorted judgment were rejected.
They implied, for the activists, a status inequality, a haughty removal
from the people's struggles. Among social workers, for example, this
produced a new sympathy for protest. (Epstein) Instead of the protec-
tion of detachment, however, there appeared the concomitant willingness
to be criticized, to listen to the client, to be humble in the exercise
of judgment. (Ultimately, of course, responsiblity for technical judg-
ment could not be evaded--and the more life-threatening a potential
error was, the less such views penetrated the profesion in question.)

In place of the "hard" results which planners, architects, doctors had come to expect--projects completed, buildings designed, patients cured-- new goals arose: leadership developed which could carry on without constant technical support; buildings and projects designed perhaps more slowly, but with the approval of their users; communities not free of disease perhaps, but a bit less in awe of and less reluctant to use modern medicine. While these are some of ways the climate created by the New Left had impact on the human service professions, the question of permanence or the evolution of this impact remains.

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