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# Notes on Social Work Education

## The Social Work Educator: Social Worker and Professor?

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This paper examines the role orientations of social work educators to determine whether they identify with their dual roles of professor and social worker. Alvin Gouldner's typology of cosmopolitans and locals is tested on a sample of 162 social work faculty employed at twenty-three colleges and universities. The findings indicate that social work educators do differ in their role identifications. The most significant indicator of academic role orientation is the possession of the Ph.D. or D.S.W.

Due to the complex nature of professional practice, the education of professionals is a difficult task. The components of professional education should cover the profession's knowledge base, code of ethics, values, service ideal, history, and practice skills.

Within a higher education institution, the educator of professionals must address the complexities of professional education and delicately balance the role of professional with that of educator. Whether the dual roles of professional practitioner and academic are acknowledged and addressed by social work educators is the focus of this paper.

Social work is a relatively new profession; whereas university programs were established for medicine and law in 1779 and 1817, respectively, the first such program for social work appeared in 1904.<sup>1</sup> Its comparatively recent entry into the academic marketplace, with only a very recent expansion of Ph.D.-granting social work programs, coupled with the profession's strong roots in practice, make it difficult for social work faculty to identify with their role of academic within the university

community. At the same time, the lack of status and clarity sometimes associated with the role of social worker might result in social work educators identifying with the role of educator and losing their identification as social workers.

## Theory

Prior research into role orientations has not produced any clear set of principles for study in this area. The term "role taking" was first introduced by the sociologist George Herbert Mead in his philosophical and sociological examination of interaction.<sup>2</sup> During the same period, the anthropologist Ralph Linton defined role as a concept linking persons and society.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the 1950s, however, that persons in their roles were subject to empirical study. Reisman introduced the concept of divided loyalty in his study of middle-level bureaucrats. He uses the term "functional bureaucrat" for the worker "who is oriented toward and seeks his recognition from a given professional group rather than within the bureaucracy."<sup>4</sup>

Wilensky concluded from his study of intellectuals in labor unions that the largest and most stable grouping is the "professional service" type.<sup>5</sup> This group is distinguished by its orientation to colleagues outside the labor union. Its primary concern is the development and enhancement of professional skills.

Many studies began to examine professionals employed in organizations. Blau and Scot conducted a study of caseworkers in a welfare department in which they confirmed their hypothesis that there is an inverse relationship between the professional commitment of the workers and their organizational loyalty.<sup>6</sup> The number of social work conferences attended by the workers and their level of involvement in welfare activities are used as validation for the extent of professional, as opposed to bureaucratic, orientation. Billingsley conducted a study of caseworkers in a private setting, where he identifies four subsystems that require the workers' attention: the social work profession, the agency, clients, and the community.<sup>7</sup> He was interested in studying the patterns of orientation toward conflicting expectations.<sup>8</sup>

In 1957 and 1958, Alvin Gouldner published his studies of liberal arts faculty.<sup>9</sup> From a detailed factor analysis, Gouldner validated the existence of cosmopolitan and local latent orientations. Latent roles are not culturally prescribed by the norms governing the behavior of manifest roles. Latent roles are, according to Gouldner, the identities that are not considered "relevant" or "appropriate" to role performance; they are not specifically prescribed for the individual. Manifest roles

are the prescribed beliefs and behaviors exhibited in the role performance. Cosmopolitan and local orientations account for how the latent roles get played out by individuals. According to Gouldner, it is important to examine the latent roles, as these will have a strong impact on how individuals identify their manifest roles in the organization, and will therefore affect how the job gets defined. Gouldner suggests analyzing the following three variables in order to identify latent orientations: loyalty to the organization, commitment to professional skills, and reference group orientations.

## The Study

The purpose of this article is to examine the role orientation of social work educators. This study specifically asks whether the educators identify with their dual roles of social worker and faculty member, and whether the identification is related to individual or institutional characteristics. The cosmopolitan and local typology posited by Gouldner was tested on a sample of social work educators. In this study, cosmopolitan-oriented educators are defined as those persons primarily identifying themselves with the academic role and the larger university community. Local-oriented educators are those persons with primary orientation to the profession of social work. The definition of role in this study is the pattern of behaviors and set of expectations an individual in a position has for himself or herself. It includes an ordering of priorities to fulfill his or her conceptions of the position held.

This study hypothesizes that those with the latent, cosmopolitan orientation consider themselves academics. They participate in the research and scholarship activities associated with a university position, and identify with other academics. Those with the latent, local orientation maintain stronger ties to the social work profession and practice community, and consider themselves social workers. This study further hypothesizes that some educators might have both local and cosmopolitan orientations. These persons might address the dual aspects of their position as educators of professional practitioners by maintaining a high orientation to both the social work profession and the academic community.

The major hypothesis of the study, however, is that the identification with the dual roles of professor and practitioner will be significantly different among social work educators based on their educational backgrounds, amount of scholarship, level of involvement in professional activities, amount of agency practical experience, and the mission of their current institutions.

## Method

This study was conducted utilizing a survey with a mail-back questionnaire technique. All social work faculty employed at twenty-three colleges and universities located in eight Central Plains states were asked to participate. The Central Plains states are Colorado, Kansas, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. These institutions were selected because they offer a program range of bachelor's only, bachelor's and master's degrees, and master's and doctorate degrees. All the programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The deans or directors were sent questionnaires and asked for school catalogs. These institutions serve both rural and urban populations, and both private and public institutions are included. According to the institutional documents and deans' comments, the missions of these institutions were determined based on their emphases on research, scholarship, and teaching.

The educational backgrounds of the educators at these institutions are diverse, with degrees from a wide range of colleges and universities. The educators represent a range of ethnic groups. Sixty percent of the sample is male, while 40 percent is female. A total of 261 individual faculty members were contacted, and 162, or 62.1 percent, responded.

The instrument used was a modification of that developed by Gouldner for his study of cosmopolitan and local orientations of liberal arts faculty.<sup>10</sup> The utilization and modification of Gouldner's concepts are well supported in the literature. Based on his work, Bennis, Berkowitz, Affinito, and Malone studied occupational therapists; Billingsley and Blau and Scot studied social caseworkers.<sup>11</sup> Modification of the Gouldner scale involved selecting and modifying the items that related to the traditional faculty duties of teaching, scholarship, and service. Items about membership in the university community were also included. Items were added to the instrument to provide information about the respondents' identification with the social work profession and their view of the functions of professional education.

The instrument consisted of a total of forty-nine questions, including both Likert-like and descriptive items.<sup>12</sup> The Likert-like items were scored on a range of 1–5. "Strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was the range of response choices. The choices themselves reflect a single dimension, so that each item is mutually exclusive. Items requiring comments were read, categorized, and assigned scores. All items were summed, providing total scores for each respondent. These scores were considered in relationship to the data from the institutions and individual characteristics of the educators. A chi-square test was performed on the data to determine whether there was a systematic relationship between the educators' responses and the selected set of individual characteristics and institutional factors.

## Findings

The findings indicate that social work educators differ in their identifications with the dual roles of social worker and professor in the following ways: (1) the importance they attach to different parts of their job, or their job definitions; (2) their view of the function of professional education; (3) their identification with the role of professor; and (4) their identification with the social work profession.

*Job definitions.*—Through a series of questions, the participants were asked to identify which of their teaching tasks were most important to them. Those with master's degrees as their terminal degree considered teaching the most important function in their role as educator. Those with both Ph.D.'s and M.S.W.'s, or D.S.W.'s, considered research and scholarship most important. Of these respondents, 65.3 percent have published three or more articles, 71.4 percent are from schools emphasizing graduate teaching, 65.3 percent are males, 61.9 percent earn salaries of \$25,000+ per year, and over 63.2 percent have teaching assignments in M.S.W. or Ph.D. programs, rather than B.S.W. programs.

Sex, salary, and teaching assignment (i.e., in B.S.W., or M.S.W., or Ph.D. programs) are significantly related to responses. Due to the high significance of the variable degree, the real significance of these other factors was suspect. Further cross tabulations were used to examine the relationships between the responses and sex, salary, and teaching assignment, while controlling for degree. As hypothesized, the variables sex, salary, and teaching assignment were no longer significantly related to the responses. More males have Ph.D.'s, higher salaries are paid to those with Ph.D.'s, and Ph.D.'s tend to teach in M.S.W. and Ph.D. programs; but, it is the possession of the Ph.D. that is so strongly associated with the job definitions. Those educators with Ph.D.'s identify research and scholarship as the most important part of their role as educator, while those with M.S.W.'s feel their teaching tasks are more important (corrected  $\chi^2 = 19.96$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

*Function of professional education.*—Degree is also a significant factor in how these educators define the function of professional education. Those with master's degrees as the terminal degree view the primary function of professional education as training students to be practitioners. Out of these respondents, 77.7 percent demonstrate high involvement in practice-oriented professional activities. Those with Ph.D.'s and M.S.W.'s or D.S.W.'s—68.8 percent—view the primary function of professional education as teaching general knowledge and understanding.

*Identification with the role of professor.*—Those who state that they receive gratification by being a professor and doing research also read higher education and social work education journals, attend continuing ed-

ucation workshops on educational skills, and admire other colleagues for their scholarly traits. Of the educators with these characteristics, 73.8 percent have the Ph.D. and M.S.W. or D.S.W. degree, and 87.8 percent have published at least one article or one book. Educators with Ph.D.'s or D.S.W.'s and having a record of publication tend to strongly identify themselves as professors (corrected  $\chi^2 = 4.85$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

*Identification with the role of social worker.*—Those educators who receive gratification by being practicing social workers read journals dealing with social work methods and interventive techniques and also attend continuing education workshops on direct practice and admire other colleagues for their practice competence. Of these educators, 70.8 percent have seven or more years of practice experience. Educators with a high amount of practice experience tend to strongly identify themselves as social workers (corrected  $\chi^2 = 7.06$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

*Institutional characteristics.*—As would be expected, the research and scholarship emphasis of the school and the presence of a Ph.D. program were found to be significantly related to faculty scholarship production. Of those publishing at least two articles or a book, 99.0 percent came from schools ranking research and scholarship "4" or "5" in importance (on a scale of 1 to 5), corrected  $\chi^2 = 27.99$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ . Of those from schools ranking research and scholarship "5" in importance, 80.4 percent published at least two articles or a book, corrected  $\chi^2 = 9.99$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ . Of those publishing at least two articles or a book, 61.8 percent are from schools with Ph.D. programs, corrected  $\chi^2 = 6.34$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

The pattern is consistent throughout the findings: the Ph.D., the production of scholarship, and a research orientation or presence of a Ph.D. program at the teaching institution are related to this study's definition of a cosmopolitan orientation. An M.S.W. degree, lengthy practice experience, lack of scholarship production, and no research orientation or Ph.D. program at the teaching institution are related to a local orientation.

Of the Ph.D. degree-granting schools, an average of over one-fourth of the faculty possessed the M.S.W. as the terminal degree, ranging from 10 percent at one school to 43 percent at another. This may explain why the presence of a Ph.D. program did not show up more consistently in the findings. There is still much variation among schools of social work in the terminal degree of social work faculty. It

is not possible to determine from this study the impact of individual motivation, or the effects of peer pressure on the responses. The participants in the study were not a random sample, but were a population of social work educators. There is no way to know whether the respondents differ from the nonrespondents. The individual participants were not asked to provide their perceptions about their employing institutions. Recent studies in role orientation point to the association between organizational expectations and role orientations.<sup>13</sup> In this study it is quite clear that the organization's expectations for research and scholarship are associated with role orientation, though the stronger association is between degree and role orientation. The statistical analysis on which these findings are based supports a strong association between the type of degree and the role orientation.

## Conclusions and Implications

This study provides support for the cosmopolitan and local typologies posited by Gouldner.<sup>14</sup> Gouldner's cosmopolitan orientation involved much emphasis on professional skills and outer referent groups. Social work educators with a cosmopolitan orientation in this study demonstrate high identification with the professional skills of the academic, have other academics and education and social work organizations as their referent groups, and emphasize the scholarly aspects of their positions. Gouldner's locals were low on professional skills, and had inner referent groups. In this study, social work educators with a local orientation demonstrate low identification with the professor role, their primary referent groups include social work practitioners, and they emphasize the practice aspects of their positions. Only a small number of social work educators were both cosmopolitan and local in orientation, identifying with both of their professions—social work and education.

The results of this study indicate that very few social work educators are balancing their dual roles of professional social worker and educator, but are "choosing" one role as their primary orientation. The dual needs of schools of social work for loyalty to both the profession of social work and the university community may not be adequately met unless the need for this duality is considered in planning and hiring. Unless the importance of both roles is addressed, there may be serious repercussions. If social work educators define themselves solely as practitioners, social work education will not be viewed as a credible unit within the educational community. If, however, social work educators orient themselves solely as educators, they will not adequately address the practice needs of the profession.

The difficulty of balancing practice and theory is common to all professional education. The heritage of social work is strongly rooted in practice, yet it is practice that seems to be getting short shrift by social work faculty who engage in research and knowledge development. The social work profession has a unique opportunity to build knowledge about social work practice. The concurrent model of social work education enrolls students in their practice fieldwork at the same time they are taking classes. This affords social work faculty the opportunity to contribute to scholarship about practice. Yet, that knowledge development will not occur unless social work educators acknowledge and address their dual role as social worker and professor.

## Notes

This article has been adapted from a portion of the author's doctoral dissertation submitted in 1982 to the Department of Educational Policy and Administration of the University of Kansas. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Council on Social Work Education, 1982 Annual Program Meeting. I wish to thank the social work educators who participated in this study.

1. Ralph Blankenship, *Colleagues in Organization* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977), p. 16.

2. George H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

3. Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1936).

4. Leonard Reisman, "A Study of Role Conceptions in Bureaucracy," *Social Forces* 25 (March 1949): 305–10.

5. Harold Wilensky, *Intellectuals in Labor Unions* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956).

6. Peter Blau and W. Richard Scot, *Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1962).

7. Andrew Billingsley, "Bureaucratic and Professional Orientation Patterns in Social Casework," *Social Service Review* 38 (1964): 400–407.

8. Additional referent group studies include a focus on occupational therapists by Frank Baker, Gregory O'Brien, and Ann Sheldon, "Reference Groups of Occupational Therapists: Role Orientations in a Changing Mental Hospital," *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 22 (1968): 197–202; a focus on nurses by Ronald Corwin, "The Professional Employee: A Study of Conflict in Nursing Roles," *American Journal of Sociology* 66 (1961): 604–15; an examination of elementary school teachers by Edward Kuhlman and Wayne Hoy, "The Socialization of Professionals into Bureaucracies: The Beginning Teacher in the Schools," *Journal of Educational Administration* 8 (1974): 18–27; and of social workers by Raymond Scurfield, "Social Work Administrators: Their Educational Preparation, Value Orientation, Role Transition, and Satisfaction," *Administration in Social Work* 4, no. 2 (1980): 47–59, and Larry Lister, "Role Expectations of Social Workers and Other Health Professionals," *Health and Social Work* 5, no. 2 (1980): 41–49. Lewis C. Goldberg, Frank Baker, and Albert M. Rubenstein ("Local-Cosmopolitan: Unidimensional or Multidimensional?" *American Journal of Sociology* 70 [1976]: 704–10) expanded the role orientations to three, adding cosmo-local as a type loyal to both the employing organization and the profession. Janet Rosenberg ("Discovering Natural Types of Role Orientation: An Application of Cluster Analysis," *Social Service Review* 52, no. 1 [1978]: 85–106), using a naturalistic mode of inquiry, identified three role orientation clusters patterned on four dimensions. The association between role orientations and job performance is examined by Manuel London, Larry Cheney, and

Richard Tavis in "The Relationship between Cosmopolitan-Local Orientation and Job Performance," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 11 (1977): 182-95, and Lawrence Jauch, William Glueck, and Richard Osborn, "Organizational Loyalty, Professional Commitment and Academic Research Productivity," *Academy of Management Journal* 21, no. 1 (1978): 84-93. Barbara L. Toffler ("Occupational Role Development: The Changing Determinants of Outcome for the Individual," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 26 [1981]: 396-418) points out that one's role development is critical in determining future job and career decisions. Nancy B. Tuma and Andrew J. Grimes ("A Comparison of Models of Role Orientations of Professionals in a Research-oriented University," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 26 [1981]: 187-206) pose a multidimensional model for analysis of role orientations with five empirically and conceptually distinct dimensions, including professional commitment, commitment to organizational goals, organizational immobility, external orientation, and concern with advancement.

9. Alvin Gouldner, "Cosmopolitans and Locals: Toward an Analysis of Latent Social Roles, I," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 1 (December 1957): 281-306, and "Cosmopolitans and Locals: Toward an Analysis of Latent Social Roles, II," *ibid.* 2 (March 1958): 444-80.

10. Permission was granted to modify the scale by the wife of Alvin Gouldner.

11. Warren G. Bennis, Leonard Berkowitz, M. Affinito, and M. Malone, "Reference Groups and Loyalties in the Out-Patient Department," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 2 (1958): 481-500; Billingsley (n. 7 above); Blau and Scot (n. 6 above).

12. A copy of the instrument is available on request from the author.

13. Harvey Rich and Pamela Joliceur, "Faculty Role Perceptions and References in the Seventies," *Sociology of Work and Occupations* 5, no. 4 (1978): 423-45.

14. Gouldner (both articles cited in n. 9 above).