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The public image of the social worker

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THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

A thesis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Our purpose in this study is to explore the image of the social worker that is held by a variety of groups. We were interested in seeing whether there was sufficient agreement among the groups to speak of a general public image of social work. We also wondered to what extent there might be differences between groups and also differences within groups as to the manner in which social work was perceived.

The following are some of the specific questions we had in mind as the study proceeded. Is the picturesque image of the social worker as a "snoopy welfare investigator" still held by a large proportion of the public? To what extent, if at all, does the public image of social work embrace social group work and social community work? Is there a relationship between class position, or the degree of association with social work, and the projected image of social work?

The authors feel that answers to the above questions are very important to the profession in its efforts to recruit more skilled and qualified people. We also agree that every social worker has a professional responsibility to aid in this crucial area of recruitment. Therefore, we felt that by studying different publics we would be able to isolate certain broad areas where stereotypes exist. If our efforts are successful, the profession might be able to use our findings to project a more accurate image of social work. In turn, this

may aid social work in gaining a higher level of public acceptance which would also serve to raise prestige and salaries.

To some extent this study is a continuation of a study completed in 1960 which explored the professional values and perceptions of social workers.¹ That study raised certain questions and suggestions pertaining to the self image of social work and the image of the social worker projected by evening college business students. It will be quite interesting to compare the image of our different publics to the self image of social workers. In addition, the responses brought forth by the business student group prompted us to explore further the image of social workers held by other groups in society.

Methodology

This is an exploratory and descriptive study, which means that our conclusions are limited to our respondents. Since we were six students the work was divided in the following ways. Five students studied different publics and one student was made responsible for the summary and conclusions. The five publics included clergymen, public school teachers, college students and their parents, and samples of the upper and lower classes. A minimum of fifteen respondents were included in each sample. Specific methodology concerning each public is discussed in each of the individual chapters.

A common questionnaire, based somewhat on the 1960 questionnaire,

¹Coetta Lou Berry, Emma M. Dawson, Moragh Lesslie Shepherd, and Sally Ann Wood, "A Study of the Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers," pp. 51-56.

was set up. After a number of pilot interviews the questionnaire was revised and was used as a basis by all of the authors. In some cases, interviewing was used with the questionnaire serving as an outline. In other cases the questionnaire was administered without the opportunity for additional clarification.

An attempt was made by all of the authors to disguise the fact that we were social work students. This was done to eliminate any possible bias that might enter into the replies of the respondents. The authors agreed to state in all cases, that they were "graduate students at Boston University."

It is important to emphasize that the conclusions will be based on our respondents and any attempt at generalization may be inaccurate. This is due to the size of our samples and the time limits imposed on student theses.

Where interviewing was used our techniques were influenced by our own personal approach and therefore led to variations in the responses. In those cases where the questionnaire was administered or mailed, there was no opportunity for further clarification. Therefore, it is conceivable that a question or questions may have been misunderstood by the respondents.

The following groups were chosen by the authors to participate in this study: clergyman, public school teachers, college students and parents, upper class people, and lower class people. These groups were chosen as the authors felt that they would encompass a sizeable proportion of the overall public and would include many different

attitudes towards social work. Each of the following chapters entails more of the specifics with reference to background characteristics, methodology, data analysis, and conclusions which are germane to that particular group. All of the conclusions from the various chapters will be reviewed in the final chapter with an effort to categorize any trends and an attempt to provide some answers to the questions raised in the beginning of the introduction.

CHAPTER II

THE CLERGYMAN'S IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER*

Introduction

This chapter concerns itself with the clergyman's image of the social worker. The importance of determining what this image is stems from the fact that the clergyman's role provides for a unique continuing relationship between himself and members of his congregation. This relationship takes many forms. He is there to help in times of trouble as well as times of joy. In the study by Keller, et al., it is pointed out that as social work has evolved into a professional discipline, specializing its functions in order to do its job more effectively, the clergyman should discriminate among types of problems that he is more competent to treat in pastoral counseling and those which the social worker is better prepared to deal with.¹

In order to determine the clergyman's utilization of the profession of social work in aiding people to solve their problems it is important to determine how the clergyman views the social worker. If there is ignorance on the part of the clergyman as to how the profession of social work goes about its work this may lead to misunderstanding. Such misunderstanding may confirm the clergyman's opinion

*by Burton Garr

¹Barbara Keller, Roger W. Phelps, Evelyn J. Shickman, Carol Slade, "A Study of the Interprofessional Relations of Social Workers with Physicians, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and Clergyman," p.98.

that the profession of social work intends to be meddlesome, mothering, dictating, and that it tends to force an opinion upon people for which one can always find illustrations enough in fiction and in fact to give it the air of realism.

It was this misunderstanding on the part of a Catholic clergyman in the east side of Somerville which prompted this investigator to do research on the clergyman's image of the social worker. While doing his second year placement at the Elizabeth Peabody House, a settlement house in the lower-class section of Somerville, the investigator was made aware of the mistaken impression that this clergyman had of social workers. The Peabody House, having newly moved into the area after the redevelopment of the West End, was met with feelings of hostility on the part of this clergyman who carried a great deal of prestige in the community. This clergyman felt threatened by the presence of the social work agency which he felt would usurp and meddle into many of the functions of the clergyman and the church. It was no coincidence that children were detained at school when the nuns learned that they had a group meeting at the Peabody House. This resentment and misunderstanding prompted the investigator to think about the extent to which this misunderstanding and view of the social worker existed amongst the clergy, not only the Catholic clergy but the Protestant and Jewish clergy as well.

A word of praise must be extended to Miss Jane Dale, Executive Director of the Elizabeth Peabody House, and her staff, who have done an excellent job in interpreting the social worker's role to this

particular clergyman which has greatly reduced his feelings of resentment and hostility to social workers. As Faraday points out:

The growth of our social welfare programs depends to a great extent upon the help that other professional people give in interpretation in their contacts, and the social worker has a responsibility to see that the clergy's interpretation of social work is based on sound understanding.²

Thus, smooth-working relationships with other professional people are essential to the success of the social worker's role. A solution to a client's problem often requires the services of members of the other professions such as the clergyman. That solution may depend upon the image the clergyman has of the social worker. The clergyman's acceptance and understanding of the social worker may be one measure of the social worker's success.

Thomas J. Bigham suggests that cooperation between clergymen and social workers is so eminently desirable, so very reasonable, and not impracticable, that it seems almost unnecessary to do more than note the fact. He says:

After all, everywhere men of goodwill believe in cooperation in this world of competition and conflict. The clergy are outstanding proponents of unity, peace, and concord; and the constant concern of social workers is to enlist all members of the community to work together in helping those in need.³

It seems, then, that clergymen and social workers would form almost a natural partnership in helping with personal problems, for both

²Marge Faraday, "Teamwork Between the Church and the Social Agency," Social Work Papers, pp. 15-20.

³Thomas James Bigham, "Cooperation between Ministers and Social Workers," Religion and Social Work, (1956) p. 141.

intend to help individuals and families achieve the inner strength which makes them at once self-reliant persons and socially responsible members of the community. On the practical level, such social ills as dependency, delinquency, and disease raise many problems for the solution of which the clergyman and the social worker each needs to call on the special skills and resources of the other in the interwoven problems of the spiritual and moral and of the psychological and social. Thus, the professional cooperation and relationship between social workers and clergymen is of importance and is desirable in aiding individuals solve their problems. This chapter is devoted to the task of determining the clergyman's image of the social worker which can be related to the clergyman's utilization or non-utilization of the profession of social work in aiding those members of his congregation in need to make a better adjustment to life.

Methodology

In order to determine the clergyman's image of the social worker the interview was chosen over the questionnaire thereby assuring us of an equal number of responses from Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish clergymen. It was hoped that the interview would bring forth certain ideas and feelings that would not be conveyed in the questionnaire. An additional benefit of utilizing the interview stems from the fact that many of the questions in the questionnaire could be answered in a vague manner. Thus, in utilizing the interview, the investigator was on hand to ask the clergymen to clarify their responses.

The investigator selected five communities around the greater Boston area from which to select the respondents. The communities were selected on the basis of the economic class level of their residents. It was expected that the clergyman's image of the social worker would vary in relation to the type of community in which he performed his ministerial duty. It was anticipated that a clergyman practicing in a lower-class community would have more contact with social workers and therefore would have a more favorable image of the social worker than a clergyman practicing in an upper-class community whom we assumed would have less contact with social workers. Perhaps this expectation is an indication of the fact that, although social workers are trying to refute the stereotype that their clients are mainly lower-class, it is nevertheless true that most of their clients are from this class.

The determination of the class level of the communities selected was based upon the accepted status and prestige these communities are given by the general population throughout the greater Boston area. Therefore, this project did not do research to determine whether these communities actually do fall into the class levels accorded them in relation to the way in which Warner views the class level of a community. When a community is classified as upper or lower class it must be kept in mind that this classification is based upon the feelings and beliefs of the general public and that certainly

⁴
Lloyd Warner, The Social Life of a Modern Community, 1941, pp. 15-20.

within each community the class level may vary as much as the level between different communities.

The communities used in this study along with their accepted status positions are: Malden, a lower-middle to middle-class suburb eight miles outside of Boston; Somerville, a lower to lower-middle-class suburb four miles outside of Boston; Brookline, an upper-middle to upper-class suburb a few miles outside of Boston; Newton, an upper-middle to upper-class suburb outside of Boston; Dorchester (the particular area utilized in this study was the Columbia Point Project), a lower-class section of Boston.

Three clergymen (one Protestant, one Catholic, and one Jewish) were selected randomly in each of these five communities. The random selection in all communities was made from the city directories listing religious institutions and in some cases the names of the clergymen. In cases where the names of the clergymen were not listed, a church was chosen and the name of the clergyman was secured by asking residents of the community the name of the clergyman in charge of the particular church that had been selected. The investigator contacted the clergymen by telephone several days prior to the interview in order to establish a time for an appointment. Over the phone the investigator told the clergymen that he was a graduate student at Boston University working on a research project attempting to study attitudes toward professions, and that the clergy among many other professions had been chosen as a study group. All of the fifteen clergymen contacted agreed to see the investigator and with the exception of two, who happened to be Catholic

clergymen, accepted the explanation given over the phone. The two Catholic clergymen seemed to be somewhat reluctant to take part in the project and questioned the investigator further. They wanted to know such things as whether this was something they were going to be quoted on. However, the investigator was able to assure them that they would remain strictly anonymous and that it was just their response as clergymen that we were interested in. Given this explanation, they consented to see the investigator. It should be noted that the investigator was careful not to inform the clergymen that he was a graduate student at the school of social work. This information was held back for fear that it would bias the responses of the clergymen. All but three of the clergymen accepted the fact that the investigator was a graduate student. However, three clergymen (two rabbis and one minister) questioned what the investigator was specifically studying, and all three accepted the response that the investigator was a graduate student in social science.

The average length of the actual interview was approximately twenty minutes. The investigator divided the interview into two parts. The first part, which consisted of the background material and questions on rankings, was given to the clergymen to be filled out. The second part consisted of the investigator asking the clergymen the questions which appear on pages three and four of the questionnaire in the appendix of the thesis.

Background Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents consisted of fifteen practicing clergymen all of

the male sex. The respondents included five Protestant ministers, five Jewish rabbis, and five Catholic priests. Although not planned in this manner each of the five Protestant ministers represented five different denominations of Protestantism. The denominations represented were: Methodist, Unitarian, Congregationalist, Lutheran and the Church of the Nazarene. Among the Jewish clergymen interviewed three were Orthodox rabbis, one was Conservative and the fifth represented the Reform movement of Judaism. The median age of the respondents was 46, the youngest being 28 and the oldest 66. The median number of years on the job was 19, the highest being 38 and the lowest 5. All of the Protestant ministers and Jewish rabbis interviewed were married, and nine out of the ten listed their wife's occupation as housewife. The tenth, a Jewish rabbi, listed his wife as an occupational therapist. Similarly, all of the rabbis and ministers interviewed had children with the median number of children being 2.3.

In reviewing the educational background of the fathers of the respondents we find that three had college training, four received high school training, three had grammar school training, and five received no formal educational training at all. There is a wide variety of difference in the educational background of the fathers of Protestant ministers, Jewish rabbis, and Catholic priests. The three who had received college training were fathers of Protestant ministers. One minister's father received high school training while the other finished grammar school. Only one out of the five fathers of Catholic priests received any kind of formal education, which was

a grammar school education, while the other four had not received any formal education. Three of the fathers of rabbis received high school education, one grammar school education, and the other received no formal education. The positions held by the fathers of these clergymen were related directly to the education they had received. Three of the fathers of Protestant ministers held professional positions, one was a farmer and the other a mechanic. Four out of the five fathers of Catholic priests were listed as laborers while the fifth was listed as a warehouse manager. Three of the fathers of Jewish rabbis were listed as grocers, one was listed as a ritual slaughterer, and the fifth was listed as a laborer.

As compared to the Catholic priests and the Jewish rabbis the group of Protestant ministers on the whole had a larger number of more highly educated fathers.

Analysis of Data

In tabulating the results of the responses given by the fifteen clergymen throughout the entire interview, it became evident that the image of the social worker held by the Protestant clergyman, the Catholic clergyman, and the Jewish clergyman are not the same and, in fact, present wide variations on some of the responses. Thus, in speaking of the clergyman's image of the social worker, due to the variations in responses given by the three groups of clergymen, it became necessary also to speak of the Catholic clergyman's image of the social worker, the Protestant clergyman's image of the social worker, and the Jewish clergyman's image of the social worker. In

effect, what has been procured represents three distinct images of the social worker, one held by the Jewish clergymen, one by the Protestant clergymen, and one by the Catholic clergymen. The first question the clergymen were asked to answer consisted of three parts which involved ranking ten occupations in order from one to ten for each question. Berry, Dawson, Shepherd and Wood in their thesis on the "Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers", asked social workers to rank these same occupations.⁵ The responses given by the social workers in Berry's study will serve as a base to measure the responses given by the clergymen.

The ten occupations were those of lawyer, clergyman, nurse, physician, policeman, psychiatrist, psychologist, public school teacher, social worker, and undertaker. The respondents were asked to rank them in terms of the general prestige they felt each occupation has in our society, the general prestige they felt they should have in our society, and the consideration of the needs and feelings they show to those they serve.

It is interesting to note the reaction of the clergymen to this type of questioning. Fourteen out of the fifteen respondents commented that this type of questioning was "unfair" or "impractical". One clergyman, a Catholic priest, refused at first to answer the question at all, saying that he has practiced in certain communities where the undertaker was the man with the most prestige in the community.

⁵Coetta Lou Berry, Emma M. Dawson, Moragh Lesslie Shepherd, And Sally Ann Wood, "A Study of the Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers," pp. 51-56.

However, he agreed to answer the question saying that if he did not, "he probably would foul up the statistics." Another clergyman, a Protestant minister, commented that he did not look upon professions in terms of the prestige they have but rather looked at the individual instead. He stated further that the term "prestige" was vague and unfair. Another clergyman, a Jewish rabbi, commented that he knew persons in each of the professions that performed their jobs nobly and it was unfair to have to rank the professions. He stated that he once had contact with a social worker whose sense of morals left much to be desired, and although he realized that not all social workers could be classified as such, this contact was foremost in his mind when thinking of the profession of social work.

Such responses, perhaps, would substantiate the conclusion drawn by Berry et al., that certain occupations, like people, are often evaluated on those characteristics they show and not on the values which are so much more difficult to assess.⁶

One respondent added parent to the list of the ten occupations and remarked that they come first in all three categories.

Keller, et al., found in their thesis that social workers were unwilling to discriminate between the professions and they felt that in being asked to do this they were being asked to put aside their concern for the individual within the professional group.⁷

⁶Ibid., p. 58.

⁷Keller, et al., op. cit., p. 136

Berry et al., who also found similar reactions to this type of questioning, conclude that social workers feel strongly about their belief in the worth of the individual and that this attitude towards all people is intrinsic to their professional values.⁸ The same conclusion could be drawn about clergymen who also express a strong belief in the worth of the individual. Perhaps this suggests a common thinking ground of both social workers and clergymen. This belief in the worth of the individual on the part of the clergyman and the social worker is further indication of the importance and necessity of cooperation between the two professions.

Ratings on Actual Prestige

Prestige, as defined by Kadushin, is "the invidious value (attached) to a status or office independently of who occupies it."⁹ Kadushin further states that the question of the prestige of social work is a matter of importance to the individual social worker, the social work client, and the social work profession. According to Kadushin, prestige is affected by occupation, influence potential with client and community, identification with a male or female role, the prestige of the clientele, the degree of independence granted to the individuals in the profession, and the amount of training required.¹⁰ The prestige of the profession affects not only the social worker's concept of self, but

⁸Berry, et al., op. cit., p.65.

⁹Alfred Kadushin, "Prestige of Social Work - Facts and Factors," Social Work, vol. 3 (April, 1958), p. 37.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 40-42.

it also affects his relationships with representatives of other professions.¹¹ Therefore, according to Kadushin, the very factor which the clergymen did not consider a fair basis on which to rate the ten occupations may well be the factor influencing the way in which the clergymen view the social worker. In other words, although the clergymen may be sincere in discounting the factor of prestige as a basis, this factor consciously or unconsciously influences their perception of social workers.

As can be seen in Table 1 the clergymen collectively ranked the social worker eighth, the same ranking the social workers gave themselves. However, the mean rank the clergymen gave was 7.33 while the social workers' mean rank was 7.16.

TABLE 1
RANKINGS ON ACTUAL PRESTIGE BY TOTAL CLERGY

Clergymen		Social Workers		
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	
1.	Clergymen	2.00	Physician	1.38
2.	Physician	2.13	Clergyman	2.88
3.	Lawyer	3.27	Lawyer	3.15
4.	Psychiatrist	4.40	Psychiatrist	3.26
5.	Teacher	4.93	Psychologist	5.64
6.	Psychologist	5.93	Teacher	6.05
7.	Nurse	7.27	Nurse	6.57
8.	Social Worker	7.33	Social Worker	7.16
9.	Policeman	8.60	Policeman	9.02
10.	Undertaker	9.13	Undertaker	9.58

¹¹Ibid., p. 37.

This ranking is comparable to that found by Berry et al.,¹² where business students ranked social workers eighth. It is interesting to note that the clergymen ranked themselves first whereas the social workers ranked the clergymen second in actual prestige. This low ranking by the social workers themselves, by the clergymen, and by business students, all of whom ranked social work eighth seems to further substantiate Kadushin's statement that social work ranks as one of the lowest professions and also ranks fairly low when compared with many other occupational groups.¹³ It would appear that this consistent low ranking of social work confirms the social workers' belief that they are accorded low status in our society.

This low level of prestige may have important effects upon recruitment into the field of social work. It would appear that the whole question of recruiting people into the field of social work, a major concern of the social work profession, would have to center around raising the actual prestige rating now accorded social workers. For, as Kadushin points out, the choice of a professional career for the majority of young people is determined in part by the prestige accorded that profession in our present day society.¹⁴

From the ratings which appear in Table 1 it can be seen that the clergymen and social workers come very close in their ratings of actual prestige of the ten occupations. The differences are in the

¹²Berry, et al., op. cit., p.51.

¹³Kadushin, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 37.

ratings of clergymen, physicians, psychologists, and teachers. The social workers tend to rank the physician ahead of the clergymen and the psychologist ahead of the teacher, while the clergymen rank themselves ahead of the physician and the teacher ahead of the psychologist in actual prestige.

Table 2 shows a breakdown of the ratings of rabbis, ministers, and priests as compared to ratings of social workers in terms of actual prestige. This table does not differ too greatly from that which was depicted in Table 1 which represented the rankings of the clergymen collectively. However, there are a few changes of importance that should be noted.

The rabbis ranked social workers in seventh position in actual prestige placing the nurse, policeman, and undertaker below the social worker. The ministers ranked social workers in eighth position, but with a mean rank that was higher than that accorded them by the rabbis. The priests ranked the social worker equal with the policeman in actual prestige giving both a mean of 7.60.

TABLE 2
RANKINGS ON ACTUAL PRESTIGE BY RABBIS, MINISTERS, AND PRIESTS

Rank	Rabbi		Minister		Priest	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
1.	Physician	1.60	Physician	2.00	Clergyman	1.00
2.	Clergyman	2.40	Lawyer	2.80	Physician	2.80
3.	Psychiatrist	3.00	Clergyman	3.40	Lawyer	3.80A
4.	Lawyer	3.20	Psychiatrist	4.00	Teacher	3.80B
5.	Psychologist	4.80	Teacher	5.00	Psychiatrist	6.20
6.	Teacher	6.00	Psychologist	5.10	Nurse	6.40
7.	Social Worker	7.40	Undertaker	6.80	Psychologist	7.20
8.	Nurse	7.60	Social Worker	7.00	Social Worker	7.60A
9.	Policeman	9.00	Nurse	7.80	Policeman	7.60B
10.	Undertaker	10.0	Policeman	8.10	Undertaker	8.60

This breakdown demonstrates that both the ministers and rabbis do not rank the clergyman as high as was depicted collectively. The rabbis rank the clergyman second while the ministers rank the clergyman third, placing the physician and lawyer above the clergyman in actual prestige. However, all of the Catholic priests ranked the clergyman first. Perhaps this may be an indication of the position of importance Catholics accord the priest. Both the ministers and the rabbis feel that in actual prestige there are others that their followers place above them. However, the priests feel they are accorded the highest prestige.

Ratings on Ideal Prestige

The respondents were then asked to rank the ten occupations according to the general prestige they felt they should have in our society. It was hoped that this question would give some idea of the types of occupations the clergymen consider important. As can be seen in Table 3 the clergymen collectively ranked the social worker fifth, the same ranking the social workers gave themselves. However, the mean rank the clergymen gave was 5.67, while the social workers' mean rank was 4.75. This would indicate that social workers think that social work should have a somewhat higher prestige than the clergymen think it should have.

TABLE 3
RANKINGS ON IDEAL PRESTIGE BY THE TOTAL CLERGY

Clergymen		Social Workers		
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	
1.	Clergyman	1.20	Physicians	2.28
2.	Physician	2.27	Clergyman	3.17
3.	Teacher	2.40	Psychiatrist	3.17
4.	Lawyer	5.53	Teacher	4.35
5.	Social Worker	5.67	Social Worker	4.75
6.	Psychiatrist	6.07	Lawyer	5.11
7.	Nurse	6.60	Psychologist	6.17
8.	Psychologist	6.93	Nurse	7.21
9.	Policeman	7.93	Policeman	8.83
10.	Undertaker	9.07	Undertaker	9.77

It is interesting to note that the clergymen again ranked themselves first for the general prestige they feel they should have within our society. The social workers, on the other hand, ranked the physician in first place and the clergymen in second for the prestige they felt he should have within our society.

It is interesting to note that the clergymen and social workers rank the lawyer and psychiatrist very differently. Social workers rank the psychiatrist third, whereas the clergymen rank him sixth. This is related to the findings of Berry et al., which found that business students ranked the psychiatrists fifth.¹⁵ They account for the social workers' high ranking of the psychiatrist as a result of a more thorough

¹⁵Berry, et al., op. cit., p. 54.

knowledge and identification on the part of social workers with this profession. On the other hand, social workers ranked lawyers sixth and the clergymen ranked them fourth. Berry et al. find that business students also ranked lawyers fourth, which they related to the comparatively higher prestige law has to people who are business oriented. However, the ranking by the clergymen of lawyers in fourth place would seem to discredit the conclusion they draw.¹⁶ Generally speaking the clergymen cannot be thought of as business oriented persons and yet they still ranked lawyers relatively high. Perhaps the high ranking is due to a more thorough understanding and acquaintance throughout all classes of our society with the lawyer's role. The psychiatrist, on the other hand, is not as well known to the general public and performs his services more frequently in the upper-class strata of our society.¹⁷ There is also the element of distaste amongst the clergy for the high fees a psychiatrist charges, which perhaps influences them to rank the psychiatrist relatively low.

The rankings on ideal prestige take on more meaning as the clergymen are divided into their respective denominations, as is shown in Table 4.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷August Hollingshead and Frederick Redlich, Social Class and Mental Illness, pp. 65-73.

TABLE 4
RANKINGS ON IDEAL PRESTIGE BY
RABBIS, MINISTERS, AND PRIESTS

Rank	Rabbi		Minister		Priest	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
1.	Clergyman	1.4	Clergyman	1.2	Clergyman	1.0
2.	Physician	2.6	Teacher	2.8	Physician	2.8
3.	Teacher	2.8	Physician	3.4	Teacher	3.6
4.	Lawyer	4.2	Social Worker	4.8	Lawyer	4.6
5.	Psychiatrist	5.2	Lawyer	5.8	Nurse	6.7
6.	Social Worker	6.0	Psychiatrist	6.2	Social Worker	6.8
7.	Psychologist	6.2	Nurse	6.6	Psychiatrist	6.9
8.	Nurse	6.4	Psychologist	7.2	Policeman	7.0
9.	Policeman	8.6	Policeman	8.2	Psychologist	7.4
10.	Undertaker	9.6	Undertaker	8.8	Undertaker	8.8

It is interesting to note that in the above table the ministers rank social work in fourth place, one place higher in ideal prestige than the social workers rank themselves. Compared to the ranking given by the clergymen collectively the rabbis drop social workers one position to sixth place, placing psychiatrists above them. The priests also drop social workers one position, placing the nurse above them. The psychiatrist is accorded the lowest position by the priest and the highest by the rabbis. All three groups of clergymen ranked themselves first in ideal prestige. This would indicate that both ministers and rabbis feel they should have more prestige than is actually accorded them. For in the ranking on actual prestige both ministers and rabbis placed occupations above themselves. However, all five priests again ranked themselves in the first position indicating that they feel that they should have the position of prestige accorded them.

There is some evidence to explain why the priest ranks the psychiatrist lower than the rabbi and the minister. In response to several of the questions which appear later on in the interview the Catholic clergymen indicate that the place for Catholic people to take their problems is to the priest. They tend to see the psychiatrist as a person with little morality who usurps an essential part of the role of the priest. There is indication that the only person equipped to handle the problems of his congregation is the priest himself. This may explain the continuous high ranking the priests accord themselves in actual and ideal prestige. However, this does not answer the question as to why the social worker is placed relatively high by the priest, in view of the manner in which he feels that people should solve their problems. For if he feels that the only place for his congregants to take their problems is to the priest, why would he give social workers a relatively high ideal prestige rating? This question will be discussed more fully on the following pages as the Catholic priest's image of the social worker begins to unfold.

The rabbis, in comparison to ministers and priests, accord the psychiatrist high status. Of the three, the minister accords the social worker the highest status, and in fact he ranks the social worker higher in ideal prestige than the social worker ranked himself. These questions will be discussed more fully on the following pages of this chapter. It is important to note here, however, that the Protestant ministers, the Jewish rabbis, and the Catholic priests seem to differ somewhat in the way they rank social work in relation to other professions.

Ratings on Consideration for Clients

From the findings of Berry et al., we see that social workers place themselves first in the rankings on the consideration for the needs and feelings they show to those they serve.¹⁸ In the findings of Keller et al., it was found that social workers ranked themselves a close second to the psychiatrist in regard to the respect the members of an occupation have for the client.¹⁹

As noted on Table 5 the clergymen collectively ranked social workers fifth in terms of their consideration for the needs and feelings of their clients.

TABLE 5

THE RANKING ON THE CONSIDERATION
FOR THE NEEDS AND FEELINGS THE
OCCUPATIONS SHOW TO THOSE THEY
SERVE BY THE TOTAL CLERGY

Clergymen			Social Workers	
Rank		Mean	Rank	Mean
1.	Clergyman	1.40	Social Worker	2.32
2.	Physician	3.20	Psychiatrist	2.83
3.	Teacher	3.60	Clergyman	3.29
4.	Nurse	3.93	Physician	4.23
5.	Social Worker	5.13	Nurse	5.17
6.	Psychiatrist	6.87	Teacher	5.51
7.	Psychologist	7.20	Psychologist	5.74
8.	Policeman	7.73	Lawyer	7.87
9.	Lawyer	7.93	Undertaker	9.03
10.	Undertaker	8.00	Policeman	9.12

¹⁸Berry, et al., op. cit., p.56.

¹⁹Keller, et al., op. cit., p.135.

Again the clergymen voiced some reluctance on answering this type of question, saying that it is difficult to rank people in this way, "lumping them together."

One clergyman, a Unitarian minister, stated:

None of us shows as much concern for the needs and feelings of those we serve as the trust of the people and our responsibility toward them would merit.

The majority of the respondents thought this question was unfair and two told of undertakers they knew who showed a great deal of consideration for the needs and feelings to those they serve.

The clergymen again ranked themselves first in terms of the consideration they show to those they serve. There exists a big difference in the position in which social workers ranked psychiatrists and the clergymen ranked psychiatrists. Social workers ranked them second while the clergymen ranked them sixth. Again, there is evidence that this low ranking of psychiatrists by the clergymen is based on the fees psychiatrists collect for their services. For in answering this question several of the clergymen referred to the exorbitant prices the psychiatrist charges for his services.

The fact that the social worker is ranked comparatively low by the clergymen may indicate that social work has not been successful in interpreting to the clergymen its belief in the worth and dignity of the individual. Social workers think of their profession as a helping profession which is concerned with the dignity of the individual, his right to self determination, and his particular needs and feelings.²⁰

²⁰Berry, et al., op. cit., p. 55.

The clergymen, by their low ranking of social workers, demonstrate that they are not too well acquainted with the inherent values of social work, or that they do not believe that social workers live up to these values. The clergymen place the nurse, the teacher, the physician, and the clergyman above the social worker in this ranking. The mean rank the clergymen gave to nurses was 3.93 while the mean rank for social workers was 5.13. This represents quite a gap. We are in agreement with Berry et al., who state:

It appears that social workers, psychiatrists and psychologists have a long way to go in making known their ideals and values. Perhaps a fuller understanding of these would raise the general public's opinion of these occupations but one wonders if they would ever rank as high as the physician and nurse who will always be known by a greater majority of people.

The key words here are "known by the majority of people," for it seems that the clergymen have a fuller understanding and acquaintance of the nurse's role than they do of the social worker's role.

Table 6 reveals some further distinctions in the views of the Protestant clergymen, the Catholic clergymen, and the Jewish clergymen.

TABLE 6

RANKINGS ON THE CONSIDERATION FOR NEEDS AND FEELINGS
TO THOSE THEY SERVE BY MINISTERS, PRIESTS, AND RABBIS

Rank	Rabbi		Minister		Priest	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
1.	Clergyman	1.4	Clergyman	1.8	Clergyman	1.0
2.	Physician	2.4	Nurse	2.8	Teacher	3.0A
3.	Teacher	3.6	Social Worker	3.8	Physician	3.0B
4.	Psychiatrist	4.4	Teacher	3.9	Nurse	3.2
5.	Social Worker	5.2	Physician	4.2	Social Worker	5.2
6.	Psychologist	5.8	Psychiatrist	6.2	Policeman	6.0
7.	Nurse	5.9	Undertaker	7.4A	Psychiatrist	6.4
8.	Lawyer	7.2	Psychologist	7.4B	Lawyer	8.0
9.	Policeman	8.0	Lawyer	8.6	Psychologist	8.4
10.	Undertaker	9.2	Policeman	9.0	Undertaker	8.6

Both the rabbis and the priests ranked social workers comparatively low in terms of the consideration for the needs and feelings they show to those they serve. Both ranked social workers fifth with a mean rank of 5.20 for both. The ministers, however, ranked social workers third with a mean rank of 3.80. The rabbis ranked psychiatrists fourth with a mean rank of 4.4, the ministers ranked them sixth with a mean rank of 6.2, while the Catholic clergymen again ranked psychiatrists the lowest with a mean rank of 6.4 in seventh position. All three groups ranked the clergyman in first position, with all five of the Catholic priests placing the clergymen first in terms of the consideration for the needs and feeling they show to those they serve. All three groups accorded the lawyers low status in this rank with all three ranking him in eighth position. This is consistent with the results of Berry's study

where the business students ranked lawyers eighth with a mean rank of 7.33.²¹

In comparing the rankings of the respondents on ideal prestige and consideration for the needs and feelings the various occupations show to those they serve it is apparent that a consistent pattern of responses had developed for all three groups. The Protestant ministers consistently ranked social workers high in comparison to the Catholic and Jewish clergymen, and in fact they ranked social workers higher than social workers ranked themselves in terms of ideal prestige. Both the rabbis and priests ranked social workers lower than social workers ranked themselves, both in terms of ideal prestige and in terms of the consideration for the needs and feelings they show to those they serve. However, an important distinction between the two is that the rabbis ranked psychiatrists comparatively high, higher than the social worker in both rankings, while the priests ranked psychiatrists low in both rankings. All five Catholic clergymen ranked the clergyman first in all three rankings. A discussion of the factors involved in these responses will be left for the next section, where it can be related to the job description of social workers given by the clergymen.

However, one other important factor needs to be mentioned in relation to the responses on the ranking questions. It is interesting to note that the more conservative elements of the Protestant and Jewish clergymen consistently ranked both social workers and psychiatrists lower in the rankings than did their more liberal colleagues. Thus, the Lutheran minister, the most conservative representative of the Protestant

²¹Ibid., p. 56.

denominations represented, ranked social workers eighth in terms of ideal prestige and fifth in terms of the needs and feelings they show to those they serve, while the other Protestant ministers ranked social workers much higher on the ranking questions, as is evidenced by their mean rank given to social workers. This also held true for the conservative element of the Jewish clergymen in that Orthodox rabbis tended to rank social workers somewhat lower than did the Conservative and Reform rabbis.

It is difficult to generalize with this small sample but it seems that as one moves from the more conservative elements of Judaism and Protestantism to the more liberal elements the image of the social worker more closely approximates the image the social worker has of himself. It also should be noted that the responses of the more conservative Jewish and Protestant clergymen more closely resembles the responses of the Catholic clergymen than members of their own faiths. However, the responses of the Orthodox rabbis were similar to those expressed by members of their own faith in relation to psychiatrists, who were accorded high prestige. The Lutheran minister's responses to the prestige of the psychiatrists closely approximates the responses given by the Catholic clergymen. Perhaps the low rankings given social workers by the more conservative elements reflects the feeling that the spiritual help given a person is more important than the psychological and social help. There may also exist a feeling that a person's problem can be handled by the clergyman himself rather than through outside help. However, this still leaves the question of why the Orthodox rabbis give such a high rank to psychiatrists.

Job Description

Another index used in the study to obtain the clergyman's image of the social worker consisted of asking the respondents to give a job description for social workers. It was hoped that the responses to this question would provide a clearer picture of the way the clergyman views the social workers' role and function in society. Four categories were used to determine the types of responses given by the clergymen in their job descriptions of the social worker. The categories are:

(1) Social-Emotional: This denotes any activity the social worker had in helping people with their feelings and anxieties towards any life situation. This included help towards gaining understanding and insight into problems and dealing with emotional difficulties. (2) Physical: this denotes any activity the social worker had in helping people on a material basis. It included such things as giving money, food, clothing, or shelter, and finding a job, medical care, or housing. (3) Mixed: this category indicated that the respondents saw the social workers' role as being both of the above. (4) Other - this denotes those responses that did not specify the type of help or were not clear in their specification.

In the study done by Berry et al., it was concluded that social workers saw their role as being one of helping clients with their anxieties and feelings more than with their material needs.²²

Table 7 indicates the clergymen's responses to the job descriptions of social workers. We can see that the Protestant clergyman saw

²²Ibid., p. 44.

the social workers role in a way that was fairly similar to the way the social workers saw it. Four of the Protestant clergymen saw the social workers' role as providing social and emotional help to their clients. One, a Lutheran minister, viewed the social workers' job as one in which the primary concern was providing physical and emotional help to their clients. This reference to the occasional help with emotional problems placed him in the mixed category. However, it should be noted that he felt the primary function of social workers was providing material things.

TABLE 7
JOB DESCRIPTION

	Social Emotional	Physical	Mixed	Other
Catholic	1	3	1	0
Protestant	4	0	1	0
Jewish	2	1	2	0

The Catholic clergymen appeared to be the most distant from the social workers' job classification of themselves. One Catholic priest felt that the social workers' job was to help their clients solve emotional conflicts that they have. Another saw the social worker as being a provider of material things and as being one who helps people to make a better adjustment to society. Three of the Catholic priests viewed the social workers' job as providing physical things to their clients such as money and clothing. It should be noted that the two priests who viewed the social workers' job as having some concern for the

social and emotional problems of their clients both were practicing in lower-class communities, one in a housing project in Dorchester and the other in a housing project in Somerville. Perhaps this gives some credence to the suggestion made earlier that the clergyman practicing in lower-class sections would have a more favorable image of the social worker because of more frequent contact with social workers. The three priests who classified the job of social workers as dealing only with the physical giving of things were practicing in Newton, Brookline, and Malden. However, place of practice for the Protestant minister and the Jewish rabbi did not seem to influence the images they accorded social workers. For example, a Jewish rabbi practicing in a lower-class section did not give a more favorable job description for social workers than did his colleagues practicing in upper-class sections. Place did not seem to be a factor for the Protestant ministers either, and those practicing in lower-class sections for the most part gave a similar response to those practicing in upper-class sections. Thus, for the Protestant and Jewish clergymen place of practice did not appear to have any influence on their image of the social worker. However, this does not seem to hold true for the Catholic clergymen who seemed to present a more favorable job description in lower-class sections. More research would have to be done in this area before a definite conclusion could be drawn as to the influence the place of practice has on the clergyman's image of the social worker.

Two of the Jewish rabbis indicated that the social workers' job was concerned with the social and emotional welfare of their clients. One, an Orthodox rabbi, saw the social workers' job as being both

physical and social and emotional with the emphasis on the physical. Another, also an Orthodox rabbi, saw the social workers' function as dealing solely in the realm of providing physical things to their clients. Thus, again, as in the questions on ranking, one sees more of a similarity between the responses of the liberal factions of the Protestant and Jewish clergymen and the responses given by social workers. However, the responses given by the conservative Protestant and Jewish clergymen are more distant from the responses given by social workers and are like the responses given by the Catholic clergymen.

Some of the responses given by the clergymen on the job description of social workers are as follows:

Protestant:

Social workers are primarily concerned with helping people readjust who have personal or social problems.

Social worker tries to discover the fundamental needs or problems in a situation and tries to deal with them, not the superficial aspects but the deeper ones.

Catholic:

Social workers are investigators; they investigate conditions at home - endeavor to stabilize a family by getting monetary help for them.

Social workers investigate the environment of people giving them things so that they may have a fuller and richer life.

Jewish:

There are different types of social workers. The group worker aids individuals in developing ability to communicate with others and function within a social group. The family worker aids individuals to function well within the family group.

Social workers provide material things for those less fortunate in our society.

It is interesting to note the similarity in the above responses of the Protestant clergymen with the responses by social workers found by Berry et al., in their thesis.²³ Thus, in both the ranking questions and the question on the job description, the Protestant clergymen's responses were closely related to the responses of social workers themselves. There is also a close similarity in the terms used by ministers and social workers. The Protestant clergymen appeared to "speak the language of social workers." Note the usage of such terms as help, needs, feelings, adjustment, problems, emotional, and maladjustment. These are terms that social workers also utilized in their job description. Thus, from the responses on the ranking questions and job description it appears as if the Protestant clergymen seem to have a fuller understanding of the social workers' role and appear to be more sympathetic with the values and purposes of social work than do their Catholic and Jewish colleagues. This raises the question as to why the Protestant clergymen's image of the social worker is more favorable than the Catholic and Jewish clergymen's image of the social worker. Other questions asked the respondents in the interview may throw more light on why this is so.

In response to the question, do you have any personal friends or close relatives who are social workers, four out of five of the Protestant clergymen answered "yes," while only three out of five of both the Catholic and Jewish clergymen answered in the affirmative. Although it is difficult to generalize with this small number perhaps through close friendship with social workers the Protestant clergyman has learned more about the

²³Ibid., pp. 57-59.

role and function of social workers. Perhaps the most important influencing factor in determining the Protestant clergymen's favorable image of the social worker is the training they received in Theological school. Four out of the five Protestant clergymen responded to the question of how they learned about social workers by saying that they had direct training in social work in Theology school. In addition all five had, at one time or another, served on the board of a social agency. In comparing this training to the training of priests and rabbis it appears that the Protestant clergymen had more extensive social work training in Theology schools. All five of the Catholic priests stated that they had learned about social workers from courses they had in undergraduate school, such as Sociology. One said he learned about social workers through reading and another through inquiry. The rabbis answered in much the same way stating their knowledge of social workers stems from courses in undergraduate school and reading.

It appears that the Protestant schools of Theology provide the Protestant clergymen with a much fuller background and understanding of social work, providing both courses and field placements in social work. This seems to be consistent with what Steiner has to say about the training of Protestant clergymen. She states that in preparation of ministers there is increasing emphasis on counseling, to make the minister's role one of real personal helpfulness to his people. She further states that an important aspect in this preparation is that he be able to recognize a problem that arises from a disorder of the personality and refer such a person for professional help.²⁴

²⁴Lee R. Steiner, Where Do People Take Their Troubles, p. 134.

The responses to the question on job description of the social worker by the Catholic priests throws some light on a question that was raised earlier. It was noted earlier that the Catholic priests tended to rank psychiatrists in a very low position. A majority of the priests indicated that they view the psychiatrist as usurping an essential part of the role of the priest. On the questions of referral four out of five of the priests indicated that any problems, emotional or social, that their congregants had would be handled by the priests themselves and that these problems usually are kept within the confines of the church. It is evident from the responses given above on the job description of social workers that four out of five priests viewed the social worker's primary function as being one of giving material things to his clients. It is interesting to note that three of the five priests used the term "investigators" when referring to social workers. From the responses given by the Catholic clergymen it is evident that they do not see the social worker as one who helps individuals with social and emotional problems. The priests do not tend to view the social worker as usurping an essential part of the role of the priest; rather, they view the social worker as a "giver of material things." This perhaps leads to a higher ranking of social workers than psychiatrists. It is interesting to note in the case of referrals that although all of the Catholic priests said that they had made referrals to social workers, all but one stated the referrals were usually made because of financial reasons. In other words, they utilize the social worker in the function they think he primarily has. All but one priest stated that the social and emotional problems of the congregants would be handled for the most part by the priest himself.

This seems to be consistent with the findings of Berger who found that the Catholic clergymen of Waltham tended to keep any social or emotional problems of the congregants within the confines of the church.²⁵

From the responses of the Jewish clergymen in relation to the job description of social workers several interesting factors emerge. It is interesting to note that three out of the five Jewish clergymen make reference directly and indirectly to group work as a part of social work. One rabbi even makes mention of the fact that group work is part of social work. The other two refer to group work in terms of recreational activities. There was only one other clergyman, a Protestant minister, who referred to group work as being a part of social work. This would indicate that group work still has not made itself known as a method of social work to the majority of clergymen. Perhaps more knowledge and recognition of group work as a method of social work on the part of the Jewish clergymen stems from the fact of the Jewish Center movement which employs professional group workers. As in the ranking question, the job description of the social worker by the Jewish clergymen more closely approximates the social worker's job description of himself as one moves from the Orthodox to the Conservative and Reform elements of Judaism.

However, three out of the five Jewish rabbis saw the social worker as one who has a concern for the social and emotional problems of his clients. In the ranking question it will be remembered that the Jewish clergymen ranked social workers about the same as did the Catholic priests. However, an important difference is the fact that the rabbis

²⁵John Berger, "A Study of the Relationship Between the Clergy of Waltham and the Waltham Family Services Association," p. 36.

also ranked psychiatrists above social workers. Certainly the social and emotional aspects of the social workers' job could not be a factor in ranking social workers low since they ranked psychiatrists above social workers. Perhaps the element influencing this high ranking of the psychiatrist is the education one needs in order to attain this position. Education represents an important aspect in Judaism and perhaps psychiatry is given a higher position by the Jewish clergymen because of the educational factor. Another element stated by Myers and Roberts suggests that there appears to be little conflict between Jewish religious doctrine and psychoanalytic theory.²⁶ There appears to be more of an acceptance of psychiatry by the Jewish clergymen who give it a higher position of prestige than they give social work. The rabbis seem to comprehend the role and function of the social worker somewhat better than do the priests. A greater percentage (80%) of the rabbis saw the social workers' function related to the social and emotional problems of their clients and only forty per cent of the priests recognized this as being a function of the social worker. In view of the comparatively knowledgeable understanding of the social workers' function expressed by the Jewish clergymen it is interesting that they still rank the social worker low. Perhaps in the Jewish community the psychiatrist is thought of as having more prestige than the social worker.

Personal Experience with a Social Worker

Two of the questions the respondents were asked attempted to get at their personal experiences and views of the social worker. The

²⁶Jerome K. Myers and Bertrand H. Roberts, The Jews, p. 556.

questions asked were: "Have you or has a member of your family ever gone to a social worker (social agency) for help?" This question was followed by another which asked the respondents: "Would you ever go to a social worker (social agency) for help?" All but one of the respondents, a Protestant clergyman, stated that neither they nor any members of their families had ever gone to a social worker for help. The Protestant clergyman who answered in the affirmative at first commented in the negative. However, he asked the interviewer if this also meant group work agencies. When the interviewer stated that it did the minister remarked that although it was not for help his son does belong to a group service agency where group workers are employed. There are several important factors implicit in this reply. One, that perhaps the wording of the question in relation to help influenced the responses of the clergymen. In other words, if the phrase "for help" was not included in the question the responses given by the clergymen may have been somewhat different. This response indicates that perhaps the clergymen do not think of group work as a helping technique. This factor is further substantiated by a discussion the investigator had with a rabbi who told him that his family belongs to a Jewish Community Center. However, when asked if he or a member of his family ever went to a social worker (or social agency) for help, the rabbi stated that they had not. This would indicate that this clergyman either did not see the staff of this agency as social workers or did not view the function of the social workers employed there as being one of helping individuals.

The question which asked the clergymen if they would go to a social worker (social agency) for help if they needed it brought forth some interesting responses. All of the Catholic clergymen answered this in the negative stating that they would seek the advice or help of someone in the church. All except one of the Protestant ministers stated that they would go to a social worker for help. The minister that stated he would not go to a social worker for help happened to be the Lutheran minister who remarked he would seek spiritual help. All but one of the rabbis stated that they would go to a social worker for help if they needed it. The rabbi who stated he would not go to a social worker was an Orthodox rabbi who remarked that he would, as a last resort, go to a social worker but would seek spiritual guidance first.

Two typical responses of the Jewish and Protestant clergymen who answered this question in the affirmative were as follows:

If I needed it I certainly would go to social workers because these people are trained in the areas in which they serve and are supposed to have some understanding of the problems they deal with.

If I had the need or someone in the family had the need I would go to a social worker because these people are especially trained to deal with the emotional problems of individuals.

It is interesting to note that the Catholic clergymen again display a concern for keeping problems within the church. They tend to stress spiritual aid over the social and emotional.

The Lutheran minister was the only Protestant minister who stated that he would not go to a social worker for help but would seek spiritual guidance. One Orthodox rabbi also stated that he would seek spiritual guidance. Thus, again there appears to be some indication that the

conservative factions of the Protestant and Jewish clergymen regard spiritual aid as the ultimate in helping people solve their problems with little or no regard for the social and emotional factors.

Referrals to Social Workers

All of the clergymen stated that they had referred individuals to social workers for help. The reason for doing so show a definite relationship to the responses that were given on the question of job description. Four of the Protestant ministers stated that they referred people to social workers because the people had emotional problems that social workers are trained to deal with. Three of the Jewish clergymen gave a similar response and two of the Catholic priests responded similarly. Three of the Catholic clergymen stated that they referred people to social workers mainly because these people were in dire financial straits and could not help themselves. These same three clergymen responded to the question on job description stating that the social workers' primary function was giving things to people. There appears to be a direct relationship between the reasons given by the clergymen for referring individuals to social workers and the role and function they feel social workers have in our society. Thus, a Protestant minister who felt that social workers dealt mainly with the social and emotional problems of individuals stated that he referred people to social workers because:

As a clergyman I am trained to recognize many emotional problems which I do not have the skills, time or resources to handle with which social workers are equipped to manage.

Personality Traits of Social Workers

The final question the respondents were asked to answer concerned itself with the personality traits of social workers. The responses to this question more than any other brought forth some similarity amongst the three groups of clergymen interviewed. All but one of the clergymen, a Jewish rabbi, brought forth positive personality traits. A typical response by a minister is as follows:

A social worker is a dedicated person who is interested in human beings and the welfare of society in general.

Some of the most common phrases used by the clergymen to denote the personality traits of social workers were: dedicated and interested person, dedicated and sincere person, devoted, interested in helping people, love and consideration for those in need, a great deal of patience, sympathetic and understanding person. These phrases occurred most often in describing the personality traits of social workers. The majority of clergymen felt that social workers were sincere and interested people. An interesting factor that should be pointed out is that the clergymen who viewed the social workers' primary function as being one of giving material things stated that social workers were sincere and devoted people interested in helping needy persons have a better life. It becomes apparent that the manner in which the clergymen view the function and purpose of social work pervades throughout all their thinking about social workers.

An atypical response given to this question by a rabbi is as follows:

Social workers usually have certain intellectual characteristics beyond the average. Their analytic tendency irks me. Social workers more than psychiatrists have a certain superficiality about them. There is no reaction to depth of a personality or problem. They appear to be frustrated psychiatrists.

There are several interesting factors implicit within this statement. First, it is interesting to note that this statement was made by a rabbi who earlier stated that he had not had too many contacts with social workers, but commented that he did have a very unpleasant experience with one social worker. Perhaps this experience is reflected in the way he describes the personality traits of social workers. This response points out the position of importance the Jewish clergymen have placed on psychiatry. This statement seems to be characteristic of the Jewish clergymen in that they tend to view social workers in relation to psychiatrists. They think of social workers as pseudo-psychiatrists who really do not have an understanding of the personality. This would, in part, account for the Jewish clergymen giving a high rating to psychiatrists and a comparatively low rating to the social worker.

The majority of the clergymen, fourteen out of the fifteen interviewed, views the social worker as a sincere and devoted person. His sincerity and devotion to what seems to be the main difference. Four out of five of the Catholic clergymen see the social worker as being sincere and devoted to helping people materially have a fuller life. Four out of five of the ministers see social workers as sincere and devoted to helping their clients solve their social and emotional problems. They see the social worker especially equipped and trained to do this.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

One of the important conclusions that can be drawn from this study is that the clergymen are not unified in their image of social workers.

The Protestant ministers have a much more favorable image of social workers, which in many respects is closely related to the image social workers have of themselves. They tend to make referrals to social workers on the basis that they recognize certain social and emotional problems of their congregants which they are not equipped to deal with. They view the social worker as a professional, especially trained and skilled in aiding their clients solve their problems whether they be social, emotional, or physical. Because of this understanding of the social worker the Protestant clergymen tend to work more closely with social workers than do their Jewish and Catholic colleagues.

This favorable image and understanding of the social work profession by the Protestant clergymen seems to stem from the training they receive in theological school. Included within this training is a full orientation to social work. This training had not been received by their Jewish and Catholic colleagues.

Despite the ministers' favorable image of the social worker there does seem to exist a lack of knowledge or understanding of the role of group work as a social work method. This indicates that a great deal of interpretation of the group worker's role and function as a method of social work is needed.

The Catholic clergymen showed the least understanding of the social worker. The majority view the social workers' primary function as having to do with the giving of material things to the less fortunate people.

Having this view of social workers the Catholic clergymen on the whole tend to make referrals to social workers for alleviation of financial needs. The majority of Catholic clergymen in this study expressed the view that the only place for a Catholic to bring his problems is to the priest. It is for this reason that the priests tend to have a low regard for psychiatrists who they feel usurp an important role of the priest. They do not take this same view of social workers because the majority view the social worker's primary function as being a giver of things to the less fortunate. They do not view the social worker as a professional, equipped to handle the emotional and social problems of his clients. The two Catholic priests who did express a more favorable image of social workers happened to be practicing in housing projects where they had more contact with social workers. This is consistent with the hypothesis stated at the outset of this chapter, that a clergyman practicing in a lower-class section would tend to have a more favorable image of social workers.

The Jewish clergymen vary in their image of social workers. The more liberal branches of Judaism express a more favorable image than the Orthodox branch. The Jewish clergymen show a high regard for psychiatrists and look upon social workers as "frustrated psychiatrists".

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that the more conservative elements of the Protestant and Jewish religions, i.e. Lutheran Protestantism and Orthodox Judaism have a less favorable image of social workers than do their more liberal colleagues. They indicate a high concern for spiritual help and place less emphasis on the social and emotional help social workers can provide.

It would appear, taking the social workers' image of themselves as a basis, that the majority of clergymen interviewed do not have a favorable image and understanding of social workers. Although the Protestant clergymen do show a more favorable image of social workers than the Jewish rabbis and Catholic priests, there remains much work to be done in interpreting group work as a method of social work to the Protestant clergymen. For both Jewish and Catholic clergymen much work needs to be done in interpreting the basic function and purposes of social work itself.

There seems to be a definite need that exists for the interpretation of social work to the clergyman. The question is, who should take the initiative in meeting this need. The ideal answer to this question would be that both parties should take the initiative. However, the ideal is not always the most practical solution to a problem. It is the belief of this investigator that since social work recognizes the need, it is this profession that has the responsibility to see that the clergyman's interpretation of social work is based on sound understanding.

A criticism set forth by a Protestant minister in this study may provide one avenue for meeting the need. He stated:

There seems to be a feeling on the part of some social agencies that there is nobody but a social worker that can handle problems.

There is a failure of certain social agencies to adequately use professional and non-professional sources in the community.

Thus, the very thing that leads social workers to be critical of the other professions is the basis of criticism leveled against social workers. As Cockerill states:

The major obligation of all the professions in an age of specialization and diversified expertness is that of refining further the ways of working together so that their efforts to help people will always be attuned to the unitary nature of man and his problems. Essential to the achievement of this objective is the commitment to the principle of organic wholeness of human and social problems on the part of the professions as a whole and on the part of the individual members of these professions at all operating levels. If this commitment is firmly established it will be recognized that although the ultimate goal is not always attainable, it must always be the criterion against which we evaluate our professional service.²⁷

There is a need for social workers to be aware of the contribution the clergymen can make to them in their practice. Through this interprofessional cooperation the social worker can interpret the role and function of social work to the clergymen. Not only the individual social workers but the social work agencies can be helpful in bringing about a greater understanding of social work to the clergyman. Social agencies can take the initiative in inviting clergymen to profitably explore in group conferences with social workers case situations that involve cooperation on common problems. At such group conferences social workers and clergymen could compare basic problems and learn from each other. Each group might participate to some degree in the training experience of the other.

Therefore, cooperation between the clergyman and social worker is both helpful and desirable. However, this cooperation will not exist to any large extent unless there is constant awareness of the dual professional roles. This is essential to good social work practice.

²⁷Eleanor Cockerill, "The Interdependency of the Professions in Helping People," National Conference of Social Welfare Forum, (June, 1953), p. 141.

To quote Bigham in his article on the cooperation between ministers and social workers:

To the serious social worker this cooperation is desirable because, after all, the person in need--that person on whose dignity social work focuses its faith--is at once a social being related to others, and a psychological being with an individual dynamic in his own life, and a religious being who would see life whole; and these three dimensions of his unique existence are deeply interrelated and intertwined.²⁸

²⁸Bigham, op. cit., p. 148.

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOL TEACHER'S IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER*

Introduction

Purpose: This chapter is concerned with exploring the image that school teachers have of social workers. This is important to the social worker because of the position the school teacher holds in our society. A number of people have pointed out the major role the school and school teacher play in the community. According to William C. Kvaraceus, "the schools occupy a central position in the community program for the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency."¹ This definition can be broadened from the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency to the prevention and control of any emotional problems that children present within the school setting. The teacher, therefore, plays the key role if the school is viewed in the position presented above. The school teacher is usually the first in the school setting to detect a pupil's emotional problem. Because of this she is in a position to refer the child at a very early age to other sources of help and she is also in the position to help the child in the classroom achieve a successful learning experience. However, the teacher cannot be expected to be all things to the child, as her primary goal is education. Many schools now see:

individual services as a vital part of the school program which enrich and facilitate the education process and contribute to removing or modifying the factors which interfere with learning, learning

*by Lois Berenson

¹William C. Kvaraceus, The Community and the Delinquent, p. 265.

which includes emotional aspects of academic achievement and social aspects of the child's relations in the school setting.²

"The development of social work services in the public schools has increased rapidly and is important to the total social work profession."³ Many schools may utilize other social service agencies within the community, such as a family service agency, or a child guidance clinic, to which to refer children who are presenting learning or behavior difficulties. It is Willie's opinion that "specialists not from the field of Education have been viewed with suspicion on the part of many teachers."⁴ Willie also states that "respect is vital to the achievement of effective interdisciplinary functions. It facilitates a working climate in which meaningful sharing may take place."⁵ Crossen, in her study "Teachers Evaluate the Services Offered by a Psychiatric Clinic," concluded that the "effectiveness of a child guidance clinic unit connected in any way with a school system depends on the quality of service offered and the teacher's attitude toward it."⁶ If social work services are to be effective within

²Jane Willie, "The School Social Worker Helps the Child Through Collaboration With Other School Personnel", The Bulletin, National Association of School Social Workers, Vol. 31 (September, 1955), p. 1.

³D. Berggren, P. Borah, B. Ringer, A. Schofield, "Descriptive and Comparative Study of the School Adjustment Counselor Program in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and in the Communities of Waltham, Malden, Brookline and Northborough," p. 6.

⁴Willie, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁶Shirley Ann Crossen, "Teachers Evaluate the Services Offered by a Psychiatric Clinic"

the public school system, the school teacher and social worker should respect each other, and the quality of the social services in the school should be in accord with the best standards of other social agencies within the community. The teacher's image of the social worker and her understanding of the profession is likely to influence her attitude toward the school social services. The questionnaire in this study is designed to elicit the teacher's understanding and attitude of social work as a profession and her image of the social worker as a representative of the profession. The prestige rankings of profession are used to determine the ideal and realistic prestige value the school teacher places on social work. Kadushin believes "the level of prestige of the profession, therefore, conditions somewhat the effectiveness with which services can be offered the client."⁷

Consequently, the teacher's image of the social worker, as evaluated by this study, should provide clues as to whether the teacher could possibly view social work as a positive adjunct to the educational program. The study should also point out areas in which there should be more interpretation of services to the school teacher as well as to the community.

Methodology

The questionnaire chosen by the research group was administered to thirty-five teachers employed in an industrial community located just outside of the Boston area. The city consists mainly of lower and

⁷Alfred Kadushin, "Prestige of Social Work - Facts and Factors, Social Work, vol. 3 (April, 1958), p. 38.

middle-class residents although the teachers do not necessarily reside in this city. This city does not provide any social work services within the school setting but the local School Board is now considering hiring an elementary school social worker. The high school does have a limited guidance program and its purpose is primarily for vocational counseling.

The teachers were selected from the high school and an elementary school. It was felt the teachers would respond better to the questionnaire if confidentiality would be respected. The research person interpreted the study to one teacher in each of the schools and allowed that teacher to distribute the questionnaires. The teachers filled out the questionnaires in their leisure time and then placed it in a sealed envelope and left it with the designated teacher who in turn returned the questionnaires to the research worker.

Background Characteristics of Respondents.

There were twenty-three females and twelve males represented in this chapter of the study. The dates of birth are arranged in groups of ten years and are as follows:

Year of birth	Number of respondents
1890 - 1900	1
1901 - 1910	8
1911 - 1920	7
1921 - 1930	8
1931 - 1940	10
No response	1

According to the above table there is a somewhat even distribution of birth dates from 1900 to 1940.

All the school teachers, with the exception of one who had two years of normal school, graduated from college. Nine teachers have their

Master's Degree in Education. Most of the teachers have had one to ten years of experience, and nine teachers have had twenty to thirty years of experience.

There are nineteen married teachers and sixteen single teachers. Ten of the married teachers are men. Seventeen of the twenty teachers who are married have children and the number of children range from one to four. Six of the wives of the married male teachers are housewives. Of the four wives who are employed, one is a nurse, two are employed in clerical positions, and the fourth is an office manager. One married female teacher did not answer the question on the occupation of her spouse. The occupations of the husbands of the married female teachers are as follows: three are employed in administrative positions, one is a retired naval officer, one a civil engineer, one a salesman, one a caterer, and one listed as "inventory control."

The occupations of the fathers of the teachers cover a wide variety of jobs but the majority of occupations seem to be skilled labor with only a few professional occupations represented.

The educational background of the fathers include three who have completed college or another special educational program, fourteen who have gone no further than high school, twelve who did not go beyond grade school, and two who did not have any formal education.

Limitations. The sample was chosen by two teachers, each in their own schools. Because these two teachers may have been biased in their selection of the sample, the sample cannot be considered an adequate cross-section of school teachers in the community.

Only one community was represented in the sample and the selected teachers from this community cannot be representative of all teachers.

As there are a small number of teachers in the sample, and along with the two reasons noted above, one cannot overgeneralize the findings of this study.

Analysis of Data

Rankings of Occupations

Occupations are ranked in terms of actual prestige, ideal prestige, and on the consideration for needs and feelings their members show to those they serve. In this section the rankings of the school teachers will be compared with the rankings of social workers as was found in the thesis of Berry and others.⁸ In this way one can see in what areas the teachers agree with the social workers and in what areas there is disagreement.

Actual Prestige. In looking at the ranking of social workers and school teachers on actual prestige in Table 1, it can be seen that the ranking is fairly similar. The only difference is that the teachers rank themselves one step higher than the psychologist while the social workers rank the teachers one step lower than the psychologist. According to this data, the school teachers rank higher than the social worker in actual prestige. As was noted in Berry's thesis, the social workers see themselves as low on prestige and the teachers agree with this finding.

It would appear that the school teachers have somewhat more confidence in their own profession than do the social workers and are probably more secure in their role than are the social workers. This

⁸C. Berry, E. Dawson, L. Shepherd, S. Wood "A Study of the Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers"

could cause some difficulty in the relationship between school teachers and social workers, as social workers who seem to have a poor image of their prestige in our society, would probably have difficulty in interpreting their services effectively to the school teachers.

TABLE 1
RANKINGS ON ACTUAL PRESTIGE BY
SCHOOL TEACHERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

School Teachers		Social Workers		
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	
1.	Physician	1.51	Physician	1.38
2.	Clergyman	2.26	Clergyman	2.88
3.	Lawyer	3.54	Lawyer	3.15
4.	Psychiatrist	4.77	Psychiatrist	3.26
5.	School Teacher	5.71	Psychologist	5.64
6.	Psychologist	5.89	School Teacher	6.05
7.	Nurse	6.51	Nurse	6.87
8.	Social Worker	7.43	Social Worker	7.16
9.	Policeman	8.51	Policeman	9.12
10.	Undertaker	8.80	Undertaker	9.58

Ideal Prestige. On ideal prestige, we can see in table 2 that the teacher and the social worker agree only on rankings seven through ten, which include psychologist, nurse, policeman, and undertaker.

In this ranking the school teachers still rate themselves higher than the social worker and they also rate themselves higher than the psychiatrist. The social worker, on the other hand, rates the psychiatrist and school teacher higher than themselves in ideal prestige. Both the teacher and the social worker see themselves as higher in ideal prestige

than actual prestige. The teachers advanced the social workers two places from actual to ideal prestige, and the social worker advanced the teachers in the same manner.

In relation to the school teacher, according to tables 1 and 2, the social workers see themselves as lower than the teacher in ideal and actual prestige. As was mentioned in the introduction, Kadushin believes the prestige of a profession is related somewhat to the effectiveness of its services.⁹ As teachers see social work as fairly low in prestige, it seems possible that the teachers may view the social worker as somewhat ineffective. However, the social workers see the school teachers as having more prestige than themselves, so the teachers may be viewed by the social workers as being more effective in their role.

TABLE 2

RANKINGS ON IDEAL PRESTIGE BY
SOCIAL WORKERS AND SCHOOL TEACHERS

School Teachers		Social Workers		
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	
1.	Clergyman	1.86	Physician	2.28
2.	Physician	1.94	Clergyman	3.17
3.	School Teacher	3.37	Psychiatrist	3.17
4.	Lawyer	4.80	School Teacher	4.35
5.	Psychiatrist	5.51	Social Worker	4.75
6.	Social Worker	6.23	Lawyer	5.11
7.	Psychologist	6.57	Psychologist	6.17
8.	Nurse	6.71	Nurse	7.21
9.	Policeman	8.23	Policeman	8.83
10.	Undertaker	9.63	Undertaker	9.77

⁹Kadushin, op. cit., p. 9.

Concern Shown for Those They Serve. In Berry's thesis, it is stated that social workers usually think of their profession as a helping profession, and the social worker's consideration for the needs and feelings of those they serve is an important part of the helping process.¹⁰ As shown in table 3, the social workers rank themselves first in showing consideration for the needs and feelings of those they serve. The teachers, however, rank the social workers fourth in this category, and obviously the teachers are not in agreement with the social workers high opinion of themselves. The social workers see the teachers as low in this category and rank them sixth in the table while the teachers rank themselves second.

The school teachers see clergymen, themselves, and physicians as the top three professions in showing consideration to the people they serve. According to the social workers, the top three professions in this category are social work, psychiatrists, and clergymen. Interestingly, the teachers rank the social workers two places higher than the psychiatrist in this table.

In summary, both the teachers and social workers rank their own professions as showing more concern for those they serve, and there is quite a difference of opinion of the images, both the social worker and the school teacher have of each other in this category. If this runs true in other communities, it would seem there would be problems in relationships between the two professions, that is to say, since the teacher feels he shows more understanding and concern for his pupil, he may be less likely to refer his pupil to a social worker for help. Also the teacher may view the clergyman or physician as a better referral source

¹⁰C. Berry, et al., op. cit., p. 55.

for the handling of emotional problems of his pupils. As shown by table 3, the teachers rank the physician and clergyman higher than the social worker in the concern he shows for those he serves.

TABLE 3
RANKINGS ON CONSIDERATION FOR NEEDS AND FEELINGS
BY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

School Teachers		Social Workers	
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
1.	Clergyman 2.06	Social Worker	2.32
2.	School Teacher 3.37	Psychiatrist	2.83
3.	Physician 3.60	Clergyman	3.29
4.	Social Worker 4.49	Physician	4.23
5.	Nurse 5.34	Nurse	5.17
6.	Psychiatrist 5.69	School Teacher	5.51
7.	Psychologist 5.91	Psychologist	5.74
8.	Lawyer 7.51	Lawyer	7.87
9.	Policeman 8.51	Undertaker	9.03
10.	Undertaker 8.63	Policeman	9.12

Job Description

In accord with the other chapters of this group study, the job description of social work that has been written by the school teachers will be divided into three categories for the purpose of analysis.

First is the Social-Emotional area which, as in Berry, Dawson, Shepherd, and Wood's thesis, is used to "denote any activity the social worker had in helping people with their feelings and anxieties toward life situations."¹¹ In this category, the teacher's description of social

¹¹Ibid., p. 32.

work included such phrases as works with, understanding, guiding, counseling, adjust, and gives psychiatric aid.

The next category is the Physical area which denotes concrete tangible services. The phrases used by the teachers that fall into this category were investigates, liason, social reformer, and referral agent.

In the third category are those replies that saw social work as engaged in both physical and social-emotional activities.

It should be noted that in the job description the teachers gave of social workers, many of the answers are vague and general and in many instances it was difficult to categorize them.

In regard to the school teachers, it was felt important to see if they mentioned, in their job description, social work as a resource for helping children or as a special service within the school setting. It seems equally important to see if the teachers viewed social work as a service for the whole community or just for a certain type of individual.

There were eight teachers who described social work as a social-emotional helping process, ten teachers saw social work as offering only physical services, and fifteen teachers saw social work as a combination of both social-emotional and physical activities. Those teachers who describe social work as a combination of both social-emotional and physical activities perhaps have a good understanding of social work as this description includes all phases of the social work profession whereas the other teachers' definitions are more limited.

Children were mentioned by six teachers in their job description of social work and this was not in connection with the school. These six teachers referred to children in the following ways in their job

description: one teacher mentioned an orphanage, and one teacher mentioned a child placement agency. Four teachers viewed social work as a service for underprivileged children, emotionally disturbed children, and juvenile delinquents.

The role of the social worker within the school was only mentioned by two teachers. One teacher was aware of the function of a school social worker, and the other teacher noted school records as a diagnostic aid for social workers.

Three teachers in their job description saw social work as a service only for the lower class members of the community, and key words used in this description were needy, charity, and underprivileged.

In conclusion, most of the teachers do show a fairly broad understanding of social work as evidenced by their job description, and the majority of teachers do see social work as a possible resource for "helping" all social classes of the community. But, as was noted earlier, their answers are vague and general and this may point out the fact that the teachers are not well-informed about the social work profession. This seems to relate to the answers of the upper-class Jewish group as many of their replies to the job description of social work were vague and general and perhaps reflected a limited knowledge of social work.

Only a few teachers mentioned children's services in the social work profession, and this is interesting, as the teachers are in daily contact with children, and a certain number of their pupils are likely to manifest some emotional problems. This may indicate that the teachers are referring their disturbed children to other sources for help. However, it

is quite possible that because of lack of full knowledge and communication with the social work profession, the teachers may not be aware of children's social services.

School Teachers' Involvement with Social Work

In this section, questions 1 through 6 of the questionnaire will be analyzed.¹² One teacher failed to answer these questions, therefore the responses of thirty-four teachers are included in this section.

Eight teachers or members of their families have gone to a social worker or social agency for help and twenty-six teachers or members of their families have never gone to a social worker or social agency for help. However, twenty-one teachers would consider going to a social worker or agency for help as opposed to thirteen teachers who would not go. One teacher of the thirty-four did not answer this question. Although the answers were varied many of the responses were similar and these reasons have been categorized as follows:

Reasons why would go to a social worker	No. of responses
1. The social worker is equipped to help people with their problems.	15
2. As a last resort	4
3. The social worker can direct people to other help	1
4. Would go if referred by a clergyman	2
Reasons why would not go to a social worker	No. of responses
1. Can solve own problems	5
2. Had negative experience with social agency	1
3. Have no problems	1
4. Social work has connotation of charity	2
5. Would turn to family or friends for help	2

Eighteen teachers have referred others to social agencies for help while sixteen teachers have not. However, thirty-three of the teachers

¹²See Appendix A

would consider referring someone to a social worker, or agency for help, while only one teacher would not do this. This one teacher who would not refer anyone to an agency, felt social workers and agencies ineffective because of one negative experience with a social agency.

The reasons why teachers would refer others to a social agency were mainly because they felt the social workers or agencies were trained to handle the problems they would refer, although none mentioned any specific problems. Six teachers did not comment on this question.

Nineteen of the thirty-four teachers have personal friends or relatives who are social workers. They have therefore been able to learn about social work through personal contact with their friends or relatives. Besides personal contacts, the teachers have learned about social work from the following sources: (Four teachers misinterpreted this question and included personal contacts in their replies)

Sources	No. of responses
1. Reading in general	10
2. Films	2
3. Books	2
4. Magazines	3
5. Direct work experience	3
6. College courses	9
7. Television	4
8. Familiarity with some social agencies	1
9. School records	1
10. Social work as part of our culture	1
11. School counseling program (Guidance)	1

We have tried to decide whether or not direct contact with a social worker or social agency, either for the purpose of obtaining help or through personal friends or relatives, has any effect or at least is related to whether a teacher has actually referred others to a social agency. Those teachers or members of their families who have gone to a

social worker for help will be referred to as Group A, and those teachers who have never gone to a social agency for help will be referred to as Group B. Group C includes the teachers who have personal friends, who are social workers while Group D refers to those teachers who have no personal friends or relatives who are social workers.

Five of the eight teachers from Group A have referred others to a social worker while the remaining three teachers have not. From the twenty-six teachers in Group B, thirteen teachers have referred others to a social agency and thirteen teachers have not. This data indicates that direct contact with an agency for help does not effect whether a teacher has referred others to a social agency for help.

TABLE 4

RELATIONSHIP OF PERSONAL CONTACT WITH AN AGENCY
BY SCHOOL TEACHERS TO REFERRING OTHERS TO AN AGENCY

	Have referred	Have not referred
Group A (Personal contact with agency)	5	3
Group B (No personal contact with agency)	13	13

Fourteen of the teachers from Group C have referred others to a social agency for help, while the other five teachers of this group have not. From Group D four teachers have referred others for help while eleven of this group of teachers have not. It appears from this data that teachers who have personal friends or relatives who are social workers are more likely to refer others to a social agency for help than those teachers who have no personal friends or relatives who are social workers.

TABLE 5

RELATIONSHIP OF HAVING PERSONAL FRIENDS OR RELATIVES
WHO ARE SOCIAL WORKERS TO REFERRING OTHERS TO A SOCIAL AGENCY

	Have referred	Have not referred
Group C (Have personal friends or relatives)	14	5
Group D (Have no personal friends or relatives)	4	11

In concluding this section, it appears that when teachers explained why they would or would not go to a social worker for help, or why they would or would not refer anyone to a social worker, their answers tended to be very vague and general and the majority of teachers did not describe any specific problem areas for referral. It does seem encouraging for the social work profession that thirty-three teachers would not rule out referring anyone to a social worker or agency if the need arose even if thirteen of these teachers would not consider a social worker for themselves for help. Having personal friends and relatives who are social workers seems to be a positive factor for those teachers who have referred others to a social agency.

Personality Evaluation of the Social Worker

The personality evaluation that the teachers gave of the social worker, which was analyzed from question 7 in the questionnaire, is separated into three categories which should be self-explanatory. The three categories are favorable, unfavorable and ambivalent.

Four teachers did not respond to this question. One of these four teachers also failed to answer questions 1 through 6 of the questionnaire. There did not seem to be any indication in the questionnaire of these four teachers why they failed to answer the question on personality evaluation. The three teachers who answered questions 1 through 6 reported they would be willing to go to a social worker or agency if the need arose and they would refer others to a social worker. Two of these teachers also have personal friends who are social workers.

Twenty teachers gave favorable responses to the personality evaluation of the social worker. The most frequently used words in the favorable description were kind, understanding, dedicated, mature, patient, objective, forceful, intelligent, helpful, and other words similar to these. The majority of these twenty teachers have had some personal contact with a social worker or agency either through personal friends or relatives who are social workers or for receiving help. There was only one unfavorable comment and this teacher wrote in great detail on the back of the questionnaire his personality evaluation of the social worker and his reasons for the unfavorable criticism. He reports he is employed in a community center with social group workers and he acknowledges his opinions are prejudiced. In summary he sees the social workers as "sacrosant" and "status seekers" which is evidenced by "too much theory and spouting of all the latest social work words."

Ten teachers were ambivalent in their personality evaluation. Five of these teachers described social work in positive terms but before their phrases used the words "usually" or "should be", thus possibly designating there is a difference between the ideal favorable personality

and the realistic personality image. The five remaining teachers differed in their views. One felt there were too many personality traits to single out, another described a social worker as an analyzer, the third felt that generally social workers were concerned with the problems they meet but that most seem hard and cruel, the fourth described social workers as idealists and do-gooders, and the fifth teacher felt social workers meant well, but were not practical.

On the whole the majority of teachers seem to have a favorable personality image of the social worker. Of the eleven teachers who gave either an unfavorable or ambivalent personality evaluation, all but two of them have had some direct contact with a social worker or social agency. One might wonder, therefore, whether these contacts have been negative ones. One teacher did mention specifically his negative contact with a social agency. However, only four of the negative or ambivalent respondents would not go to a social worker for help, and only one would not refer anyone else to a social worker for help. This does imply somewhat that these eleven teachers, despite the fact that they hold an unfavorable or ambivalent image of the social worker, still view social work as a helping process and would possibly refer others to a social worker.

Conclusions

The school teachers seem to have a favorable image of the social worker as evidenced by the job description they give of social work as a helping profession, their willingness to refer others for help, and their reasonably favorable personality evaluations of social workers. However,

their job descriptions are vague, as are their reasons for going to a social agency or referring others to a social agency for help. The majority of teachers have had some direct contact with a social worker or social agency and this could have influenced their favorable personality image. Only two teachers mentioned a specific reason for their contact with the social work profession. Nineteen of the thirty-five teachers have close friends or relatives who are social workers, and the majority of these teachers made most of the referrals to a social agency.

Although the teachers seem to present a favorable image of the social worker as a "helper" one might question this because of the way they rank social workers on the consideration they show for the needs and feelings to those they serve. In this category the teachers rank the clergyman, the school teacher, and the physician higher than the social worker. However, the teachers' image of the social worker is still not too unfavorable as the teachers did rank the social worker above nurses and psychiatrists in showing concern for those they serve.

As the teachers have made very little specific mention of referring children to a social agency or social worker, one could question if this implies that teachers see themselves as better equipped to handle disturbed children in the classroom or perhaps they do not think of social workers as a source to refer their pupils with emotional problems. Then again this could also mean the teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of children's social services.

In regard to the prestige rankings, both the teachers and social workers see social work as low in actual prestige and ideal prestige. The teacher did raise the social worker two places in ranking from actual

to ideal prestige, but the social workers raised their ranking three places from actual to ideal prestige. However, on both ideal and actual prestige, the school teacher is ranked higher than the social worker by both professions.

If the social worker is seen as low in prestige by most of the community, it is possible that this could have some bearing on the effectiveness of the services social work has to offer. Along the fact that the teachers seem to have a vague and general understanding of social work, it seems likely there is some difficulty in communication between the two professions. Erma Meyerson states that "the job of interpreting social work must begin with the social workers."¹³ In Keller, Phelps, Shickman, and Slade's thesis, it is pointed out that "social work is still trying to define its own role and to interpret its functions to other disciplines."¹⁴ Kadushin points out that the public has to be better informed if the prestige of the profession of social work is to be elevated and one way to elevate prestige is to "increase functional effectiveness and so increase functional importance to the community."¹⁵

In regard to social work in the schools, the school teachers do indicate they are willing to refer others to a social worker, and as the

¹³Erma T. Meyerson, "The Social Work Image or Self Image?" Social Work vol. 4 (July, 1959) p. 71.

¹⁴B. Keller, R. W. Phelps, E.J. Shickman, C. Slade "A Study of the Interprofessional Relations of Social Workers with Physicians, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and Clergymen" p. 56.

¹⁵Kadushin, op. cit., p. 43.

teachers have shown little or no knowledge of children's social services, it appears it would be up to the social worker to interpret services in such a way that another discipline would see and realize what needs in the community social workers can meet.

CHAPTER IV

COLLEGE STUDENTS' AND THEIR PARENTS' IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER*

Introduction

Within this chapter, I will attempt to present the images of the social worker as projected by undergraduate college students and their parents. Due to the fact that the social workers of the future will come from the ranks of undergraduate college students, I felt that it was quite important to gain further insight into their feelings, thoughts, and attitudes about social work. I had made the assumption that some aspects of the image of the social worker projected by college students would be grossly inaccurate. My own feeling that each and every social worker must accept some responsibility in the area of projecting an accurate image, as well as in the area of recruitment, was the primary motivating factors.

I am of the opinion that many of the college students in our current American culture seek the feelings and opinions of their parents prior to making a final occupational or professional choice. In addition, I suspect that in many cases the feelings and opinions of the parents are decisive factors. It is not difficult to follow this hypothesis and see the implications that exist for social work recruitment. Therefore, an attempt to discover the image of the social worker that is held by the parents of college students seemed as important as discovering the image of the students. Again, I expected that many areas of the image to be projected would be grossly inaccurate. However, with this effort as a base,

*by Warren Simon

the profession might possibly have a clearer perception of the current image, and become more familiar with the areas of greatest need in terms of correcting the inaccuracies.

Methodology

The standard questionnaire for this study was used with both the student group and the parent group. The only difference was the manner in which the questionnaire was administered. With the student group, the interviewer was present and available to answer any questions as well as having the opportunity to make introductory and closing remarks. The questionnaire was mailed to the parental group and the above factors were not in effect.

The Sample

A class in Introductory Sociology was selected from the College of Liberal Arts at Boston University. Part of the rationale for the choice of a class in the College of Liberal Arts was due to the fact that students in the Evening College of Business Administration had been included in a study of a similar nature last year.¹ The primary reason for the choice of this particular class, and this particular University, was convenience.

There were forty-nine students present on the day the questionnaire was administered. The students were not informed in advance about the questionnaire being administered on this particular day, and the instructor felt that this was average attendance. Approximately a half-

¹Berry et al., "A Study of the Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers."

hour was allotted for the questionnaire and all of the students were able to complete it in this time. One of the interviewer's opening remarks was a request that those students who were willing to do so write the name and address of their parents on the reverse side of the questionnaire. This was repeated during the half hour and immediately before the questionnaires were being passed in.

Of the forty-nine students who completed the questionnaire, twenty included the names and addresses of their parents. The author decided to include in this study only those twenty student respondents who had volunteered the names and addresses of their parents. He felt that some very interesting results might come from studying this group and comparing it with the parent respondents. Of the twenty questionnaires sent to parents, ten were returned. Therefore, the two groups are composed of those twenty students who submitted the names of their parents, and the ten parents who completed and returned the questionnaire.

Techniques Employed in Administering and Mailing the Questionnaire

Prior to utilizing the questionnaire, the authors had agreed that, wherever possible, an attempt should be made to disguise the fact that the authors were social work students. It was hoped that this would serve to eliminate a great deal of bias that might have entered the study had the respondents known the actual identity of the authors and the fact that they were particularly interested in social work.

Towards this goal, the interviewer had arranged with the class instructor to be introduced as "a graduate student here at the University." The heading of the questionnaire mentions only Boston University and the

name of the study. No reference is made to the School of Social Work. After being introduced to the Sociology class, the interviewer briefly mentioned the purpose of the study and its relationship to a study done the previous year. He stated that he would be very happy to answer any questions and proceeded to distribute the questionnaire. The only question asked had to do with face sheet information and was not significant. After the questionnaires were collected, the interviewer thanked the students for their cooperation and asked that those students who had volunteered the names and addresses of parents not to discuss the study or the questionnaire with their parents.

In sending out the mailed questionnaire to parents, a letter guaranteeing anonymity and stating that names would not be used in the study was enclosed. In addition, a self-addressed, stamped envelope was enclosed for their use in returning the questionnaire. Finally, the stationery and envelopes were those of the College of Liberal Arts. A copy of the letter is included in the study² and one can note that the letter was signed "graduate student." The envelopes used to return the questionnaires were addressed to this author, in care of an instructor in the Sociology Department.

Limitations of the Methodology

With the student group, the author made an attempt to rule out some of the general limitations of the questionnaire by suggesting that the students feel free to ask questions, thus giving himself the opportunity to do a bit of interpretation. In reality any meaningful

²See Appendix B

interpretation would have been impossible because of the time limits and the number of students. As previously pointed out, the students did not take advantage of the suggested questioning. With the parental group, the mailing prevented any additional interpretation or observation.

Background Characteristics of the Sample

The following information was obtained from the face sheet information of the questionnaires. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the study.

Of the twenty students included in the sample, there were fifteen women and five men. The mean age of the respondents was 20.95 years. However, this includes two women who are forty and thirty-nine, respectively. A significant decrease in the mean age occurs when one removes the ages of these two women. The mean age then becomes 18.89 years. With all respondents included, the median age is 18.50 years. All of the students listed their major occupation as college students with the exception of the two older women referred to above. Both of these women listed their major occupation as that of "housewife." The inference may be drawn that these two women are part-time students. However, this is impossible to validate. Again, with the exception of these two respondents, all of the students were single. The two married students have two and three children, respectively.

TABLE 1
FATHER'S OCCUPATION OF THE STUDENT RESPONDENTS

Business Men	Professional Men	Others
10	8	2

The occupation of the fathers of these students gives some indication of the type of environment in which they live. It would follow that one can gain some insight into the feelings, attitudes, and ideas that these families have towards different occupations and professions. Table 1 should assume increased significance when the images of the student group and the parent group are compared and contrasted. The category referred to as "Business Men" includes salesmen, factory owners, and business men who are self-employed. The category referred to as "Professional Men" includes physicians, dentists, teachers, professors, clergyman, and engineers. The two fathers in the final category are a printer and a non-professional welfare agent for a small community.

The final question of face sheet information had to do with the respondents' parents' highest level of education. In answer to this question ten students stated that their father had completed college, four stated that they had partially completed college, four stated that they had completed high school, and two replied that they had completed grade school.

An analysis of the parental group of returned questionnaires with reference to face sheet material results in the average age of the respondents being 51.67 years, with a range of 41 to 62. Of the ten

parents who returned the questionnaire, nine were men. All of the respondents were married, and all had at least one other child besides the one that took part in this study. Seventy per cent of the respondents categorized their spouse's major occupation as that of "housewife."

TABLE 2
MAJOR OCCUPATION OF THE PARENT RESPONDENTS

Business Men	Professional Men	Others
4	4	2

The categories in Table 2 include the same positions that were used in Table 1. Thus, the two respondents categorized as "Others" includes the lone female respondent, whose husband is a physician, and a non-professional welfare agent. The category referred to as "Professional Men" includes a physician, a lawyer, a dentist, and an optometrist. The category referred to as "Business Men" includes a salesman, a commercial farmer, a manufacturer's representative, and an accountant. In addition, five of the respondents stated that they had completed college, two stated that they had partially completed college, two stated that they had completed high school, and one stated that he had completed grade school.

Analysis of Data

Ranking of Ten Occupations by College Students and Parents

Before attempting to discuss the image of the social worker projected by the students or their parents, it is important to note the

comparative ranking given to social workers in the areas of actual prestige, ideal prestige, and the consideration they show for the needs and feelings of their parents. In so doing, one can gain a base or a frame of reference in relation to some of the attitudes and feelings towards all of the occupations being ranked. In turn, this provides a comparative perspective of the social worker and should serve to lend some meaningful indications as to the shape of the over-all image as projected by these two groups. The following tables will compare and contrast the rankings of the students and parents, and a discussion of the similarities and differences will follow each table.

TABLE 3

RANKINGS ON ACTUAL PRESTIGE BY COLLEGE STUDENTS AND PARENTS

College Students		Parents			
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean		
1.	Physician	1.60	1.	Physician	1.60
2.	Lawyer	2.55	2.	Clergyman	3.20
3.	Psychiatrist	3.10	3.	Psychiatrist	3.40
4.	Clergyman	3.95	4.	Lawyer	3.60
5.	Psychologist	5.15	5.	Psychologist	5.40
6.	Pub. Sch. Teacher	6.15	6.	Pub. Sch. Teacher	6.00
7.	Social Worker	7.00	7.	Nurse	6.50
8.	Nurse	7.40	8.	Social Worker	7.70
9.	Policeman	8.55	9.	Policeman	8.30
10.	Undertaker	9.55	10.	Undertaker	9.30

As can be seen from Table 3, the college students ranked social workers seventh while the parental group ranked social workers eighth. The college students ranked lawyers higher and clergymen lower than their parents did. However, the parents' mean rank of the clergyman, lawyer, and psychiatrist

was so close that only four tenths of a point separate second and fourth rank.

A similar study which was done in 1960 utilized the same ranking question on actual prestige that was used in this study.³ The question was administered to a group of practicing social workers and a group of business students in the Evening College of Boston University. Both the practicing social workers and the business students ranked social workers eighth in this area of actual prestige.⁴ In addition, the over-all ranking of the ten occupations in terms of actual prestige by social workers and business students was very similar to the manner in which these occupations were ranked by college students and parents.⁵ Finally, the ranking of college students and parents is similar to that found in Polansky's study, where physician, lawyer, and teacher were among the five occupations ranked ahead of social work.⁶

While the question with reference to actual prestige, or what is, was quite important in gaining some indication of the position of the social worker as compared to the other occupations, the same ranking question in terms of ideal prestige was even more important. Herein, the respondents were asked to put aside what actually was, and rank the occupation as they felt they should be ranked. Thus, it is possible that the ranking in this area might reflect the value that each respondent attaches

³Berry, et al., op. cit., p. 51.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Norman Polansky, "Social Workers in Society, Results of a Sampling Study," Social Work Journal, vol. 34 (April, 1953), p. 78.

to each of the occupations being ranked. In reference to the image of the social worker, this ranking question seems to serve as a vivid illustration of the importance of the social worker as compared to the other occupations. Thus, I suspect that a respondent who chose to rank the social worker fairly high on this question and increase the prestige which the social worker should have would also project a favorable image of social work on the ensuing questions. Naturally, this would also work in reverse.

TABLE 4

RANKINGS ON IDEAL PRESTIGE BY COLLEGE STUDENTS AND PARENTS

College Students		Parents	
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
1. Physician	1.85	1. Physician	2.00
2. Lawyer	3.55	2. Psychiatrist	2.90
3. Psychiatrist	3.55	3. Clergyman	4.20
4. Clergyman	4.75	4. Lawyer	4.80
5. Teacher	4.95	5. Teacher	4.90
6. Psychologist	5.05	6. Psychologist	5.40
7. Social Worker	6.35	7. Nurse	7.00
8. Nurse	7.15	8. Social Worker	7.00
9. Policeman	8.15	9. Policeman	7.60
10. Undertaker	9.65	10. Undertaker	9.20

Initially, it is important to point out that the students ranking of the lawyer and the psychiatrist in Table 4 was an exact tie. Thus, while I chose to call lawyer rank 2 and psychiatrist rank 3, there is no difference. The same thing occurs in the ranking of nurse and social worker by the parental group. Here, we have an exact tie for seventh position.

When one studies the mean ranks accorded the various occupations by both groups, the striking factor is the similarity of the rankings. There is not one case where the mean rank of any of the occupations possesses a great degree of difference when compared to the ranking of the same occupation by the other group.

It is interesting to compare the results of the ranking question on ideal prestige in this study to the results obtained in the study done a year ago where the same question was administered to social workers and evening business students. The most important difference is in the ranking of the social worker. In terms of ideal prestige, social workers ranked themselves fifth with a mean rank of 4.75. Business students ranked social workers sixth with a mean rank of 6.13. Both groups ranked physician, clergyman, psychiatrist, and public school teacher in front of the social worker.⁷

Table 4 reveals that the college students ranked social workers seventh with a mean rank of 6.35 in the area of ideal prestige. Their parents gave social workers a tie for seventh position with nurses and accorded them a mean rank of 7.00. Thus, neither the college students nor their parents ranked the social worker as high as the social workers ranked themselves. As a matter of fact, business students ranked the social worker higher than the college students or their parents. Both of these comparisons hold true in terms of actual rank and mean rank.

It is of equal importance to compare the manner in which the college students and parents ranked the various occupations in terms of actual and ideal prestige. The college students ranked the social worker seventh in both areas. However, there was a slight difference in the

⁷Coetta Lou Berry, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

mean rank (7.00 for actual prestige as compared to 6.35 for ideal prestige). Their parents ranked the social worker eighth on actual prestige with a mean rank of 7.70. For ideal prestige, they moved the social worker into a tie for seventh position with a mean rank of 7.00. Thus, neither group indicated a marked desire to increase the relatively low position of the social worker. The author feels that this will become a significant factor in the over-all image projected by these two groups. This concludes the discussion of the two questions dealing with prestige.

The final ranking question deals with the consideration of needs and feelings that the various occupations have for the people they serve. While neither the students nor their parents indicated any marked desire to change the prestige of the social worker, it will be interesting to note the impressions of these two groups with reference to the respect that the social worker has for his clients as compared to the respect that the other occupations have for the people they serve.

TABLE 5

RANKINGS ON CONSIDERATION FOR NEEDS AND FEELINGS
BY COLLEGE STUDENTS AND PARENTS

College Students		Parents	
Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
1. Physician	3.00	1. Clergyman	3.60
2. Clergyman	3.00	2. Physician	3.90
3. Social Worker	3.85	3. Nurse	4.00
4. Pub. Sch. Teacher	4.10	4. Psychiatrist	4.30
5. Nurse	4.80	5. Pub. Sch. Teacher	4.80
6. Psychiatrist	5.65	6. Social Worker	5.10
7. Psychologist	6.85	7. Psychologist	6.10
8. Lawyer	7.25	8. Policeman	7.20
9. Policeman	7.55	9. Lawyer	7.40
10. Undertaker	8.75	10. Undertaker	8.60

In this area, we find the rating of the social worker is considerably enhanced. The college students rank the social worker third with a mean rank of 3.85. Only the physician and the clergyman are ranked higher than the social worker, and the difference between these two and the social worker is less than one full point in terms of mean rank. While the parental groups did not promote the social worker's ranking to the degree that the students did, they increased the mean rank accorded to the social worker by over two full points. In addition, less than one point separated the sixth ranked social worker from the fourth ranked psychiatrist.

As was done in the areas of actual and ideal prestige, it is interesting to compare these rankings with the manner in which social workers and business students completed this task. Social workers ranked themselves first in the consideration shown for needs and feelings of those helped with a mean rank of 2.32. Business students ranked social workers fourth with a mean rank of 4.65, and they ranked clergyman, physician, and nurse ahead of the social worker.⁸

There are other interesting things about the way in which the college students and parents completed this question. The students ranked both psychiatrist and lawyer much lower on this question than on either of the questions involving prestige. Parents did the same but their downgrading of the lawyer was more vivid than their downgrading of the psychiatrist. To further illustrate this point let us look at the comparative rankings of the lawyer and the social worker on Table 4 and Table 5.

⁸
Ibid. p. 56.

On Table 4 (ideal prestige), students ranked the lawyer second and the social worker seventh. Parents ranked the lawyer fourth and the social worker eighth. On Table 5 (consideration for needs and feelings), students ranked the social worker third and the lawyer eighth, while parents ranked the social worker sixth and the lawyer ninth. This presents an interesting issue.

It appears rather confusing that a group would assign a positive value (high consideration for needs and feelings of those helped) to the social worker and refuse to raise his prestige if they had the power to do so (rank on ideal prestige). It is possible that the question on ideal prestige was misunderstood. The other possibility is that consideration for needs and feelings of those helped is not an important enough factor, in itself, to effect any change in prestige. The other elements which contribute to the over-all image of the social worker will be gleaned from an analysis of the remaining aspects of the questionnaire. Perhaps they will serve to provide a partial answer to the above noted issue.

Job Description

Following the ranking questions, both groups were asked to take social work as an example of the ten occupations and write what they think a social worker does. Here, by asking for a job description, we felt that many inaccuracies would be brought to the fore. Hopefully, social work will be able to use many of the isolated inaccurate factors in an attempt to project a more accurate image.

TABLE 6

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONSES AS TO WHAT A SOCIAL WORKER DOES
BY COLLEGE STUDENTS AND PARENTS

College Students			Parents		
Social- Emotional	Physical- Practical	Mixed	Social- Emotional	Physical- Practical	Mixed
6	2	12	4	4	2

Initially, it is important to provide some examples of what have been categorized as "Social-Emotional," "Physical-Practical," and "Mixed." Taking the college students first, the following are examples of the three categories:

"Social-Emotional"

Social work involves helping people who have not been successful at conforming to society, live in society. Direct contact is necessary. Work is with the poor generally, and in slum areas. Another field of social work is in mental hospitals.

"Physical-Practical"

A social worker does many things, helps the poor and needy with funds and education. This aid is extended to those who want it and need it.

"Mixed"

To assist the general public psychologically and physically is the job of the social worker. They give special help to poor families, families with sick members, disabled persons, broken homes, and minority groups.

Next, examples of the parents' responses:

"Social-Emotional"

The social worker makes a case study of a particular individual or family and attempts to help the person or family adjust to its environment and eliminate the major disturbing problem so as to be able to carry on under his, her, or their own efforts.

"Physical-Practical"

Evaluation of needs of individuals and families in fields of basic needs (food, shelter, heat, finances, health, and education) and the methods for obtaining same. Too often the solution seems to be "how can society supply the needs" and not "how can these people be fitted to serve society so that they supply their own needs".

"Mixed"

The social worker takes into consideration the social, spiritual, and economic conditions, of those who seek or need help. He determines the type of help required, and determines the area in which the most adequate advice or assistance may be rendered without compromising the individual's honor and dignity.

While realizing that the above categories are not all inclusive or foolproof, I do think that they are useful in providing an interesting comparison between the students and parents. The significance stems from the fact that 40% of the parents indicated that the prime responsibility of the social worker is in the Physical Practical area. Only 10% of the students shared this view. This seems to signify that many more parents retain the outdated image of the social worker as "the snoopy welfare investigator," or "the little old lady bringing food to the poor on Thanksgiving or Christmas" than do the students.

There are other interesting areas which arise with reference to the manner in which the respondents replied to this question. Many of the same results found in response to the earlier study's question to evening business students in this area seem to be substantiated.⁹ For example, there were an overwhelming number of references to "poor," "needy," "destitute," "down and out," "and low class people". In addition, there seemed to be

⁹Ibid. pp. 30-37.

a great deal of confusion as to whether social work was entitled to call itself a profession. Many of the responses, implicitly or explicitly, denied social work its own identity, and termed all "do gooders" as social workers. Finally, there were very few in both groups who seemed cognizant of the fact that graduate training is part of the expected education of the social worker.

To generalize a bit further, there seemed to exist a great deal of confusion with reference to this thing called social work. As was expected, many of the respondents referred to their own experience or shared experience in describing what the social worker does. Rarely did a respondent even imply that he was familiar with more than one method of social work. As a matter of fact, there were few direct references to any of the social work methods by name (i.e., casework, group work, or community organization). Thus, among the college students as well as their parents there seemed to be a widespread lack of knowledge and a great deal of confusion about social work.

Other Aspects of the Image of the Social Worker

The next two questions dealt with whether or not the respondents had gone, or would go, to a social worker for help. The second question was followed by a "why or why not." The results are as follows:

- COLLEGE STUDENTS:
1. Three stated that they or members of their families had gone to social workers for help. Seventeen stated they had not gone.
 2. Fifteen stated that they would go to a social worker for help. Five stated that they would not go to a social worker for help.

- THEIR PARENTS:
1. One stated that he or a member of his family had gone to a social worker.
 - Nine stated they had not.
 2. Seven stated that they would go to a social worker for help.
 - Three stated that they would not go.

Thus, only 15% of the students and 10% of the parents had had direct contact with a social worker in the role of a client. However, 75% of the students and 70% of their parents stated that they would go to a social worker for help. One of the respondents, a parent who happens to be a lawyer stated that he would not go to a social worker for help because: "it would be unnecessary in light of my training." A student who stated that he would not go said, "I would rather try to help myself than depend on someone else."

The next set of questions had to do with whether the respondents had referred or would refer someone to a social worker for help. The results are as follows:

- College Students:
1. Four said that they had made a referral.
 - Sixteen said they had not.
 2. Fifteen said that they would make a referral.
 - Five said they would not.
- Their Parents:
1. Four said that they had made a referral.
 - Six said they had not.
 2. Nine said that they would make a referral.
 - One said he would not.

In this instance 75% of the students and 90% of the parents stated that they would make a referral. Much of the rationale for making or not making a referral to a social worker was similar to the examples cited above.

In an attempt to follow through on where the image of the social worker comes from, the next two questions asked if the respondents have any personal friends or close relatives who are social workers, and then asked how else they have learned about social work. In response to the first question, the responses are as follows:

College Students: Seven did have personal friends or close relatives who were social workers.
Thirteen did not.

Parents: Five did have personal friends or close relatives who were social workers.
Five did not.

Thus, 35% of the students and 50% of the parents had close friends or personal relatives who were social workers. It is important to restate that the results of an earlier question indicated that 15% of the students and 10% of the parents had come in contact with a social worker in the role of client. Thus, allowing for duplication, and assuming that all close friends or relatives were actually social workers, 50% of the students and 60% of their parents came into direct contact with a social worker. This leaves a considerable number in both groups who must have received their image from ways other than direct contact. The next question will provide some of the answers.

Parents responses are as follows:

- newspaper and magazine
- listening to discussion
- speaking with clients
- literature
- United Fund pamphlets
- *experience

Students said:

- observation
- Sociology courses
- part-time work in Agency
- newspaper
- school
- nursing courses
- career conferences
- movies
- *by being one

The starred responses are indicative of some of the results of the question on job description. If an undergraduate student could be a social worker, or think he was, I wonder if he has any idea of the necessary graduate training. The same can be said for the parent who replied in this manner. The other previous mentioned factor is whether these people see social work as a profession unto itself. From these two replies, it is safe to say that these two do not.

In our final question, we asked for a brief description of the personality traits of a social worker. Some examples from the parental group are as follows:

One who tries to and believes he or she can help and knows the problem of the case study.

An idealist to whom salary is of secondary importance. Their primary aim being that of helping people, i.e. humanity in some way.

Patient, selfless, type.

He is one who is sympathetic to the needs of the less fortunate members of society and does what he can to bring relief.

A dedicated person.

The following are student responses:

A person generally interested in his neighbor and in helping him.

A social worker must be a kind, compassionate, and patient person who is able to see clearly into a poor situation.

Having met only one, I cannot really say. However, she struck me as a kind and intelligent woman whose effectiveness was hampered by her circumscribed social contacts.

Extroverts, intelligent, sympathetic, like people.

In my opinion, he is someone who must be intelligent as well as congenial, tactful, and firm. He is in a position which requires much individual decision and he must be able to meet these requirements.

Psychologically oriented. Aware of the individual in society. Behavior would seem to be more erratic than is normal.

A social worker is willing to satisfy himself rather than achieve personal glory.

Many of the same aspects come through from both groups on this question as from the question on job description.

Summary and Conclusions

The results obtained from college students and parents certainly seem to substantiate the following which is drawn from the study done last year.

In conclusion, therefore, we ought to say that the business students hold a stereotyped and somewhat uninformed view of the social work field, which is perhaps an indication of the image of the social worker which is held by the public at large.¹⁰

The fact that the general conclusion drawn from the two groups studied in this chapter is in full agreement with the above would seem to indicate that a large portion of the general public does, indeed, have a very stereotyped and uninformed view of the social worker.

¹⁰

Ibid. p. 45.

Neither group indicated any marked desire to raise the prestige of the social worker assuming that they had the opportunity to do so. However, the students ranked the social worker relatively high in terms of consideration for needs and feelings. This may be an indication of some change in attitude as the parents ranked the social worker lower on this question than did the students. If this is the case, the profession of social work must do everything in its power to build on this strength and further attempt to correct some of the inaccuracies of the stereotyped image.

The majority of the stereotypes were indicated in the responses to the questions on job description and personality traits of the social worker. In addition, there was a great deal of confusion and uncertainty about social work, in general. Thus, it appears that the profession of social work has a large job in front of it in attempting to find and utilize many techniques which can be used to correct some of the inaccuracies which still appear to be prevalent in the public image of the social worker.

CHAPTER V

AN UPPER CLASS GROUP'S IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER*

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Because we believed that the image of the social worker varied among different classes, as well as professional groups, we were interested in exploring the attitudes of the upper class towards the social worker's role, function, and values. A major concern here was whether or not understanding of social work was greater if an individual belonged to the upper class. Since many in this sample donated money and services to social agencies we wished to know if their image of the profession was accurate. Another area of concern was in determining if the sample saw the profession as being either casework or group work oriented.

Methodology

Based on Hollingshead's criteria of class, which included residence, occupation, and education, an upper class sample was selected of individuals using a local Jewish Community Center.¹ With the help of the agency's administrators, a list of people who were Board members or who used the agency's nursery school or day camp was compiled. A cover letter, explaining that the Center was cooperating with Boston University on a study and asking their help if contacted, was mailed to 60 people. From this group, 15 people were randomly selected for interviewing; there

*by Baila Goldstein

¹August B. Hollingshead and Frederic C. Redlich, Social Class and Mental Illness, pp. 387-397.

were 7 Board members and 8 individuals who used the nursery school or day camp.

This letter proved to be extremely helpful as the interviewer was frequently told that an interview would not have been granted if the study was not associated with an agency known to the individual. Thirteen participants were interviewed in their homes and 2 in their places of business.

Interviewing technique was chosen rather than a questionnaire, because of its "open-ended" nature. It was advantageous in that questions could be clarified and feeling tones obtained. Furthermore, when asked, many respondents indicated that they would not have returned a mailed questionnaire. The main disadvantage, however, was that 5 individuals, after asking what field the interviewer was studying, may have been reluctant to relate their true feelings about social workers to an interviewer who was herself a social worker. For the most part though, it was believed that answers were quite honest and respondents were very cooperative, trying to be as accurate as they could.

For this sample, the four page questionnaire was divided into two parts. The respondents wrote answers on the first two pages and answered the interviewer's questions on the last two.

Background Characteristics of Respondents

Of the 15 people interviewed, there were 14 women and 1 man. This was due to the fact that the women were at home and had more time available for an interview than their husbands. Everyone belonged to the Jewish faith and can be considered to be upperclass within Jewish

society. Eleven respondents lived in large, expensive homes in exclusive residential sections of Greater Boston; two lived in smaller, but expensive homes, and the remaining 2 occupied large apartments. These types of homes are similar to those of the upper class which Hollingshead described in the "Index of Social Position."²

In occupation the group can be broken down as follows: nine were housewives, five were employed full time, and one worked only part time. Median years at this occupation was 16.5. Thirteen of the spouses were employed in business; eleven were in executive positions and two were owners of companies. Two spouses were doctors. Of the sample, six of the respondents' fathers were business owners, seven held executive positions, and two were doctors.

In educational background, five of the group had completed graduate school, four had finished college, and five had acquired some college training. Only one person's highest level of education was high school. However, among their fathers, three had completed graduate school, two had finished college, while six had attended school through high school. Only four had received grade school training alone. Thus we see that the sample had received more education than their fathers.

All of the group were married and the mean number of children was 2.5. Mean age of respondents was 41.5, the youngest being 31 and the oldest 58.

²Ibid.

The Image of the Social Worker

A Comparison of Occupational Rankings

In determining the public image of the social worker, we were concerned about how the upper class would rank this profession in relation to other professions. Respondents were asked to rank ten professions in terms of the general prestige they felt each had within our society, the general prestige they felt that each should have within our society, and the consideration for the needs and feelings each showed to those they served. The ten professions were lawyer, clergyman, nurse, physician, policeman, psychiatrist, psychologist, public school teacher, social worker, and undertaker.

These questions proved to be difficult for some respondents. One woman stated that it was impossible for her to rank them from 1 to 10 because they were so similar. Another woman commented that if she had to rank these same professions on another day her answers would probably be different. With this upper-class group, the ranking was the question most resisted. One woman, who found it impossible to rank in the directed manner, preferred to group her answers into two prestige groups. When determining the mean in this case, the higher placed groups were valued at 4.50 and the lower placed ones at 4.25.

Rankings on Actual Prestige

As Table 1 illustrates, the upper class considered physicians to have the highest prestige, while undertakers were rated at the bottom of the scale. These findings were similar to rankings by social workers

and business students as seen in the Berry study.³ Likewise, Hyman found that the upper class gave high prestige to the professions but ranked the undertaker very low.⁴ Again, the results of Grunes and Polansky are similar to ours.^{5,6}

Social workers were placed in the seventh position, higher only than nurses, policemen, and undertakers.

There is a small difference here between this and the previous study in which social workers ranked themselves eighth in actual prestige, higher only than policemen and undertakers.⁷

TABLE 1

RANKINGS ON ACTUAL PRESTIGE BY AN UPPER CLASS GROUP

Rank		Mean
1.	Physician	1.46
2.	Clergyman	3.20
3.	Psychiatrist	3.93
4.	Lawyer	4.00
5.	Psychologist	5.20
6.	School Teacher	5.26
7.	Social Worker	7.20
8.	Nurse	7.53
9.	Policeman	8.66
10.	Undertaker	9.47

³Berry, et al., "A Study of the Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers," p. 51.

⁴Herbert H. Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes," in Social Perspectives on Behavior, p. 329.

⁵Willa F. Grunes, "Looking at Occupations," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 54 No. 1 (January, 1957), pp. 86-92.

⁶Norman Polansky, et al., "Social Workers in Society," Social Work Journal, Vol. 34 No. 2 (April, 1953), pp. 74-80.

⁷Berry, et al., op. cit., p. 51.

Kadushin's statement that social work ranks low among professions but favorably among the traditional women's professions such as teaching and nursing is true in this study.⁸ We see that "professional status also seems to be affected by the prestige of the persons for whom a service is rendered."⁹

The physician was clearly separated from the other professions as indicated by their high mean of 1.46, compared to the mean of the clergyman, 3.20. Fauman stated that "the prestige of education is a function of the historical experience of Jewish life."¹⁰ We also note that "within the professional category there is a distinct hierarchy of prestige," where a "doctor" rates higher by Jews than does a person with a PhD. or a lawyer.¹¹ It was also reported that to Jews, the three main criteria of status are: 1, learning, 2, family status, and 3, money.¹² Therefore, we can conclude that this Jewish upper-class sample ranked the physician high because of the prestige they associate with his extensive education. Conversely, they ranked social workers low because they do not consider them to be a well-educated group, as is illustrated by one respondent's comment, "anyone who likes to work with people can be a social worker."

⁸ Alfred Kadushin, "Prestige of Social Workers," Social Work Journal, Vol. 3 No. 2 (April, 1958), p. 40.

⁹ Joseph W. Eaton, "Whence and Whither Social Work?," Social Work Journal, Vol. 1 No. 1 (January, 1956), p. 19.

¹⁰ Joseph S. Fauman, "Occupational Selection Among Detroit Jews," in The Jews, p. 135.

¹¹ Mark Zborowski, "The Place of Book Learning in Traditional Jewish Culture," in Childhood in Contemporary Cultures, p. 140.

¹² Ibid., p. 120.

It was noted that school teachers with a mean of 5.26 ranked much higher than social workers, whose mean was 7.20, although they were only one rank apart. This could be based on the sample's greater familiarity with teachers as they have had contact with them through their children.

There appears to be a distinct grouping of the first 4 professions, physician, clergyman, psychiatrist, and lawyer, that is separated from the remaining list. The lawyer's position could be due to the fact that 13 spouses of the respondents were employed in business and thus would have contact with lawyers. However, all in the sample have had some contact with social workers through the Community Center but they may not think of them as such.

Rankings on Ideal Prestige

In Table 2 when the upper class ranked the 10 professions on the general prestige they felt each should have within our society, physician and clergyman still occupied the first and second positions while the policeman and undertaker remained at the bottom. Although the social worker was ranked seventh, as in the previous table, it is interesting to note that the public school teacher was moved up to the third rank. In this ranking there is not as much separation of professions, indicating that the upper class was not too secure in their ranking choices.

TABLE 2
RANKINGS ON IDEAL PRESTIGE BY AN UPPER CLASS GROUP

Rank		Mean
1.	Physician	1.68
2.	Clergyman	2.68
3.	School Teacher	3.75
4.	Psychiatrist	4.41
5.	Lawyer	4.88
6.	Psychologist	5.28
7.	Social Worker	6.08
8.	Nurse	7.68
9.	Policeman	8.36
10.	Undertaker	9.30

As in Table 1, Table 2 leads us to believe that although this upper-class sample has some contact with social workers, they do not think that their prestige within society should be increased or that they are aware of the social worker's function. Social work seems to be a "minor, if not a marginal profession."¹³

Rankings on Consideration for Needs and Feelings

In ranking the 10 professions according to the consideration for the needs and feelings they showed to those they served, the upper class, as seen in Table 3, placed social workers in the fifth position, higher than the psychologist, nurse, lawyer, policeman, and undertaker. It would appear that even if they were not clear as to what a social worker does, this profession was still associated with helping or giving and thus ranked high. Yet the results of this ranking as compared to social

¹³Kadushin, op. cit., p. 40.

worker's ranking of themselves in this area are quite different. Social workers placed themselves first, above all 10 professions.¹⁴

TABLE 3
RANKINGS ON CONSIDERATION FOR NEEDS AND FEELINGS
BY AN UPPER CLASS GROUP

Rank		Mean
1.	Physician	2.26
2.	Clergyman	2.53
3.	Psychiatrist	4.23
4.	Public School Teacher	4.53
5.	Social Worker	4.63
6.	Psychologist	5.73
7.	Nurse	6.20
8.	Lawyer	6.80
9.	Policeman	8.40
10.	Undertaker	9.53

The upper class was consistent in their ranking of the physician and clergyman but their close placement of the psychiatrist, social worker, and public school teacher indicates again that their ideas of the social worker's function are neither stable nor clear.

Although the upper class ranked the lawyer higher on both actual and ideal prestige, he was ranked eighth in the area of consideration for others. Furthermore, Table 3 illustrates that the upper class is similar in its ranking of the public school teacher's ideal prestige and consideration for others as this profession was ranked comparatively high in both these areas.

¹⁴Berry, et al., op. cit. p. 56.

We note that the physician and clergyman are ranked first and second respectively. However, this is a marked separation between clergyman (2.53) and psychiatrist (4.23) from which we could infer that the upper class is also not clear as to the extent that these professions show consideration. It would be of interest to know how many of the 15 people interviewed have had close contact with psychiatrists but unfortunately this question was not included in the questionnaire.

As in the previous tables, Table 3 indicates that the upper class was consistent in their ranking of the physician and clergyman, who are always placed first and second, and policeman and undertaker, who occupy the ninth and tenth positions. However, the sample was not consistent in rating the psychiatrist, public school teacher, social worker, psychologist, nurse and lawyer.

Job Description of the Social Worker

In order to arrive at a concrete public image of the social worker, respondents were asked to take social work as an example of the 10 professions mentioned in the ranking question and to tell what they thought a social worker did. Interviewing technique was extremely valuable here as replies could be explored to see exactly what was meant.

In discussing the job description of social work we must take into account the upper class's contact with the profession. Respondents were asked to state whether or not they had ever gone to a social worker or social agency for help. Here, we hoped to determine where they had received their information about social work.

Of the 15 people interviewed, 12 had never gone to a social worker

or social agency for help. Only 1 of the 3 who had requested help wanted direct service, and the remaining 2 were interested in securing help for a family member or in finding someone to whom this person could be referred, e.g. a psychiatrist.

Kind of help given

Responses to the kind of work a social worker did were grouped into 3 categories: 1, Social-emotional help included general remarks such as "helping people with problems," or "meeting people's needs". 2, Physical help referred to the social worker as providing a specific service such as "getting someone a job," or "giving money to people". 3, Mixed help included a combination of social-emotional and physical aid. Through this classification we were able to include all responses to the question.

Eleven people stated that the social worker offered social-emotional help while only four replied that help was of a mixed nature. It is noteworthy that no one described the job as purely physical. This could be explained by the upper class's general knowledge of the profession as well as their indirect experience with social workers.

Of the three people who had requested help, the two who did not want direct service spoke only of the social-emotional help given. These two responses of "the social worker helps meet human needs," and "she works on a team with psychiatrists, doctors, and teachers," indicated that although they had some contact with social workers they were still not clear as to the work being done. Because this was an interview situation we were able to ask specific questions about what the respondents thought a social worker did. There was much resistance in answering this

question and this may be indicative of the sample's lack of knowledge. They did see the social worker as offering some emotional help but only in a vague kind of way. The one person who had requested direct help from a social worker stated that the worker "responds to the needs of the client," helping families adopt children or providing recreational activities for people through clubs and Centers. Her reply was mixed and her experience with a social worker seems to have given her some concrete knowledge of what the profession does.

Of the twelve people who had never requested help, three described the job as offering mixed help. This content included remarks such as "she listens and helps people with their problems and can give financial aid if there is need," or "she works with people, as with children at a community center, and tries to help them". The nine replies in the social-emotional category ranged from "helping families as a whole," to "speaking to people and looking for causes of behavior".

Seven people saw the social worker as working with people in general. Two were quite insistent that the social worker's main job was referral, either to doctors or psychiatrists. Two others stated that social worker's were not psychiatrists, that they administered to a "semi-psychological need," which meant "emotional or more practical problems".

Thus, of the total sample, eleven people saw the social worker as giving some kind of social-emotional help while the remaining four saw this help as being of a mixed nature. However, although the upper class, on the whole, saw the social worker as offering social-emotional services to clients, it is obvious that they understood the work being done only in a general way.

An area that was completely left out of the description was that of social action. None of the respondents saw social workers as being active in this area and their statements were confined to the more popular role.

Five of the sample gave various settings in which they believed social workers operate. These settings included settlement houses, hospitals, community centers, welfare agencies and guidance clinics. However, none of these people were able to describe the job being done in specific terms.

Four people mentioned that there are different types of social work and these "types" included foster placement, adoption, and relief work. Social work, in these cases, was characterized by the setting in which it functions and there seemed to be no realization of the fact that the profession, being generic, adapts itself to the setting. Only two people stated that there are different types of social workers, referring to the medical and psychiatric workers.

Because of the group's association with the Community Center, it was pertinent to note whether or not this agency was considered to be social work orientated. Eight of the fifteen respondents stated that social workers are seen in community centers. One individual stated that she did not think of the Center as a social work agency but rather one with a recreational focus. Although the remaining six were asked if they saw social workers placed in community centers they did not mention this type of agency in their job description and one wonders just what they think the center is.

Only two people of the fifteen recognized the group worker as a

social worker. One woman stated that there were group workers but that "they were not real social workers". What is indicated here is that the public image of the social worker among the upper class is that of the caseworker and there is little awareness that group workers exist or are professionally trained. This finding implies that it is necessary for us to interpret the role of the group worker in a more understandable way than has been done.

Social work is considered to be a helping profession, yet only six of the sample used the word "help" in their description of the job being done. "Help" was mentioned only eight times. The comparison with the social worker's use of the word is startling for even though there were 66 respondents, the word was used 82 times.¹⁵ We can conclude that (1) the upper class may not be aware of the fact that helping is an aim or value of social work, or (2) that helping is assumed to be the social worker's job and therefore not mentioned.

A word needs to be said about the clients of social workers. Although this was not their prime focus, six people mentioned social workers as helping "the needy, destitute, or underprivileged". Seven of the group saw social work as being family centered, concentrating on helping with family problems. The remaining two believed that the clients were anyone who needed help. Thus we find some stereotyping of the people served by almost half of the sample, despite their high degree of education and sophistication.

Our results indicated that this upper class group considered social work to be a female profession, for fourteen of the fifteen

¹⁵Ibid. p. 31.

mentioned the word "she" when referring to the worker. This is in line with White's findings.¹⁶ It is interesting to note this, despite the fact that they all have had contact with male social workers at the Community Center.

Social work has a "learned character" and its technique can be communicated through education.¹⁷ None of the sample mentioned the fact that professional training was necessary to become a social worker. Only one person stated that the social worker's training and licensing differed from that of a psychiatrist. As another put it, "anyone can do social work if she helps people". This omission is significant and it would appear that the group did not associate the social worker with having a professional education which would be needed for practice.

Contact with Social Workers

Because we were concerned with the source of the respondent's image of social workers we asked not only if they had gone to a social worker or social agency for help but where they had learned about the profession. Twelve of the sample had personal friends or close relatives who were social workers while two had not known any social workers in this capacity. Yet even with these associations they were not too sure of what a social worker did.

Besides personal contact with social workers respondents said that they had obtained information about them in the following ways:

¹⁶Clyde R. White, "Prestige of Social Work and the Social Worker," Social Work Journal, Vol. 36 No. 1 (January, 1955), p. 23.

¹⁷Abraham Flexner, "Is Social Work a Profession?," Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, Vol. 42, (1915) p. 579.

five had worked with social workers in organizational and volunteer projects, one had contact with workers at the Center, two had read about social workers, one had learned through advertising and the mass media, and another mentioned only general knowledge, remarking "I keep my eyes open." One respondent stated that she had been informed by her husband who was a doctor while another gave no source of contact.

Respondents were asked to state whether or not they would go to a social worker or social agency for help. Of the fifteen, nine said they would request this help and all qualified this by adding that they would ask for help if they felt they needed it. One person stated that if she could not afford other help, i.e. psychiatry, she would see a social worker. Another replied that there were others she would go to first, including a physician, lawyer, or clergyman. Although these people would seek aid from a social worker they were not able to specify the forms of assistance they would request. This is in line with their general lack of definite knowledge about the profession.

All of the six who would not go to a social worker for help explained that they would prefer to see a psychiatrist. This was qualified by their feelings that they could afford a psychiatrist while social workers dealt with poorer people. This attitude is illustrated by the following comments: "In our income bracket you see a psychiatrist," and "social work is concerned with families who can't afford professional people". Their attitudes correlate with Hollingshead and Redlich's finding that upper-class individuals "are treated exclusively by private practitioners or in private hospitals."¹⁸

¹⁸Hollingshead and Redlich, op. cit. p. 264.

Referral to Social Work

The public image of the social worker can be further seen in the sample's replies relating to referral. Seven stated that they had referred someone to a social worker or social agency for help while eight had not done so. However, fourteen said that they would refer others to a social worker if help was needed. The one person who would not refer explained that she did not know enough about this and would not have any idea about which agency would be appropriate.

These replies indicated that although six of the upper class would not seek the aid of a social worker they would refer others for help. However, only one person mentioned the kind of problem necessitating referral; "I would refer if a person has difficulties which interfere with his work". The sample was asked to be specific regarding the situations warranting referral and because they could not do so we can conclude that although they would refer people to social workers they would not really know under what circumstances a social worker would be helpful.

Personality Description of Social Workers

Respondents were asked to describe the personality traits of a social worker, telling what kind of person they thought a social worker was. Replies were categorized as being favorable, unfavorable, or mixed.

Of the three people who had gone to a social worker for help, one response was entirely favorable. To her, a social worker had "warmth, understanding, and a desire to help others". The two unfavorable statements were that social workers were "neutral and colorless" people, lacking "spice" in their personalities, and "loathe to express their opinions".

It was believed that they "try to force their values on others," and that this was more "subtle than direct manipulation".

In the answers of the remaining twelve, two were unfavorable and nine were favorable. One individual stated quite vehemently that the statement was "hogwash". She added that she thought that each profession was different and that practitioners all had different personality characteristics. Unfavorable comments described the social worker as being "narrow-minded and psychology-centered," unable to "see the layman's point of view". According to one person, "this (narrow-mindedness) gets worse with higher social work positions". Again, it was believed that social workers were very controlled and noncommittal people who "will not answer questions without delving into them".

The nine favorable replies described the social worker as being dedicated, nice, objective, having a feeling for others, patient, compassionate, possessing a sense of humor, intense, sincere, friendly, optimistic, good natured and sociable. Thus, ten of the fifteen replies were favorable and portrayed the ideal image of the social worker. However, accuracy can be questioned due to the sample's limited contact with social workers. Because the description was so ideal we wondered what it was based on and what it meant to the upper class.

Three of the group spoke of the social worker as being altruistic and not interested in making money, indicating that they were aware of the low salaries in the profession.

When asked if a particular picture came to mind when they thought of a social worker, none of the upper class offered anything in a stereotyped manner. In fact, one woman stated that modern social workers were

"not the kind that wear low heels and glasses". This may be due to the upper-classes' worldliness and contact, through friendship, with social workers.

Concluding Remarks

Although this upper-class sample was small, some trends in their image of the social worker are evident. To this group, social workers rank low in both actual and ideal prestige but are believed to show more consideration for the needs and feelings of those they serve than psychologists, nurses, lawyers, policemen, and undertakers. The majority of the group had not gone to a social worker for help and were unable to be specific about the types of social-emotional help that social workers give. Through the Community Center the group had contact with social workers but half of the respondents did not see this agency as being staffed by social workers or having a social work orientation. Despite their education, almost half of the upper class, in part, saw the social worker in a stereotyped manner as serving the needy or underprivileged. Their image of social work is general and does not seem to be based on much concrete knowledge.

For the most part, the image is favorable and the social worker is considered to have positive personality characteristics. The upper class saw social workers as being untrained and believed that anyone who liked people could be a social worker. Their image was of the female caseworker with little mention of the group worker. Almost half of the sample would not go to a social worker or social agency for help as they felt that they could afford more "professional" help.

We found that even though the upper class was well educated, their image of the social worker was only accurate in part and was still affected by stereotypes.

CHAPTER VI

A LOWER-CLASS GROUP'S IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER*

Introduction

Social work has traditionally been involved in efforts to improve the lot of the less privileged segment of society. Although the current trend in social work is towards extending its services to meet the needs of a wider range of the population, many programs are still geared towards and involved with low-income families. Even a recent study showed that (using the terminology of social class,) thirty-eight per cent of the clients accepted for casework services were ranked as upper-lower, and twenty-eight per cent were ranked as lower-lower.¹

A continuation of the same study went on to say that although there were no significant differences regarding class distribution in two agencies (a Psychiatric Clinic and a Family Service Agency), lower-class applicants were represented more than twice as often in the clinic and almost three times as often in the Family agency compared to their proportions in the city's population.²

If, then, the client of the social work Agency is frequently from this social stratum, it seems that this group's perception of the social worker would be relevant. Evaluation of the worker by the public

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¹Jules V. Coleman, "A Comparative Study of a Psychiatric Clinic and a Family Agency," Social Work, vol. 38 (January, 1957), p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 77

that knows him as consumers of his services, or as a close friend or relative of consumers of his services, is relevant because this group speaks from the vantage point of an expertness based on personal observation. In terms of social workers it may or may not be valid to state that "to know them is to love them". In later sections we shall attempt to show the relationship between the image of the social worker and personal contact with the profession.

Definitions of Social Class

The choice of the phrase "lower class" rather than "low income" to describe the sample in this chapter was purposeful, because the two designations are not synonymous. The concept of class includes as one of the most important determining factors in one's choice of a particular life style the amount of money earned annually. However, class is also determined by other, more subtle factors. The division of people into various classes is not a popular one in our society. In this paper class is used in a descriptive sense, not as a negative evaluation. It follows the axiom elaborated by Walter Miller that "to discriminate between is not to discriminate against".³

W. Lloyd Warner, in his monumental work, Social Class in America, based his system of social stratification on objective criteria such as kind of job, amount of education, type of residence, and extent of social interaction. He describes the two lower classes in the following way:

The upper-lower class, least differentiated from the adjacent levels and hardest to distinguish in the hierarchy, but clearly present, is composed of the 'poor but honest

³Walter B. Miller, "Implications of Urban Lower-Class Culture for Social Work," Social Work, vol. 50 (September, 1959), p. 222.

workers' who more often than not are only semi-skilled or unskilled.⁴

He sees them in general as being good people who have strong feelings about doing the right thing, of being respectable and rearing their children to do better than they have, coupled with the realistic limitations of their income.

Warner goes on to say:

The lower-lower class, referred to as 'Riverbrookers' or the 'low-down Yankees who live in the clam flats', have a 'bad reputation' among those who are socially above them. This evaluation includes belief that they are lazy, shiftless, and won't work, all opposites of the good middle-class virtues belonging to the essence of the Protestant ethic. They are thought to be improvident and unwilling or unable to save their money for a rainy day and, therefore, often dependent on the philanthropy of the private or public agency and on poor relief.⁵

These two groups are combined into Class V by August Hollingshead in his Social Class and Mental Illness. He uses as distinguishing factors such things as ecological area of residence, occupation, and education. His description recalls Warner as he says:

Class V is comprised of the unskilled workers who frequently have less than a grammar school education. Their work history is apt to be sporadic, for, because of certain characteristics apparently not related to lack of skill or intellectual endowment, they are found to be 'the last to be hired and the first to be laid off'.⁶

The characteristics of the lower socio-economic group have been described in detail because this is the frame of reference of the sample

⁴W. Lloyd Warner, Social Class in America, p. 14.

⁵Ibid., p. 15.

⁶August Hollingshead, Social Class and Mental Illness, p. 36.

chosen for this paper. While the Warner and Hollingshead studies are not strictly contemporary, it is the feeling of some professionals that their findings are still relevant in over-all social work planning. This is nicely summed up by Walter Miller as he says:

It is the thesis of this paper that there is a substantial segment of present-day American society whose way of life, values, and characteristic patterns of behavior are the product of a distinctive cultural tradition which may be termed 'lower class'. The size of this group is not decreasing; its most characteristic behavior patterns are not appreciably modified by rising income levels; its potential for upward social movement is substantially inhibited by a set of built-in cultural mechanisms which impede significant modification of class-related behavior patterns; the major outline of its cultural traditions, rather than becoming closer to that of the middle class, is becoming progressively more stabilized and distinctive.⁷

The Sample

The group selected as representative of the lower class was made up of fifteen residents who were chosen from within a low-rent public housing project. It was felt that in terms of income this group would fit the standard concept of lower class, since the maximum possible annual income of housing project tenants is set by law at \$3,600. One hundred dollars is allowed for each minor child, to a maximum of \$3,900. There is no minimum income stipulated. The interviewees were not questioned about finances, but many of them volunteered that they were on various kinds of pensions, or in other ways indicated their limited sources of income.

All of the individuals in this sampling fulfilled Hollingshead's criteria for lower class in terms of ecological area of residence. Their

⁷Miller, op. cit., p. 231.

occupations and educational levels also fell well within the Class V determinants. Of the fifteen, there were thirteen women and two men. Racially, ten were Caucasian and five were Negro. One had completed high school, three had completed grade school, six had attended high school, and five had only attended grade school. There was a wide range in age, from seventeen to eighty. The mean age was 50.5, the median was 49. The reason for this atypical sex and age distribution in the sampling is probably that the interviews were conducted during the afternoons of week days. For this reason the respondents are overweighted with housewives and retired people. In terms of marital status, nine were married and living with their spouses, one was legally separated, two were single, and three were widowed. Occupationally, six were retired, three were unemployed, one was a student in high school, and five were housewives whose husbands had such occupations as bar tender, bell hop, and fruit packer.

Methodology

The interviews were patterned along the lines of the questionnaire that was used to determine the image of the social worker among other groups. This enabled the interviewee to focus on social workers in terms of a job description, personality evaluation, rankings of consideration, actual and ideal prestige, and the extent of their present and potential involvement with the profession. As a means of determining whether or not personal contact played a part in the evaluation of social work, the fifteen respondents were divided into a client group of eight who had themselves been served by social agencies, and a non-client group of seven who had not had this experience. Some in this latter category were recipients of Old Age Assistance, but it was felt that if they did not recognize this as

contact with a social worker they belonged in the non-client group. All of the fifteen had friends or relatives who had gone to social agencies for help.

Analysis of Data

Job Description of the Social Worker

The job descriptions given by the respondents were not elaborately thought out, and consisted mainly of disconnected phrases. There were fifty-nine of these, which were classified individually as having to do with social-emotional help, physical-practical help, and "other". The social-emotional grouping referred to the therapeutic functioning of the social worker, and was expressed in such phrases as: "gives advice," - "helps you to be a better person," - "tries to help people adjust themselves," - "helps to see problems in a different light". There were fifteen of these replies in the client group, seven in the non-client group.

The physical-practical grouping included concrete services, expressed by the respondents in such phrases as: "money or food to tide you over until they investigate," - "get you a better job," - "arrange for nursing care". The client group distinguished eleven of these, as opposed to eight for the non-client group. Many of the answers fit neither category, but referred rather to routine actions or to social work settings. For example, responses put into the "other" category included: "bookkeeping," - "visits clients," - "looks up affairs," - "works in hospitals". The client group gave eleven answers to the non-client's seven of this type.

TABLE 1
 SPECIFIC COMMENTS CONCERNING JOB DESCRIPTION
 BY A LOWER CLASS GROUP

Client Group	Total	Non-Client Group	Total
Social-Emotional	15	Social-Emotional	7
Physical-Practical	11	Physical-Practical	8
Other	11	Other	7

The job descriptions were also classified according to the predominant tone of the answer. This was done on the basis of whether there were more social-emotional or physical-practical answers. A third category, "mixed", was introduced for responses that were evenly divided. In the client group five responses were predominantly social-emotional, only one was predominantly physical-practical, while two were evenly mixed. In the non-client group, three were social-emotional, which included a woman who had been employed as a domestic by a social agency's group home and was very much aware of the kinds of services offered to their clients. The other four were physical-practical. None were mixed.

TABLE 2
 JOB DESCRIPTIONS CLASSIFIED IN TERMS OF THEIR PREDOMINANT TONE
 BY A LOWER CLASS GROUP

Client Group	Total	Non-Client Group	Total
Social-Emotional	5	Social-Emotional	3
Physical-Practical	1	Physical-Practical	4
Mixed	2	Mixed	0

In general, the client group was more aware of the intangible aspects of the social worker's functioning. However, the group as a whole gave twenty-two of these responses in contrast to nineteen that dealt with concrete services. This is in striking contrast to the responses of business students who on a similar questionnaire isolated only nine social-emotional functions as compared with one hundred and forty-nine physical-practical services.⁸ The ratio of therapeutic to material responses compares favorably with the social workers' own evaluation of their work, which was seventy-nine social-emotional items and sixty-two physical-practical ones. This would indicate that despite the differential in education between the lower-class group and the business students, the former has a more realistic image of the social worker in terms of daily functioning.

None of the job descriptions of the individuals comprising the sample mentioned the need for formal training for social work. The word "help" was used relatively frequently considering the briefness of the replies to this question. It was specifically mentioned seven times by the seven members of the client group, and five times by the seven members of the non-client group. One of the clients had been unable to answer this question at all. The term "help" was used less frequently by the lower-class group as a whole (.85 mean) than it had been by the social workers (1.24) or the business students (1.47).⁹

⁸Coetta Lou Berry, Emma M. Dawson, Moragh Lesslie Shepherd, Sally Ann H Wood, "A Study of the Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers." This comparison should be taken with some doubt for no check of the reliability of the classifications was done in either instance.

⁹All subsequent references to the business students' image of the social worker or the social workers' self image are from the previously mentioned unpublished masters thesis by Berry, et al.

The client group made no specific reference to social work's involvement with the underprivileged, although they implied that this was the class reached through the kind of specific services (getting jobs, food,) that they mentioned. The non-client groups answers contained the same implications, and also specifically mentioned the word "poor" three times. The business students had used the term "investigate" twenty times, the social workers not at all. The client and the non-client group each used this word once, and gave this same ^{SENSE} since in other phrases such as "look up affairs", and "ask insulting questions".

It would seem that, as a whole, the lower-class group sees social work not in the context of professional preparation, but as a helping profession that includes both physical-practical and social-emotional services. The aura of work among the needy remains, as does something of the snooping and questioning aspects of giving aid.

Personality Traits of the Social Worker

Another attempt to elicit the image of the social worker was through a question about what kind of a person he is. There was a great deal of confusion about this question, and even after careful explanation it is probable that the responses were in terms of what the social worker should be, rather than what he is.

Among the client group, the positive replies included such words as "helpful" three times, "nice" twice, and "patient" twice. Such terms as "friendly", "intelligent", and "understanding" were used once each. The negative replies were partially phrased as "should be considerate" and "should not be condemning" which implied that in reality this was not the

case. Other negative descriptions among the client group was "stern" and "not interested in helping".

There were fewer favorable comments among the non-client group. These included the word "understanding" used twice, and "kind", "good disposition", and "helpful" used once each. The negative responses were also phrased in terms of "should". There were specific comments to the effect that social workers were "easily fooled", "in through pull", and "heartless". By concentrating on the predominant tone of each person's replies, they could be roughly categorized into favorable, unfavorable, and ambivalent images. The client group as a whole had a slightly more favorable view of the social worker as a person than did his non-client counterpart. There were four favorable answers to the non-client's three, one unfavorable to the non-clients' two, and two each that were ambivalent. One member of the client group was unable to answer the question.

TABLE 3

THE IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER AS SEEN IN HIS PERSONALITY TRAITS
BY A LOWER CLASS GROUP

Client Group	Total	Non-Client Group	Total
Favorable	4	Favorable	3
Unfavorable	1	Unfavorable	2
Ambivalent	2	Ambivalent	2

Involvement with Social Work

Another perspective on the image of the social worker is the extent of the group's present and potential involvement with social work. This was the purpose of a series of short answer questions concerned with whether one has gone to a social worker, would go to one, has referred someone to one, would refer someone to one, or has a personal friend who is a social worker. The last question in this series asked how, besides personal contact, the respondent had learned about social workers.

In answer to the first of the questions, as has been mentioned before, eight respondents had had personal contact with social workers as clients of social agencies. These included Public Welfare, the Massachusetts Memorial Hospital, Old Age Assistance, Lancaster Reformatory, Boston City Hospital, Family Service Society, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Several of those answering had had contact with more than one agency. For example, five mentioned Public Welfare. Of those who had not personally been clients of social agencies, two had had siblings who had been involved with Public Welfare, and three had had family members who had been helped by medical social workers. Of the other two, one had been employed by a social agency as a domestic servant, and the other had worked at the Hope Mission sporadically.

In the next question, of whether one would go to a social worker for help, all of the client group replied yes, and all but two of the non-client group answered yes. Of these two, one would turn first to others, such as her minister or doctor. The other would go to a social worker only "for the last straw on the face of the earth."

The question of whether or not one had referred anyone to a social

agency brought a positive reply from three of the eight in the client group, and one of the seven in the non-client group. In answer to whether they would refer anyone to a social agency, six of the client group, and four of the non-client group responded positively. Their answers to the "why or why not" part of this question contained such comments as "they would be helpful", "they helped us", "for their own good". The negative responses did not elaborate to any great extent, the prevailing feeling seemed to be that others, such as family members, should help. Social contact with social workers seemed to be minimal. Two respondents checked that they were personal friends of social workers.

The question as to how one knew about social workers was answered by the client group as "read about them," "other people", "through church", "sister wanted to be one". The non-client group, usually less explicit in their responses, gave more sources of outside information. These included "friend who became one when older", "worked in foster home", "Hope Mission", "Salvation Army", "hearsay", "books", "courses on family life".

In general, it would seem that the client group was more positively oriented towards social work. They were more likely to turn to social workers in times of difficulty, had recommended social work more frequently to their acquaintances, and would continue to do so. Possibly because of their close contact with the profession through other people, the non-client group was also social-work oriented in its thinking. For the most part they seemed to recognize it as being a potential source of help. These patterns of thinking and behaving on the part of both groups was primarily based on professional relationships with social workers, since only two reported a friendship relationship with a worker.

TABLE 4

PRESENT AND POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT WITH SOCIAL WORKERS
BY A LOWER CLASS GROUP

Client Group	Yes	No	Non-Client Group	Yes	No
Have gone to	8	0	Have gone to	0	7
Would go to	8	0	Would go to	5	2
Have referred to	3	5	Have referred to	1	6
Would refer to	6	2	Would refer to	4	3
Personal Friend	1	7	Personal Friend	1	6

Rating Social Work among Ten Professions

Another means of determining the image of the social worker was by rating them among ten professions in terms of actual prestige, ideal prestige, and consideration for the needs and feelings of those they serve. The resulting rankings were based on the responses of the sample as a whole, with some further refining of the data to distinguish between the client and the non-client group.

There were some interesting differences between the rankings of the lower-class group and those of social workers themselves. Social work, as a profession, was ranked higher by the sample than by the professionals involved in it. Teacher was rated much higher by the lower-class group, and psychologist considerably lower. It is possible that teacher and social worker represent professions that are better known to the individuals in this sample than psychologist. In the light of personal knowledge effecting the rankings, even in such an objective classification as actual prestige, it is interesting to note that the overall mean for social work was 5.13 for the lower class group. The

client segment ranked social work 4.75 as compared with 5.56 for the non-clients. It seems that actual contact with social workers tended to increase the respondents concept of their prestige. The business student had placed social work seventh among the ten professions with a mean of 7.71.

TABLE 5
COMPARATIVE RANKINGS ON ACTUAL PRESTIGE BY TWO GROUPS

Rank	Lower-Class Group	Mean	Rank	Social Workers	Mean
1.	Physician	2.46	1.	Physician	1.38
2.	Clergyman	4.46	2.	Clergyman	2.88
3.	Teacher	4.46	3.	Lawyer	3.15
4.	Lawyer	4.53	4.	Psychiatrist	3.26
5.	Psychiatrist	5.06	5.	Psychologist	5.64
6.	Social Worker	5.13	6.	Teacher	6.05
7.	Nurse	6.13	7.	Nurse	6.87
8.	Psychologist	6.80	8.	Social Worker	7.16
9.	Policeman	6.93	9.	Policeman	9.12
10.	Undertaker	8.86	10.	Undertaker	9.58

The differences in the rankings on ideal prestige between the sample and the social workers followed lines somewhat similar to those of the actual prestige groupings. Again the teacher was more highly rated by the lower-class group. There was a radical difference in the position assigned the psychiatrist and psychologist by the two classes of respondents. The social workers' appreciation of the skills and knowledge of the psychiatrist is reflected in their placing him a close third in ideal prestige. This is in marked contrast to the psychiatrist's seventh place in the eyes of the lower class. In the process of ranking

he was described variously as a "nut doctor" and "for those crazy people". The lower class seemed to connect these doctors with state hospitals rather than imagining them in private practice, and accorded them none of the respect they obviously felt for the undifferentiated "physician".

In ideal prestige, social work was ranked fourth by the lower-class group, as compared with fifth by the social workers themselves and sixth by the business students. There was a striking difference between the rankings of the client and non-client groups among the lower-class sample. The mean as a whole for social work was 4.53. For the client group, however, it was 3.50 as contrasted with 5.71 for the non-client group. This shows a significant difference in the subjective assignment of prestige between those who have an intimate concept of the workings of the profession and those who do not.

TABLE 6

COMPARATIVE RANKINGS ON IDEAL PRESTIGE BY TWO GROUPS

Rank	Lower-Class Group	Mean	Rank	Social Workers	Mean
1.	Physician	2.80	1.	Physician	2.28
2.	Teacher	3.66	2.	Minister	3.17
3.	Clergyman	4.00	3.	Psychiatrist	3.17
4.	Social Worker	4.53	4.	Teacher	4.35
5.	Lawyer	5.00	5.	Social Worker	4.75
6.	Nurse	5.86	6.	Lawyer	5.11
7.	Psychiatrist	6.13	7.	Psychologist	6.17
8.	Psychologist	6.80	8.	Nurse	7.21
9.	Policeman	6.86	9.	Policeman	8.83
10.	Undertaker	9.33	10.	Undertaker	9.77

In differentiating among the professions according to consideration for the needs and feelings of those they serve, there were many

differences between the rankings of the lower-class group and those of the social workers. Again, the greatest variation was in the position allocated to the psychiatrist, which differed from second in the eyes of the social workers to sixth according to the lower-class group.

This was the only classification in which the social workers placed themselves in a higher position than that assigned to them by the lower class sampling. This was their placing themselves first as compared with third in the opinion of the lower class. It is interesting that the mean of the social worker's ranking of themselves, 2.32, is very close to the ranking of them by the client group, 2.62, in the same category. Social work received a mean of 4.65 by the business students, which is close to the non-client's estimation of them at 4.28. It is important that those in the best position to judge this particular factor, how they as clients had been treated by social workers, should agree so closely with the worker's own estimation of their efforts to be considerate. It is indicative that even though they have close relationships with those who have been helped by social agencies, the non-client group agreed very closely with business students who probably lacked their proximity to the workings of the profession. It seems that the different^{GE} in attitude depends on direct contact, and does not extend even to close relatives of those helped.

TABLE 7

COMPARATIVE RANKINGS ON CONSIDERATION FOR NEEDS AND FEELINGS BY TWO GROUPS

Rank	Lower Class Group	Mean	Rank	Social Workers	Mean
1.	Clergyman	1.93	1.	Social Worker	2.32
2.	Physician	3.06	2.	Psychiatrist	2.83
3.	Social Worker	3.40	3.	Minister	3.26
4.	Teacher	4.66	4.	Physician	4.23
5.	Nurse	5.66	5.	Nurse	5.17
6.	Psychiatrist	6.00	6.	Teacher	5.51
7.	Lawyer	6.20	7.	Psychologist	5.74
8.	Psychologist	7.00	8.	Lawyer	7.87
9.	Policeman	7.06	9.	Undertaker	9.03
10.	Undertaker	10.00	10.	Policeman	9.12

Summary and Conclusions

It is difficult to isolate the particular factors that account for the lower class group's rating social work higher than the social workers rate themselves. Alfred Kadushin, in an article on social work prestige,¹⁰ stated that women tended to rate social work higher than men. This might affect the rankings, since there was a preponderance of women in this sample. The Negro respondent also tended to rank social work higher, and one-third of the respondents were Negro. The middle-class ascribed social work higher status than did the lower class. This is interesting in view of the trend towards assigning social work high status in this sample.

Kadushin did make the statement that social work ranked high in occupational status, but low in professional status. This might in part explain the lower class attitude towards it, since these people might tend

¹⁰ Alfred Kadushin, "Prestige of Social Work, Facts and Factors," Social Work, vol. 3 (April, 1958) p. 40.

to think in terms of occupation rather than profession. His main point, that social work prestige is adversely effected because it serves the least prestigious members of society, has interesting implications for the results of this study. Social work prestige is not affected by this factor among this group because they are the ones served. They do not seem to think of themselves as the "poor", "needy", or "down and out", as evidenced by the fact that these terms were not used by any of the client group, and only one member (and that the one with the least personal contact) of the non-client group. It is perhaps in reflection of the thought that "helping us is an important and worthwhile task" that leads the group served to consider the social worker an important and worthwhile figure.

The stereotype of the social worker is vividly described by Erma T. Meyerson as: "Unattractive, or at best plain, middle-aged, nosy, and officious do-gooder with her head in the clouds and her hand in the public purse".¹¹ This public image of the social worker in no way resembles that of the lower class group interviewed for this study. Rather, most of the persons responding gave a picture of a worker who was idealistic, hard working, anxious and able to be of help.

In an attempt to categorize each interview into one of three classifications, predominantly positive, predominantly negative, or ambivalent, a ranking system was set up. This was a special scrutiny of the five major areas covered in each interview, with responses judged according to rankings of social work as a profession, feeling tone of

¹¹Erma T. Meyerson, "The Social Work Image or Self Image?" Social Work, vol. 4, (July, 1959) p. 67.

the job description, answers to the short questions on whether one would go to a social worker, and whether one would refer anyone to a social worker, and the feeling tone of the answer concerning the personality traits. Responses could then be judged as having any number of positive points from zero to five. Three positive points were termed ambivalent, those above were considered predominantly positive, while those below were considered predominantly negative.

The overall responses followed the pattern previously established as the individual answers were tabulated. The client group had a larger number of predominantly positive answers than did the non-client group, the ratio being five to three. There were an equal number of ambivalent feelings, two each. The predominantly negative answers were found in the client group in one instance, and two in the non-client group. Thus, though the opinion of the sample was generally favorable towards social work and social workers, this was found in greater percentages among those who had themselves been clients of social agencies than among those who learned about social work in a less direct manner.

TABLE 8

THE OVERALL IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER BY A LOWER CLASS GROUP .

Client Group	Total	Non-Client Group	Total
Predominantly Positive	5	Predominantly Positive	3
Ambivalent	2	Ambivalent	2
Predominantly Negative	1	Predominantly Negative	2

This sampling indicates that there is a positive attitude towards social work among the lower class group. The conditions under which this

information was obtained were hardly ideal, since every one of the respondents experienced some difficulty with the complicated and somewhat ambiguous questions. The sample itself was chosen by randomly knocking at doors, and in each case represented some degree of interruption of the person's mid-day tasks. All but one of the people approached in the Negro section of the housing project agreed to be interviewed. In the section occupied by white families about four out of five refused to speak to the interviewer. The results of the sample might have been different if all of those approached had agreed to become participants. However, the interviewer presented herself simply as a graduate student and did not mention her affiliation with the school of social work. The project was described as an attempt to "find out how people feel about different professions". Therefore, refusal to be interviewed cannot be directly connected with negative attitudes towards social work because the material to be covered was not initially apparent. But those who did agree to be interviewed seemed anxious to cooperate to the best of their ability. Certainly descriptions of jobs and personality traits do not come easily to non-verbal individuals. Their responses did seem to be a fair indication of their feelings about the subjects discussed.

Several important facts and trends come to light as a result of this sampling. The first is the extent of the involvement of this group with social work, either as clients or as persons in close contact with clients. The next is their realistic view of what the social worker does. As a whole, their reaction to the kind of person who is or should be a social worker is predominantly positive. A proof of this is the degree to which they have turned, and potentially are willing to turn, to social

work as a source of help. In addition, they rated social work highly in terms of actual and ideal prestige, as well as in the area which they were best qualified to judge, the social workers' consideration of the needs and feelings of those they serve.

Those who had had personal contact with social workers as clients are overwhelmingly more favorably disposed towards the profession than those who have not had this contact. The consistent differential between the responses of the client and the non-client groups is the most meaningful and sincere compliment possible. Social workers are currently quite concerned about what they feel is an unfavorable public image of them. But perhaps distance does not always lend enchantment to the view. When a broader range of the general public comes to know the professional social worker in his professional role, they may share the high opinion held by those who have traditionally been the focus of the social workers' activity.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS*

This study was done for the purpose of discovering what the present image of the social worker is. Each person chose a professional group or segment of the population to which he would administer a questionnaire or which he would interview, with the hope of finding out what each public's image of the social worker is and why they have a particular image. The questionnaire was designed to elicit an individual's understanding of and attitude towards social work as a profession. Assumptions which the group made before proceeding with this study were that 1) the image of the social worker varied among different classes, as well as professional groups, and 2) some aspects of the image would be grossly in error. We wondered whether there would be a change from the old stereotype described by Erma T. Meyerson as "unattractive, or at best plain, middle-aged, nosy, and officious do-gooder with her head in the clouds and her hand in the public purse,"¹ to a more realistic image of the social worker as interested in helping people in not only a physical-practical way, but also as helping people with social-emotional problems. Some important considerations for the profession of social work emerged from this study of the public image of the social worker. This image was found to vary within groups, as well as between groups. A common factor found to influence each participant's image

*by Betty Robinson

¹Erma T. Meyerson, "The Social Work Image or Self Image?" Social Work, vol. 4, (July 1959) p. 67.

was the amount of knowledge the person had about the profession and his personal contacts with social workers.

The Image of Social Work

Social Casework

Social work is composed of three methods: casework, group work, and community organization. In dealing with the clergy we find the most favorable image of the social worker, and among Protestant ministers the most knowledge about the profession. However, the only method recognized as social work by four out of five Protestant clergymen interviewed was social casework. Group work was the method mentioned by the remaining minister. A Jewish clergyman saw social workers as:

There are different types of social workers. The group worker aids individuals in developing ability to communicate with others and function within a social group. The family worker aids individuals to function well within the family group.

Three out of the five Jewish clergymen interviewed made reference to group work as a part of social work. Perhaps the predominance of the Jewish clergymen recognizing this method is due to the Jewish Center movement which employs professional group workers. However, this explanation does not seem to carry over when we look at the Jewish upper class.

Fifteen people were randomly selected from a list of board members and individuals using the services of a Jewish Community Center to represent the upper-class image of the social worker. Although all participants in this sample had some contact with a group work agency, half of the respondents did not see this agency as being staffed by social workers or having a social work orientation.

Among college students and their parents, we find no direct reference to the social work methods by name. From their job descriptions, social casework seems to be the only method of which they are aware, as a part of social work. The same is true of the lower-class sample. We find one mention of group work among the school teachers.

What seems to have been indicated here is that the public image of the social worker is that of the caseworker and there is little awareness of group work and no awareness of community organization as other methods of social work. This indicates the need for better interpretation of the methods of social work.

Knowledge of the Profession

In dealing with the clergy, it was found that Protestant ministers have the most favorable image of the social worker, an image more closely related to that which social workers have of themselves. This image stems from the training received in theological school, which involves a full orientation to social work. In looking at the Jewish and Catholic clergy, we do not find this kind of training, and are faced with a more unfavorable image of the social worker.

In comparing the findings of this study with those of Berry, et al., "A Study of the Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers," we find a contradiction.² In the Berry, et al., study there was found to be

²Coetta Lou Berry, Emma M. Dawson, Moragh Lesslie Shepherd and Sally Ann Wood, "A Study of the Professional Values and Perceptions of Social Workers".

little, if any, relation between the degree of knowledge claimed and the nature of the social work image depicted and the way in which social workers were ranked in relation to other professions.³

This finding may be due to the nature of the questionnaire used in this study, and the lack of any question truly designed to elicit the amount and source of knowledge about the profession which each person had. However, in this study there seems to be a very clear illustration of a direct correlation between these two factors in the responses of the clergy to the question on job description. In comparing the chapter on the clergy to all the other chapters in this study, we find the image is neither as favorable nor as accurate in the other groups as that found among the Protestant clergy.

Consideration of needs and feelings to those they serve is a basic tenet of social work, one of the basic values upon which the philosophy and methods of social work are built. If one is to understand and have knowledge of a profession, he must know its philosophy. To place social work fourth, as school teachers did, seems to indicate a lack of knowledge as to the basic values of social work.

In the chapter dealing with the Jewish clergy, as well as that dealing with the upper class, the factor of prestige accorded to education arises. Because of insufficient knowledge about the training of social workers and the emphasis placed on education by people of the Jewish faith, psychiatrists were seen as being better equipped to handle all social-emotional problems and the social worker's image was adversely

³Ibid., p. 69.

affected.

These findings seem to indicate that the more knowledgeable one is of the social work profession, the more realistic and more favorable an image he has of social work. Not only does lack of knowledge about the profession directly affect the image of the social worker, but also the lack of knowledge as to the training of the professional person.

Contact With The Profession

The Catholic clergy were found to have the old stereotype of the giver of material goods as their image of the social worker. This view of social workers, as well as the low esteem by which psychiatrists are held among priests, may be due to the role in which they see themselves and the threat which these professions represent to their role. The church and the priest should be the only sources of help with social or emotional problems, according to these clergymen. However, the priests practicing in lower-class areas where there is more frequent contact with social workers had a more favorable image of the social worker. Some concern for the social and emotional problems of their clients was seen as a part of the job description of social workers by these priests.

In the chapter dealing with the school teacher's image, we find a generally favorable image of the social worker emerging. This conclusion was based on the teachers' responses to the questions asking for their job description of social work and their contact with the profession. Most of the teachers saw social work as a helping profession. Of the eleven teachers who made unfavorable or ambivalent personality evaluations of social workers, all but two had personal contact with social workers

or social agencies. One might wonder if these contacts were negative ones. However, all eleven respondents saw social work as a helping process. One of this group of eleven would not go to a social agency for help and four would not refer anyone else.

Fourteen out of the nineteen teachers who had personal contact, meaning friends or relatives, with social workers had also referred other people to social agencies for help. Four out of the fifteen teachers who did not have personal contact with social workers had not referred anyone else to a social agency. This seems to indicate that those teachers who have social workers as personal friends or relatives are more likely to refer others to social agencies for help.

Contact with the profession plays a role in the lower-class image of the social worker. In view of the degree to which these people have turned to social workers, and are potentially willing to turn to social workers as a source of help, as well as their high ranking of social work on ideal and actual prestige, it was suggested that their reaction to social work is predominantly positive. However, this sample was divided into a client and non-client group, thus showing that those who had personal contact with social workers as clients are more favorably disposed towards the profession than those who have not. The social worker was not seen in the old stereotype, but as idealistic, hard working, willing and able to be of help. The profession is viewed as including both physical-practical and social-emotional services. Thus, actual contact with social workers comes forth as the most consistent differential between the client and non-client group. The client group represents the more favorable image and the non-client group the less favorable.

The upper-class image represents more of the old stereotype of serving the needy and underprivileged than was found in other groups used in this study. Their general lack of awareness of the Jewish Community Center as a social work agency follows this same pattern. However, other pertinent factors are that most of this image was not based on concrete knowledge, and certainly not on personal contact outside the realm of friendships. Of the fifteen people interviewed, five had worked with social workers in organizational and volunteer projects, and one had contact with workers at the Center.

Contact with people in the profession seems to directly influence one's image of the social worker. When contact with social workers is the only means a person has had to learn about the profession, this contact plays an even larger role in influencing his image of the profession.

Social Work Stereotype

The old stereotype of the social worker was that of the "snoopy investigator". The chapter dealing with college students and their parents brings out these ideas in their image of the social worker. Most of this came out in the replies to the questions on job description and personality traits, as well as a widespread lack of knowledge and a great deal of confusion about social work. Although 35% of the students and 50% of their parents had close friends or personal relatives who were social workers, a general lack of knowledge about the profession emerges as the prime factor in influencing the image of the social worker. Comparing the students' responses to those of their parents' on the question of the prime responsibility of the social worker, we find 40% of the parents

indicating this as physical-practical, and 10% of the college students sharing this same view. Perhaps this indicates that the trend is towards a realistic view of the profession as meeting social-emotional problems as well.

The Ranking of the Social Worker

The Berry, et al., study showed that

social workers think of themselves as showing more consideration to clients than anyone else and as being less interested in money than any group except ministers. Their perception of themselves as social workers carries therefore their primary or basic values, their concern for the individual and respect for human worth.⁴

⁴Ibid., pp. 70-71.

TABLE 1

RANKINGS ON CONSIDERATION FOR NEEDS AND FEELINGS

	Clergy		School Teachers		Lower Class		Upper Class		College Students		Parents of College Students		Business Students		Social Workers	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Lawyer	9	7.93	8	7.51	7	6.20	8	6.80	8	7.25	9	7.40	8	7.33	8	7.87
Clergy	1	1.40	1	2.06	1	1.93	2	2.53	2	3.00	1	3.60	1	1.99	3	3.29
Nurse	4	3.93	5	5.34	5	5.66	7	6.20	5	4.80	3	4.00	3	4.53	5	5.17
Physician	2	3.20	3	3.60	2	3.06	1	2.26	1	3.00	2	3.90	2	2.90	4	4.23
Policeman	8	7.73	9	8.51	9	7.06	9	8.40	9	7.55	8	7.20	9	7.92	10	9.12
Psychiatrist	6	6.87	6	5.69	6	6.00	3	4.23	6	5.65	4	4.30	6	5.68	2	2.83
Psychologist	7	7.20	7	5.91	8	7.00	6	5.73	7	6.85	7	6.10	7	6.50	7	5.74
School Teacher	3	3.60	2	3.37	4	4.66	4	4.53	4	4.10	5	4.80	5	4.79	6	5.51
Social Worker	5	5.13	4	4.49	3	3.40	5	4.63	3	3.85	6	5.10	4	4.65	1	2.32
Undertaker	10	8.00	10	8.63	10	10.00	10	9.53	10	8.75	10	8.60	10	8.65	9	9.03

In looking at Table 1 we find Berry's statement to be true, but the lower class and college students were only two points away from the social workers' ranking. Using this table to make a judgment, it seems that these two groups have a better understanding of the profession of social work and its basic values. However, there is still an indication that there is a greater need for better interpretation of the profession to the public.

The lower class stands out as not in accord with the general public in the ranking on actual prestige. (See Table 2.) A factor which must be taken into account in viewing the lower-class rankings in both Tables 1 and 2 is the way in which this sample was collected. The author of this chapter knocked on doors in a housing project at random. However, many people refused to talk with her and fill out the questionnaire. Perhaps these people would not have presented such a rosy picture of social workers. Thus the validity of these findings must be questioned as those people who did cooperate may have done so because of their positive attitude towards the profession of social work.

TABLE 2

RANKINGS ON ACTUAL PRESTIGE

	Clergy		School Teachers		Lower Class		Upper Class		College Students		Parents of College Students		Business Students		Social Workers	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Lawyer	3	3.27	3	3.54	3	4.53	4	4.00	2	2.55	4	3.60	3	2.90	3	3.15
Clergy	1	2.00	2	2.26	2	4.46	2	3.20	4	3.95	2	3.20	2	2.83	2	2.88
Nurse	7	7.27	7	6.51	6	6.13	8	7.53	8	7.40	7	6.50	7	7.25	7	6.87
Physician	2	2.13	1	1.51	1	2.46	1	1.46	1	1.60	1	1.60	1	1.88	1	1.38
Policeman	9	8.60	9	8.51	8	6.93	9	8.66	9	8.55	9	8.30	9	8.33	9	9.12
Psychiatrist	4	4.40	4	4.77	4	5.06	3	3.93	3	3.10	3	3.40	4	4.65	4	3.26
Psychologist	6	5.93	6	5.89	7	6.80	5	5.20	5	5.15	5	5.40	6	6.42	5	5.64
School Teacher	5	4.93	5	5.71	2	4.46	6	5.26	6	6.15	6	6.00	5	5.44	6	6.05
Social Worker	8	7.33	8	7.43	5	5.13	7	7.20	7	7.00	8	7.70	8	7.71	8	7.16
Undertaker	10	9.13	10	8.80	9	8.86	10	9.47	10	9.55	10	9.30	10	8.54	10	9.58

The lower class gives social workers a rank of five, while the majority of groups ranked social workers eighth on actual prestige. Perhaps this marked difference is due to the frequency with which this group uses the services of a social worker, and thus the importance which they must attribute to this profession. It is interesting to note that social workers saw themselves as ranking eighth in this area. On ranking the other occupations the lower class is within the range of the other groups used. This seems to indicate that a value judgment or need, peculiar to this group of people, influenced their perception of the actual prestige of social workers.

Table 3 shows the lower class as giving social workers the largest increase on ideal prestige; even more than the social workers gave themselves. Psychiatrists are given the least amount of prestige on this ranking by the lower class. Perhaps this is due to a lack of knowledge or understanding of this profession, or the inaccessibility of the profession to this group of people. This factor must help to account for the high ranking of social workers on ideal prestige, together with the frequent contact with the profession.

TABLE 3
RANKINGS ON IDEAL PRESTIGE

	Clergy		School Teachers		Lower Class		Upper Class		College Students		Parents of College Students		Business Students		Social Workers	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Lawyer	4	5.53	4	4.80	5	5.00	5	4.88	2	3.55	4	4.80	4	4.50	6	5.11
Clergy	1	1.20	1	1.86	3	4.00	2	2.68	4	4.75	3	4.20	1	2.13	2	a) 3.17
Nurse	7	6.60	8	6.71	6	5.86	8	7.68	8	7.15	7	7.00	8	6.83	8	7.21
Physician	2	2.27	2	1.94	1	2.80	1	1.68	1	1.85	1	2.00	2	2.19	1	2.28
Policeman	9	7.93	9	8.23	9	6.86	9	8.36	9	8.15	9	7.60	9	7.38	9	8.83
Psychiatrist	6	6.07	5	5.51	7	6.13	4	4.41	3	3.55	2	2.90	5	5.67	3	b) 3.17
Psychologist	8	6.93	7	6.57	8	6.80	6	5.28	6	5.05	6	5.40	7	6.31	7	6.17
School Teacher	3	2.40	3	3.37	2	3.66	3	3.75	5	4.95	5	4.90	3	4.21	4	4.35
Social Worker	5	5.67	6	6.23	4	4.55	7	6.08	7	6.35	8	7.00	6	6.13	5	4.75
Undertaker	10	9.07	10	9.63	10	9.33	10	9.30	10	9.65	10	9.20	10	9.35	10	9.77

a) 3.166
b) 3.173

There seems to be a great deal of confusion and general lack of agreement in the public's mind as to where social workers fit in the ranking on consideration for needs and feelings and the ranking on ideal prestige. The ranking on consideration for needs and feelings ranges from one to six. The distribution of responses is fairly even, with the majority of groups ranking between two and five. The ranking on ideal prestige runs from four through eight, with the majority of groups ranking between five and seven. This wide range of rankings on these two areas seems to indicate that the public is not sure of the place or function of social work in society. Similarly, psychiatry seems to be in the same position on the rankings of ideal prestige. Perhaps the newness of the two professions and the focus on emotional or psychological factors accounts for the public's uncertainty about them.

In comparing the findings of this study with that of the Berry, et al., study on the ranking questions, it seems as though there is no marked difference, other than those mentioned above, in the ways in which different segments of the population view the profession of social work. The public does not come up to the image the social worker has of himself as being primarily concerned with the needs and feelings of his clients, nor what he thinks his ideal prestige is. However, there is a very close agreement between what the social worker thinks his actual prestige is and what the public says it is. (See Table 2.)

From this study and that of Berry, et al., we may conclude that non-social work groups are not yet aware that "the helping professions

assert that their work requires knowledge and skill not likely to be found in any ordinary citizen," and that "it also requires the application of scientific methods."⁵ The task which seems to be confronting social work is that of effecting a better understanding of what social work is. As this becomes clearer the image of the social worker should change.

⁵Alfred J. Kahn, "A Scientific Basis for Helping," in Issues in American Social Work, p. 282.

APPENDIX A

BOSTON UNIVERSITYA STUDY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD PROFESSIONS: IIBackground

1. Sex Male _____
 Female _____
2. Year of birth _____
3. Present major occupation _____
 Number of years at this occupation _____
4. Have you completed grade school? Yes ___ If yes, in what year? _____
 No _____
- Have you completed high school? Yes ___ If yes, in what year? _____
 No _____
- Have you completed college? Yes ___ If yes, in what year? _____
 No _____
- Other educational training _____
5. Marital status _____
 Number of children _____
 Spouse's occupation _____
6. Your father's major occupation _____
7. Your father's highest level of formal education _____

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that follow. The "right" answer for us is the one that best presents your own point of view. You may find some of the questions difficult to answer, but we cannot complete this study without your help and we therefore would like you to answer all the questions as best you can.

In answering the following questions, please keep in mind the average person within the occupations listed below.

Please rank the following ten occupations in terms of the general prestige you feel they have in our society. Place a 1 beside the occupation you feel has the most prestige, a 2 beside the occupation with the next most prestige, and so on down to a 10 beside the occupation with the least prestige.

<u> </u> Lawyer	<u> </u> Psychiatrist
<u> </u> Clergyman	<u> </u> Psychologist
<u> </u> Nurse	<u> </u> Public School Teacher
<u> </u> Physician	<u> </u> Social Worker
<u> </u> Policeman	<u> </u> Undertaker

Now please rank the ten occupations in terms of the general prestige you feel they should have within our society. Place a 1 beside the occupation that you feel should have the most prestige, a 2 beside the occupation you feel should have the next most prestige, and so on.

<u> </u> Lawyer	<u> </u> Psychiatrist
<u> </u> Clergyman	<u> </u> Psychologist
<u> </u> Nurse	<u> </u> Public School Teacher
<u> </u> Physician	<u> </u> Social Worker
<u> </u> Policeman	<u> </u> Undertaker

Now please rank the ten occupations in terms of the consideration for the needs and feelings they show to those they serve. Place a 1 beside the occupation whose members show the most consideration for the needs and feelings of those they serve, and so on down to 10.

<u> </u> Lawyer	<u> </u> Psychiatrist
<u> </u> Clergyman	<u> </u> Psychologist
<u> </u> Nurse	<u> </u> Public School Teacher
<u> </u> Physician	<u> </u> Social Worker
<u> </u> Policeman	<u> </u> Undertaker

Taking social work as an example of the ten professions mentioned earlier, write what you think a social worker does. Use as much space as you need, and write a job description of social work below.

1. Have you or has a member of your family ever gone to a social worker (social agency) for help? Yes _____ No _____

2. Would you ever go to a social worker (social agency) for help?
Yes _____ No _____
Why or why not? _____

3. Have you ever referred anyone to a social worker (social agency) for help? Yes _____ No _____

4. Would you ever refer anyone to a social worker (social agency) for help? Yes _____ No _____
Why or why not? _____

5. Do you have any personal friends or close relatives who are social workers?
Yes _____ No _____

6. Besides personal contact, how else have you learned about social workers?

7. People in different occupations can sometimes be described as having particular personality traits. In a phrase or two what kind of person is a social worker?

Thank you for your help in this study. If there are any further comments you would like to make about the questions in this study, please do so on the reverse side of this sheet.

APPENDIX B

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
College of Liberal Arts
725 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston 15, Massachusetts

January 20, 1961

Dear

Recently your son/daughter participated in a study sponsored by Boston University with reference to attitudes toward professions. While administering the questionnaire, I asked the students to indicate the names and addresses of their parents. In so doing, I felt that a comparison of the responses of the two groups would be quite interesting and would provide further insight into the area being studied. I have promised that all respondents will be treated in an anonymous manner, and that all information will be kept confidential.

With the above in mind, I wonder if you would be so kind as to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it by February 1, 1961. There is a stamped, self-addressed envelope enclosed for your use. Thank you very much for your cooperation in this study.

Sincerely,

Warren Simon
Graduate Student

APPENDIX C

The JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

of Brookline·Brighton·Newton
50 Sutherland Road, Brighton
RE 4-0800

December 15, 1960

Dear Member:

Boston University is sponsoring a study whereby there is an attempt to explore the attitudes of people in the community towards people in the various professions. The Jewish Community Center of Brookline, Brighton, Newton is cooperating with the University by providing the research staff with a list of our members. Individuals will then be selected for interviews at random.

This letter is to inform you of the project in the event that you are contacted. No names will be used.

We hope that you will cooperate in this study.

Sincerely yours,

Sydney Gale
Executive Director

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Approved: May 22/61
Hyman Rodman