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Community Work Practice and Client Empowerment
Under Conservative Conditions:
From Observed Practice to a Theory
of Societal Context

By

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Abstract

The thesis of this paper is that community work can be understood in relation to the larger structure of society. Community work is seen in terms of observations on cases previously reported. These observations suggest a political model of community work. In that model, goals are short term task goals of program development aimed at social problem or disadvantaged groups. The model assumes conflict among groups which can be dealt with politically. Client systems are different than constituent systems in that model, and clients are weak participants in community work. Non-client voluntary associations can nonetheless influence program decisions. These model elements are explained in terms of pluralism and the dominance of business and big government in American society. Pluralism creates the potential for conflict, thus creating a need for political strategy and tactics in community work. Dominance of business and government in program decisions gives programs and their clients relatively low status. This low status makes empowerment of clients unlikely.

Introduction

During much of my life I have been involved in efforts to change or study public human service programs. In all such efforts, I have been impressed by the importance of government structure for the possibility of change or improvement. Program personnel told me more than once that the possibility of change was controlled by one or more levels of government. During these

efforts, I have read much social science literature. Often, I saw little in what I read that related to the change efforts in which I worked. Nor did I experience the social environment as it was described in the literature.

A few years ago, however, I read Lindblom's Politics and Markets (1977) for the first time. Lindblom describes institutional structures and political processes in polyarchies like the United States. I was impressed by the fit between his analysis and my experience.

One of Lindblom's contentions is that politics is essential for creating change in polyarchies since they are ruled by coalitions between influential groups. For the purposes of this article, the importance of Lindblom's model is that it describes political efforts in the context of societies like the United States.

In a recent paper (Woehle, 1984a), I described three cases of community work observed in small communities. Working with three graduate students, I carefully documented three voluntary groups as they tried to restore or save programs in their communities. This paper will take these results a step further and interpret our observations in terms of the structure of American society.

Definitions

"Community work" is used here to avoid association with particular models of community change. I decided to use a term which does not have the connotations of community organizing, or the non-social work tradition of community development. I hope this new term will call attention to new approaches in community work efforts.

"Program," as used here, refers to the organized delivery of a product, service or money to clients considered to need such benefits. "Partisan analysis" means the calculated description of an issue in terms compatible to certain values or interests. "Pluralism" refers to the division of people into numerous social organizations and/or cultural groups.

Finally, "sociopolitical structure" refers to the society-wide relationship of formal organizations and institutions. The thesis

of this paper is that sociopolitical structure has an important influence on community work particularly in the area of human service provision. Assuming that the cases we observed accurately reflect the nature of community work under similar circumstances, those observations should be understandable in relation to the larger structure of society. Two aspects of the societal content appear to be particularly important: the pluralism of American society, and power and authority as structured in business and government in the United States.

Pluralism is important in two ways. First, it divides society into a variety of groupings which create the potential for conflict among groups. Second, the presence of pluralism and the conflict it may create suggests that those engaged in community work will have to be knowledgeable of the use of conflict and have the ability to resolve it when it appears.

Sociopolitical structure is important for community work because human service programs have low rank in that structure. The low priority of human service programs in the structure is enhanced by the conservative values which support more prestigious parts of the structure. At the same time, limitations on the power of government make influence on human service decisions possible. The freedom of information and assembly provided by the structure allow for real influence on program decisions. Yet, because their programs have low priority, program clients are not seen as valued members of the structure. As a result, client empowerment is unlikely and community work falls to non-client voluntary associations.

Literature Review

To think theoretically, one must think generally. A basic framework is helpful for such thought. The framework used here is based on two themes: the continuum of directiveness to non-directiveness in community work practice (Norris, 1977) and that of conflict to consensus in the community's response to community work (Warren, 1971). Generally, the principles of democracy constrain community work in the United States to be non-directive. The community's response is a more complicated matter, however.

Those who see conflict in the community are inclined to see society as a system of relationships between competing or conflicting individuals and groups. To these analysts, elites consist of competing groups. They see individuals as self-interested, social control as largely unintentional, conflict as functional and change as incremental.

Dahl (1971) sees American political elites as pluralistic. Frohock (1979) summarizes this view stating that, according to pluralists, minorities govern effectively. Issues motivate interest groups which, in turn, compete and bargain for support. The bargained decision becomes policy, while the public at large remains outside of policy making.

In the pluralist model, various kinds of opposing interests serve useful functions (Coser, 1956). On one hand, conflict binds groups together, creating social structure. On the other hand, conflict becomes the basis of change, or the synthesizing process of emerging social structure.

Based on theories like those of Bell (1973), some analysts claim that we are moving from a pluralistic social structure to more intentional social structure, and that these changes are even permeating rural American (Bradshaw & Blakely, 1979). Kleinberg (1979), however, does not believe such basic changes are occurring. Rather, the elitist pluralism emerging as society changes is a continuation of traditional institutions of the type described by Lindblom (1977). The more things change, the more they are the same.

What does elitist pluralism have to do with the small community? First, there is a large social and political system which constrains local decision making. While the larger system may, in fact, be pluralistic (Lindblom, 1977), the small community appears to be under external control. In the 1950's, Vidich and Bensman (1968) saw Springdale politically dominated by state government. Springdale was also increasingly influenced culturally by a more cosmopolitan middle class. By the 1960's, the federal government was more in evidence in Benson, Minnesota, and the middle class was gaining prominence in the transmission of translocal forces (Martindale & Hanson, 1969). By the 1970's, Bradshaw and Blakely (1979) saw an even larger role of state and federal government.

They also saw a presence of a talented group of middle class professionals and technicians. They projected this as a future trend throughout the United States and saw it in a positive light for community development. We have questioned this positive evaluation elsewhere (Woehle et al., 1981).

As a result of external dominance, rural agencies have limited independence (Hobbs, 1980). In fact, some see rural independence as a myth. According to Vidich and Bensman (1968), local laws are constantly adapted to state and national laws. Local governments surrender authority and decision making in order to receive external subsidies. Among the dominating influences are the Department of Agriculture (Martindale & Hanson, 1969), state education agencies (Vidich & Bensman, 1968), and federal Title XX planning requirements for social services (Brandshaw & Blakely, 1979). According to Vidich and Bensman, local government does not take control even where it could, and when it does, decisions are usually unanimous and appear to be dominated by a local elite.

In Minnesota, leaders are over 90% men, including businessmen, public servants and professionals (Sponangle et al., 1982). In Springdale, officials emphasize low taxes locally, delegating the tasks of dealing with outside officials to the professionals able to do so (Vidich & Bensman, 1968). The poor are excluded from the governing structure (Vidich & Bensman, 1968; Bradshaw & Blakely, 1979).

The appearance of a local elite is deceiving, however, The local machine struggles to maintain control in Springdale and politics is a pervasive part of local life (Vidich & Bensman, 1968). Although rural communities emphasize the internal relationships and concerns of the local community (Jacobsen, 1980), Vidich and Bensman see external control and local political conflicts limiting the political control of the local elite.

The attempts by local elites to maintain the appearance of control in rural areas are probably related to values. Larson (1978) has presented overwhelming evidence on the relative conservatism of values in rural America. He shows that community size is consistently associated with values, with rural areas and small communities being the most conservative. Rural and small community people value traditional family structure, religion and local government responsibility more than urban people. In summary,

some writers see pluralism in American life, while others see domination of the small community. I believe both of these views can be accepted as part of Lindblom's (1977) model.

The issues of non-local forces and local control in the small community are important to the degree they describe the context and practice of community work. If the social structure of the community is dominated by a unified elite, and if this unified elite pursues its goals rationally, community work could be in consensus with the community (Warren, 1970). If, on the other hand, elites are pluralistic and community goals are the epiphenomenal result of the interaction of elites and others, community work is likely to confront a conflicting, often confusing situation. Individuals may not be able to discern what the community needs (Gilbert, 1979) or be sufficiently organized to pursue stated goals.

Rothman (1979) summarized the literature on community work in terms of three major models: locality development, social planning, and social action. Each of these three models can be described in terms of Norris' (1977) and Warren's (1971) concepts. Locality development in non-directive consensus. Planning tends to be directive consensus, but Rothman recognizes that those who describe planning allow for the possibility of conflict. Social action is non-directive conflict.

Rothman did not see the three models as the only ways to practice community work. He made two major qualifying statements on the models. First, he indicated that much social work community work was accomplished in what he called a social reform model. Second, he indicated that the models could be "mixed and phased."

Rothman said that social reform was a mixture of social planning and social action. In social reform, goal categories are of a task nature. Community problems for social reformers include social problems and disadvantages groups. Change strategies involve organizations of concerned citizens. Campaign tactics are used, with information utilized to persuade decision making bodies. Practitioner roles include coalition building, gathering facts and the operation of political techniques. The medium of change is the manipulation of voluntary associations, mass media, and legislative bodies. The power structure is viewed as a gate keeper and can be manipulated through persuasion or pressure. The

client system is defined as a segment of the population at risk. Interests of community subparts may be reconciliable or in conflict. The public interest is realist-individualist. Clients are considered victims, but have the potential of being consumers or recipients.

Although Rothman gave limited attention to the social reform model, it is of great interest here. As Rothman stated, much social work reform has taken place historically within this model. While the community work I will discuss in this document is not basically reformative, the community work we observed is very similar in form to the social reform model as presented by Rothman. Furthermore, this model is compatible with the model of a pluralistic society which nonetheless contains strong dominating influences.

The Setting, Cases Observed and Method of Analysis

The setting for this study is Minnesota or, more precisely, counties and/or portions of counties in northeastern Minnesota. Minnesota has two major types of terrain. To the south and west, open prairie befriends the farmer. To the northeast hills, lake swamps, rocks, and forestation have sometimes favored lumber jacks or miners, and still attract tourists. But such terrain makes farming difficult. Moreover, it is the northeastern part of the state where one can expect the greatest utilization of social services (Woehle, 1984b) or financial assistance (Department of Commerce, 1979).

For a time at least, the relative deprivation of northeastern Minnesota was offset, in part, by the "Minnesota Miracle" (Peek & Wilson, 1983). This miracle had kept state taxes high and the economy strong, assuring Minnesotans of plentiful jobs and a strong social welfare system. Minnesota's liberal populist tradition (Nye, 1959) had provided a series of redistribution formulas to tap a vital statewide economy and bring service resources to disadvantaged areas. As Peek and Wilson indicate, however, state and federal funding availability had downgraded the miracle considerably by the early 1980's. Except in elementary and secondary education, where they expected state increases to offset federal cuts, Peek and Wilson projected at least double-digit proportions would be slashed from state and federal funding for human services.

In this setting, my research assistants and I worked with three groups trying to save programs. We worked with each group through one episode leading to a decision on program provision. One episode was the yearly budgeting process of the Northeast Carlton County United Way. This episode involved the United Way board and subcommittees of the board. Contributors to the United Way and recipients of United Way funds were also important parties in this episode. This episode followed the yearly decision making process through eventual appeals by some funded groups and ended when those appeals were finally decided. This episode was selected to approximate locality development.

A second episode involved the Human Services Advisory Committee of Carlton County. This Committee is a creature of the County Human Services Board, a committee of the whole of the elected County Board, and recommends a human services budget to the Human Services Board. Four task forces serve the Advisory Committee and various service areas and special interest groups are important actors. This Committee had a year's experience when we began our observations and we followed the episode through the formally scheduled process to the approval of the budget by the elected County Board. This episode was selected to approximate social planning.

The final episode was the effort of a citizens group, Aitkin County Citizens Together (ACCT). This group attempted to reverse the decision of the Aitkin School Board to discontinue participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). A handful of citizens calling themselves ACCT, the School Board and School Superintendent, and interested members of the public were the important actors. We followed the episode from the emergence of the issue through the decision of the School Board to hold to its decision. This episode was selected to approximate social action.

In summary, then, we observed three community work efforts. These efforts approximated the major models reviewed by Rothman (1979). The general observations of the observed cases are described below. As indicated elsewhere, (Woehle, 1984a), these observations tended to indicate a uniformly political approach to community work in the small community.

The conservatism of the small community, as well as the fiscal cutbacks described above, provide an excellent setting for studying community work under conservative conditions. All that was needed was a method of analysis. Bulmer (1979) provided one, called retrodution.

This method goes beyond the induction normally used in case studies. Rather than move between fact and generalization as one does in induction, the analyst moves between fact, generalization, and theory to develop concepts. Concepts, therefore, are not the only end, but the development of concepts as an integrated part of theory is accomplished.

According to Bulmer, the process of retrodution has three steps:

- 1) A surprising phenomenon, P, is observed;
- 2) P would be explicable if H, a theory, were true;
- 3) Hence, there is reason to believe that H is true.

In this study, the surprising phenomenon is that community work is political in a way not described by Rothman's (1979) major models. One way to explain the form that community work takes is to describe the structure in which the efforts are developed. As I will attempt to show below, I believe that political community would be explicable if we view the sociopolitical structure as a pluralistic system which generates conflict and as an institutional structure dominated by business and big government.

Summary of the Observed Cases

Through our observations of community work in small communities, a new model of community work emerged. This "program politics" model is similar to Rothman's (1979) social reform model. Yet, there are some differences. Both models are presented in Table 1.

As Table 1 indicated, both social reform and program politics seek to accomplish task goals. Reformers seek to develop new programs for disadvantaged or social problem groups. Program politicians seek to maintain such programs. Both social reformers and program politicians assume social problems and disadvantage in the community.

Social reform strategy consists of attempts to organize a coalition of concerned interests. As we observed them, program politicians do not achieve such organization. Rather, they rely on arguments in favor of existing programs. While these arguments are analytical, they resemble what Lindblom (1980) calls "partisan analysis." Furthermore, they threaten conflict if the programs are cut.

Both reformers and program politicians mount campaigns to support programs. For reformers, this aids the formation of the coalition. For program politicians, the campaign serves two purposes. First, it provides a position that decision making might adapt. Second, it keeps that threat of conflict visible.

The differences in strategy are reflected in the differences in practitioner roles. While both models include fact gathering, the reformer relies on the coalition to motivate decision makers in the legislative bodies. Working with existing programs and making threats they may not want to actualize, program politicians must be willing to negotiate solutions.

Table 1

A Comparison of Rothman's (1979) Social Reform Model and the Program Politics Model

	<u>Social Reform</u>	<u>Program Politics</u>
1. Goal category of community action	Social Provision for a disadvantaged or social problem group (task goals)	Program maintenance or restoration for disadvantaged or social problem group (task goals)

2. Assumption concerning community structures and problem conditions	Social problems and disadvantaged populations	Social problems and disadvantaged populations
3. Basic change strategy	Organization of coalition of concerned interests	Partisan analysis and threat of conflict
4. Characteristic change tactics and techniques	Campaign: Employment of facts and persuasion	Campaign: Employment of facts and persuasion
5. Salient practitioner roles	Coalition builder, fact gatherer, legislative technician	Fact gatherer, advocate, partisan, negotiator
6. Medium of change	Manipulation of voluntary associations, mass media, legislative bodies	Manipulation of voluntary associations, mass media, legislative bodies
7. Orientation toward the power structure	Neutral: Centers of change that can be influenced through persuasion/pressure	Neutral: Centers of change that can be influenced through persuasion/pressure
8. Boundary definition of the community client system or constituency	Client system is community segment: Disadvantaged population or population at risk	Client system is community segment: Disadvantaged population or population at risk; constituent system consists of any set of groups with related interests and exceeds local geographic boundaries; system is institutionally defined

9. Assumption regarding interests of community subparts	Reconciliable or conflict	Reconciliable or in conflict
10. Conception of public interest	Realist-individualist	Realist-individualist
11. Conception of client population or constituency	Victims	Consumer and recipients and interest groups
12. Conception of the client role	Potential consumers/recipients	Potential victims

Social reform and program politics are alike on the medium of change and orientation toward the power structure. Both approaches would manipulate voluntary organizations. Both take a relatively neutral stance toward the power structure. Both approaches assume the power structure can be influenced

In our observations, the boundary definition of the client or constituency system differs considerably from the social reform model. In that model, Rothman (1979) seems to indicate that clients and constituents are one and the same. Our observations suggest that there are many non-client constituents. Furthermore, both clients and constituents are defined by complex organizational structures. Thus, the client-constituent system may exceed simple geographic definition of the local community. In addition, the differences of clients and constituents are important for the conception of the client-constituent populations and roles.

On the public interest and interests of the community subparts, our observations are similar to the elements of the reform model. As described above, interests of the sub-parts are often in conflict but these conflicts are reconciliable. The public interest can be thought of as the political, if non-rational, reconciliation of interests.

Finally, our observations suggest a different conception of clients and constituents than is evidence in Rothman's social reform model. Constituents are different from clients. Constituent

are any group with a relevant interest according to observations. Clients' interests lie primarily in the benefits of the programs. The client role is reversed in the two models. Reformers see victims who might become consumers or recipients. Program politicians see recipients and consumers who might become victims.

Briefly, I have suggested that the community work we observed is similar to Rothman's social reform model, except for some specified differences. I will now turn to the place of such community work in the sociopolitical structure.

The Sociopolitical Structure as Context

It is reasonable to assume that there will be a relationship between social structure and community work. The theoretical literature reviewed above suggests that the degree of consensus, as opposed to conflict, is a structural component of the community important to community work. Bulmer's (1979) retrodution suggests a method for discovering that relationship.

There are, I believe, two major statements about structure in American society which apply here. First, American sociopolitical structure is pluralistic. Second, the major institutions of American society are business and government, in that order. These two major institutions consist of various organizations arranged in status layers of relative influence. Lindblom (1977) has discussed these characteristics in detail. Given the conditions of pluralism and the dominance of business and government, the things we observed in community work are not surprising. In fact, the logic of retrodution and the acceptance of Lindblom's generalizations make our observations quite understandable. Let me discuss these generalizations and their implications for my findings, beginning with pluralism.

Pluralism and Community Work

For the sake of this discussion, pluralism can be divided into two categories. These are sociopolitical pluralism and cultural pluralism. The first refers to the structuring of society into a variety of formal organizations. The second refers to cultural differences which generate differing values.

Sociopolitical pluralism is evidence in the division between the public and private sectors and in the many divisions within these sectors. Significant for this study are the many levels and departments of government, the many business organizations, the presence of a variety of voluntary associations and social and economic status differences.

Cultural differences are most relevant here in terms of value differences. Although this is not a study of value differences, the cases do reveal the importance of certain values associated with small communities. Relative conservatism on social issues and a relative high value on local government often found in small communities, are important here.

Pluralism is important for community work in a number of ways. For the most part, this importance is related to the possibilities for conflict which result among groups with differing values and interests. Pluralism means that community workers will find conflict, not consensus, in the community.

Pluralism suggests that community work will have to assume a realist-individualist view of the public interest. The need for this assumption comes from the divisions in a pluralistic society, as well as the impact of pluralism on knowledge and information. Because society is organized into a variety of structures, the purposes of those structures will vary. As individuals attached to those structures, our interests become associated with their purposes. If we work for or receive benefits from a social service organization, we have interests in that organization. If we are workers, owners or consumers in business structures, we may find the taxes or contributions of those businesses to be contrary to our interests. Since taxes and contributions pay for social services, there may be conflicts between those types of organizations and the individuals who are attached to them. On a value level, we may take a position for or against social services and the resources they require. Under such conditions, the public interest will not be viewed in any singular way.

Pluralism also affects the conception of the public interest by creating a variety of knowledgeable views on an issue. In part, these differing views spring from the fact that people are associated with different organizations. Business people, for example, may try to bring "workfare" or tight management to human services,

while social workers emphasize humanistic practice. Other knowledge differences spring from value differences. One person's view of the recipient as victim has considerably different implications from another's view of the recipient as leech. Although rural communities are generally conservative, our social action case saw people demonstrate both extremes on the value of the recipient. Where culture encourages such differences on values and knowledge, it is unlikely that a general, rational view of the public interest will emerge.

In brief, our society is pluralistic. Pluralism is evident in differing values, which are related to cultural differences. It is also evident in sociopolitical pluralism consisting of multiple organizations. This pluralism divides us into interest groups and gives us differing views of the public interest. Basically, community work will probably have to assume a realist-individualist view of the public interest.

Just a pluralism generated differences which require community work to assume a realist-individualist view of the public interest, it also generates real interest differences. Community work must see these as differences which may or may not be reconciled. So far as the various organizations are concerned, issues of budget may not be reconciliable. Human services compete for resources from a finite pot. As a whole, human services providers would like the pot to grow. Outside the human services, however, individuals and businesses paying taxes and making contributions try to keep the pot small. The conflict may not be budgetary, but that does not necessarily make it reconciliable. In our social action case, the conflict seemed to be a case of the rural value of local control versus the control of the federal and state government. Nonetheless, this conflict was not reconciled. In fact, budgetary conflicts in other cases seemed more reconciliable.

Pluralism, and the conflicts it generates, makes community work a political task. Coalitions are one means of reconciling differences. This is the social reform strategy according to Rothman. Political parties are an example of coalition. Under such arrangements, groups, agree to work together despite differences. Parties and other organizations often organize around values as well as interests. The rhetoric of party positions facilitates

such organization. Similarly, partisan analysis allows legislative bodies to use information to develop policy (Lindblom, 1980). By laying out issues in a way that encourages the opposition to join the cause, the differences of groups can be more easily reconciled.

The threat of conflict is more radical than partisan analysis, but it also derives from pluralism. It is the existence of groups with differing interests and values which make conflict possible. Holding a political coalition together is a major problem for decision makers, particularly elected decision makers. Thus, they see conflict as a threat.

Just as social reform requires a campaign to hold the coalition together, a campaign based on partisan analysis becomes part of the tactic to keep the threat of conflict before the decision maker. The campaign limits the choices of decision makers. Then, decision makers must risk conflict if they make the wrong choice. Without pluralistic points of view and the possibility of dissatisfied interest groups, this tactic could not operate.

Pluralism is also important for the role of the practitioner. For the practitioner, the question is, "What do I do?" Given divided interests, the political use of information and possibility of conflict, the nature of practice becomes clear. Fact gathering and campaigning are required. The facts gathered will be subject to partisan interpretation, so the practitioner becomes partisan. The practitioner advocates for services and points to possible conflict should they be cut. Both the practitioner may not want the conflict to come to fruition. Rather, negotiated compromises may be used to avoid conflict or, perhaps, resolve conflict should it arise. To be available as negotiator, the practitioner may wish to avoid public association with conflicting parties.

In summary, pluralism is important for community work in several ways. It requires the assumption of a realist-individualist view of the public interest. It generates interest and value differences among social groupings. These conflicts necessitate political strategy and tactics to bring groups together. Strategy and tactics include campaigning, partisan analysis, and the threat of conflict. It is the role of the community worker to promote these strategies and tactics.

Sociopolitical Structure

As described by Lindblom (1977), there are two generalizations about American institutional structure which are important for community work. The first is the institutionalized limitations of the power of government. The second is the tendency of some sectors of society nonetheless to have considerably more authority than others. Checks and balances, and relative freedom of information, constitute the former. The dominance of big business and big government constitute the latter.

The limitations on government authority are related to pluralism which was discussed above. Our government institutions, defined by constitutionalism, are pluralistic. We have many levels and branches of government. In a system of checks and balances, no single level or branch is all powerful. (Some levels or branches are more powerful than others, however, a point I will return to below.) In addition to limited authority, no single organization has complete control of information. Thus, it is possible to have more than one view of a problem and no single official view. These characteristics are important for community work because they make it possible to influence an area dominated by government such as human services. Thus, the orientation toward the power structure assumed by social reform and program politics are compatible with our form of government.

The flexibility of government should not be overstated, however. In some respects, pluralism itself slows change. There is no single organization responsible for any problem in the United States. Simply locating a point to influence decisions can be difficult. But, there are more serious problems for community work than pluralism.

In modern American human services, the presence of big government is an important factor. Beginning with the 1930's and culminating in the 1960's, the federal government became a major provider of human service resources (Dunham, 1958; Kravitz & Kolodner, 1969) and social service provision has been largely taken over by government. This creates a relationship between community work and big government whenever community work is aimed at social service provision. While private groups like United Ways are somewhat independent of this relationship, they cannot ignore the ever present public sector. Moreover, they have their

own relationships to major institutions, depend on businesses for help with campaigns, and make grants to national voluntary associations or semi-public programs.

The major institutions of American society are big business and big government, in that order. True, government gives the appearance of being open to the people. But, as Lindblom (1977) has indicated, government is constantly bending over backwards to serve business interests. Politicians know they have little choice in this matter. If politicians fail to aid the economy, voters will lose jobs and throw them out of office. Business has control of jobs and thus has enormous ability to control the electorate. Although business acts like a public body in the control of employment, our popular control of business is remarkably weak.

Politicians know that they do not have to satisfy all of the people all of the time. Any politician's voting constituency is but a minority of public represented. The non-voters are often members of social problem or disadvantaged populations. Thus, politicians can often chose to ignore these segments of the population.

Business is even more likely to ignore these segments of the population. Business is most interested in those portions of the population which produce and consume what business has to offer. Those who lack skills and money are of little value to business. Because business is not subject to much popular control, there is little reason for business to be accountable to broader populations.

Those without skills or money are therefore "disadvantaged" or "social problem" populations. They reside outside the major institutions. Their interests, unaddressed by business, are served mostly by the social welfare problems or government. Less institutionalized than other government functions, their programs are last to be budgeted for, the first to be cut. Such programs are, in a word, residual (Dolgoff & Feldstein, 1984).

Our society has its humane side, of course. Some people see the needs of social problem and disadvantaged groups and work on their behalf. Sometimes, these populations work on their own behalf. Often, the advocates of the disadvantaged or social problem

groups describe them as victims of the major institutions. Although they would like to see them integrated into these institutions, the institutions are less than fully responsive. Programs are the usual response when reformers push for the interests of excluded populations. In good times, programs grow. In hard times, other interests compete against the interests of the clients of programs. In hard times, reformers are reduced to fighting to retain what they had gained in better times.

Reformers have created programs when and where they could. In the early history of social work, programs were created in the private and voluntary sector. While private services remain, the Great Depression opened the public sector for development of social welfare programs. At first, much of this development was at the state and local level. The good times and social crisis of the 1960's smashed most remaining barriers to the development of federal programs. Today, programs are largely public, and associated with all possible levels of government (Kahn, 1979).

Creating or maintaining a program is a limited goal. The major structures of society are not greatly altered by the presence of programs. While the programs provide something for the social problem or disadvantaged groups, it is less than full integration into the social fabric. The role of the program client tends to be that of recipient. Unlike a consumer in the business economy or more institutionalized public services, these roles carry strict rules about eligibility and choice of services.

Cast in the role of recipients, the client is subject to degradation. The values of American society support its major institutions and devalue its residual organizations. To be employed in the major institutional structures is good. To be a recipient of social welfare services is bad. As I indicated in the literature review, small communities are more likely to adhere to such values than large communities.

In the struggle to maintain services in hard times, clients are relatively weak constituents. The superior organization and clout of those in the major institutions tend to prevail. This weakness, combined with the tendency to label clients as bad, makes clients weak contestants in the arena of the strong.

The job of advocating for programs often falls to voluntary associations. Because clients are often too weak to work on their own behalf, this is the work of others who care.

To summarize, I see a social structure which is pluralistic but dominated by business and government. Human service programs of the type studied here are associated with all possible levels of government and the private sector. They have relatively low priority, being residual in nature.

The nature of the community work for service provision is related to the sociopolitical structure of society. Pluralism assures divided interests and makes conflict and campaigns likely. The institutional structure and its residual programs ostracize program clients. Although limited government authority makes community work influence possible, the work of creating or maintaining programs falls to voluntary associations. Clients, weak and dispirited by their place in the large structure, are unlikely to be an active part of the struggle for programs.

Briefly then, the structure of American society is related to community work as we saw it practiced.

Conclusions and Implications

This paper has presented the analysis of the place of community work in the social structure of American society. First, I noted that the community work we observed tends to indicate a community work model similar to Rothman's social reform model. The reform model is a generally political model, a mixture of social planning and social action. I call the community work we observed "program politics." Second, social reform and program politics can be related to the pluralism and sociopolitical structure of polyarchy. Basically, pluralism creates conflict in the community, while the sociopolitical structure assigns residual status to social welfare programs.

The way pluralism and sociopolitical structure affect community work can be understood by referring to Table 1. Five items in that table reflect pluralism. Items 3, 4, and 5 relate to the need to bring pluralistic groups together. Coalition building, campaigning, gathering facts for partisan purposes, advocating and negotiating all result from the presence of groups with varying

interests. Pluralism is also reflected in items 9 and 10. These items are concerned with assumptions about group differences in the community. The remaining items in Table 1 are related to the dominance of business and big government.

Item 2 indicates that social problem and disadvantaged groups are assumed. These groups exist because business and government fail to integrate them into the major institutions. Item 1 emphasizes programs for excluded populations, recognizing the failure to integrate these groups. Items 11 and 12 accentuate this exclusion. Clients may become victims or victims may become clients, depending on the interests of other constituents. Item 8 recognizes the complex nature of client and constituent systems, and the importance of non-client constituents like business. Item 6 likewise recognizes the limitations of clients as constituents, and the importance of voluntary associations which act in their behalf. Finally items 6 and 7 recognize the government has limited power and can be influenced.

In this context, community work tends to be the politics of program provision. In good times, this means reform in the form of new or expanded programs. In bad times, it means fighting for the maintenance of programs.

Like any human endeavor, this paper has its limitations. Thus, there is at least some possibility that my analysis is wrong. Naturally, I believe there is some truth in my analysis.

Being wrong has one set of implications. Being right has another. Basically, being wrong suggests that research is needed. Being right suggests that we should consider program politics as a model for community work. Let me discuss each of these possibilities.

Retroduction may bias my analysis. Retroduction says that the researcher will include theory in the analysis. It does not select theory in the analysis. It does not select theory for the analyst. For every set of observations, there are a number of plausible theoretical explanations. My selection of Lindblom's (1977) model may, therefore, bias my analysis. If I am wrong, the implications for this analysis are obvious: More research is needed.

But, I have qualified my work enough. Let me turn to the possibility that my conclusions are valid. That being the case, it is necessary to think about the implications of my research and theory for community work practice.

The implications for practice are quite straight forward. The community worker should be prepared to adopt political methods for the promotion of social programs. These methods are the methods of social reform in good times and the methods of program politics in hard times.

Because our society is pluralistic, community workers will have to work with differing groups. They may need to build coalitions between groups, conduct partisan analysis, threaten conflict, advocate, and negotiate. Assuming a realist-individualist public interest, they can expect interest in the community to be in conflict. These differences, however, may be reconcilable.

Dominance by business and big government is also important for community work. This is especially true when the goal is program provision. Most important is the implied low status of clients and victims. Excluded from the major institutions, community work clients are not likely to be ready for empowerment in those institutions. As social problem or disadvantaged populations, they do not even get much access to the power structure in programs designed for them. Even if they do, they are but one of several constituencies on program issues. Often, their interests are in the hands of voluntary associations comprised largely of non-client members. Nonetheless, constitutionalism and pluralism in government do allow for some influence by those voluntary associations.

Community workers can expect to work with such voluntary associations. Thus, direct empowerment of clients will be unlikely. Furthermore, establishing or saving programs is not an empowering goal. Clients are not noticeably more powerful than non-client victims. On program issues, however, the power structure is not the enemy. Rather, community workers should think of the power structure as subject to favorable influence.

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