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OCCUPATIONAL SOCIALIZATION IN THE PROFESSIONS:

THE CASE OF ROLE INNOVATION

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OCCUPATIONAL SOCIALIZATION IN THE PROFESSIONS: THE CASE OF ROLE INNOVATION*

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of occupational socialization in the professions is particularly pertinent in the present world because of the increasing rate of change in our institutions and total society. Rapidly advancing technology and increasing social complexity have created a situation where even the most conservative professions like teaching and law are under great strain. The traditional models of professional practice have come under challenge from students and young practitioners within the professions, and have been found to be increasingly inadequate to deal with the complex problems with which society has confronted the professional.

If the professional of today finds himself unprepared to deal with the demands which society is placing upon him, it is not for lack of technical training in the profession. Scientific knowledge and technology have more than adequately kept pace in most professions.

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If there is a problem, it is more in the conservative attitude and role rigidity of the professional, those traits which we associate more with the socialization process than with education or training. Hence I would like to focus this analysis on occupational socialization, on those events in the development of the professional which provide him with his motives, values, ethical standards, and norms of where, how, and on whom to practice.

TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL CAREERS

In any profession the individual can pursue three broadly different types of careers:

1) Custodianship

This type of career is characterized by the total acceptance on the part of the practitioner of the currently existing norms of that profession, and by the practitioner's basic acceptance of the current levels of knowledge and skill in that profession. He is content to use his technical training in the performance of a traditionally defined role; he works hard at maintaining present professional norms; he accepts whatever licensing procedures may exist; and he favors the development of strong professional associations ruled essentially by elected colleagues.

2) Content Innovation

This type of career is characterized by the acceptance of the traditional norms of the profession pertaining to practice, but by a dissatisfaction with the existing levels of knowledge and skill which underlie the profession. Thus, the content innovator will

concentrate on science, technology, or scholarship to improve the knowledge base and technology which underlie the profession. Often he will be a professor in a professional school or in a department related to a profession (e.g. micro-biology relative to medicine). The content innovator will be oriented more to academic standards and associations of scholars or scientists; he will be relatively indifferent to professional associations unless their norms make it difficult to upgrade standards or practice by utilizing the knowledge which the innovator produces, in which case he will be hostile to such norms; he will view licensing procedures as conservative forces which make it difficult for the practitioner trained in the most modern manner to become easily licensed; he will assume that the profession will be best served by giving to the practitioner the most current knowledge and skill training, and will be indifferent to how such knowledge and training is used by the practitioner or what values the practitioner learns.

3) Role Innovation

This type of career is hardest to describe because of its relative rarity and the ease of confusing it with content innovation. The essence of role innovation is a basic rejection of the norms which govern the practice of the profession combined with a concern for the role of the professional in society. The role innovator redefines: a) who is a legitimate client; b) who can or should initiate the contact between client and practitioner; c) what is an appropriate setting for conducting professional practice; and

d) what are the legitimate boundaries of the professional's areas of expertise. Underlying each of these is a concern with making the profession more relevant to the pressing problems of society.

Let me illustrate from the professions of psychiatry, law, and architecture. In psychiatry, role innovation occurred dramatically when a number of military psychiatrists, many of whom are here in the audience, decided to move the locus of their practice to the front lines and to involve entire patrols in group discussions rather than talking just to an individual who exhibited specific symptoms. Furthermore, they did this on their own initiative rather than waiting for a referral from some other source, and they involved themselves as much in the sociology of life in the combat zone as in the mental health of individual soldiers (Harris and Little, 1957).

In the case of law, perhaps the best example is Ralph Nader, with his concern that the law should become an instrument of constructive social change, that the consumer should be defined as a client though he may never have thought of going to a lawyer over an automobile safety issue, that legal aid should be available to the poor powerless individual as well as to the rich powerful corporation, and that legal training should put much more emphasis on value issues than it has traditionally done (Nader, 1969).

In the case of architecture, many young architects coming out of school today face the dilemma of whether they should design for the client who hired them (e.g. the real estate developer), or the ultimate user of the buildings (e.g. the low income black family)?

Does the poor black family wish to live like a middle class white family? If economic resources are scarce, is the marginal utility of an extra five percent of safety in building construction equal to the marginal utility of more buildings for the poor? Is functionality an aesthetic variable (O'Hare, 1969)? Recent architecture graduates are even beginning to question the relevance of an apprenticeship period preceding licensing examinations, and are looking for States in which they can practice without a license.

We can find in every major profession, practitioners who wish to conduct their practice in a drastically different manner. Such individuals are usually not content innovators, though the new areas of practice which they define may then stimulate the development of new knowledge and techniques such as medical sociology; environmental, consumer, and poverty law; and environmental psychology or "socio-physical design".

OCCUPATIONAL SOCIALIZATION FOR THE ROLE INNOVATOR

The remainder of this paper will deal with several questions pertaining to role innovation: 1) What is the relationship of role innovation to content innovation? 2) How does role innovation come about in a profession? 3) What kind of educational and socialization process will increase role innovation in a profession? The third of these questions is especially important to answer, because in our rapidly changing society, professions will have to become more adaptive to the changing needs of that society, and the key to such adaptation will be the availability of an increasing number of role

innovators in the professions.

1) How Do Content and Role Innovation Interact?

The present analysis will not pretend to make a thorough epistemological investigation of this complex question, but several points should be brought out. First of all, the interaction of content and role innovation seems to be different depending upon whether the field underlying the profession is basically convergent or divergent. For example, in engineering with its essentially convergent underlying base, content innovation has usually preceded role innovation. As new knowledge became converted to new technology, new roles for engineers were developed such as computer specialists, systems theorists, and the like.

In the more divergent behavioral and social sciences almost the reverse trend has taken place. Psychiatrists, sociologists, social workers, and psychologists have consistently found themselves facing social problems for which the existing levels of knowledge and technology were inadequate. In trying to cope with such problems they developed new roles and new concepts of legitimate practice, and these new roles in turn stimulated new areas of research and scholarship. Two striking examples in psychology are 1) the development of humanistic psychology as an outgrowth of the role innovations of the applied behavioral scientists doing various kinds of group training, and 2) the development of organizational psychology as an outgrowth of Lewin's concept of "action research" and the development by organization consultants of new data gathering methods as a

part of their effort to change the organization (Bennis, Benne, and Chin, 1969; Schein and Bennis, 1965; Schein, 1965, 1969).

In architecture and law we see a more complex interaction because these fields are based in part upon convergent fields (engineering and the law of precedent) and in part upon divergent fields (design and the law as an instrument of social change). As architects and lawyers find themselves increasingly facing social problems which cannot be solved by the simple application of existing technology or precedents from earlier decisions, the balance within both the practice of the profession and the underlying content base as taught in the professional school is shifting toward the divergent fields. Both architecture and law schools are beginning to hire applied behavioral scientists onto their faculties, and both are beginning to stimulate value discussions among their students. As these discussions proceed and as more disciplines interact within the professional school, new areas of content will be identified and new research methods will be invented.

In the case of Walter Reed's Neuropsychiatry Division, its high rate of content and role innovation is partly attributable to the forces of 1) proximity to pressing medical and social problems deriving from the Korean War and 2) the encouragement of an interdisciplinary approach to problems, and 3) the presence of both convergent and divergent fields within a single laboratory.

In summary, one can find various different patterns of interaction between role and content innovation, and these differences

are attributable to the degree of severity of new problems to be solved, the nature of the underlying disciplines, and the degree to which the field is exposed to inter-disciplinary forces.

2) How Does Role Innovation Come About in a Profession?

We can identify three basically different sources of role innovation. They are not mutually exclusive or independent of each other, but are logically distinct.

First, changes in the environment or society may create new problems which must be solved--new diseases are discovered or unsolved social problems come to be identified and pinpointed. For example, large urban centers breed ghetto dwellers who require a different form of law, architecture, social service, and health care; educationally disadvantaged groups such as blacks are identified and pinpointed as targets for new forms of education, training, counseling, and management. Role innovation occurs in these cases through "role suction", in the sense that custodially-oriented practitioners may find themselves being pulled in new directions by the gravity of the problems with which society confronts them. The doctor who works in the ghetto community health center finds himself becoming part social worker, part community sociologist, and part politician, in addition to his traditional medical role.

Second, certain classes of individuals have cognitive styles and value systems which are in varying degrees out of line with the role demands of their job. Such individuals will begin to redefine the job to suit their personal style and in that process create some

new ways of doing that job.

In the cognitive area, we are exploring the dimension of convergence-divergence both as it applies to a field of study or profession and as it applies to an individual's cognitive approach to problems (Guilford, 1967; Hudson, 1967). A number of investigators have linked creativity to divergence, i.e. the ability to recall, recombine, and create new cognitive elements (Getzels and Jackson, 1963). Both content and role innovators should therefore have divergent styles. What may distinguish these two types of innovators is 1) level of talent and 2) the degree to which professional practice permits the expression of content creativity within traditional concepts of practice. Those creative individuals who either have insufficient talent for content innovation or are professionally blocked from content innovation by conservative professional norms may begin to redefine professional practice and through role innovation find greater congruence between their cognitive style and their occupation.

In the value area, we find the role innovator to be the person who accepts the pivotal or central norms of the professional organization in which he works, but who rejects the peripheral norms (Schein, 1967). For example, there is the psychiatrist who believes that no one should practice without an M.D. (pivotal norm), but who rejects the notion that the patient must always take the initiative in coming to the psychiatrist (peripheral norm), or the norm that psychiatrists should not reveal their own personal feelings in the

context of a therapeutic relationship. If such a person rejected the pivotal norms of the professionas well, he would no longer be part of that profession. The important theme in role innovation is that the innovator retains his membership in the profession, but stretches the concept of what is legitimate professional practice.

Third, role innovation results from professional school training which is deliberately aimed at changing the profession. In a previous paper, I have pointed out that professional schools can be classified in terms of whether they are custodially or innovatively oriented (Schein, 1967). Some schools attempt to teach their students the present concepts of how the profession should be practiced; other schools attempt to predict what the professional of the future will have to know and be able to do, and deliberately train in terms of that future concept. To the extent that such latter schools are successful, they are producing graduates who will, from the outset, reject many of the traditional peripheral norms and attempt to invent new ones.

The socialization which occurs in the early part of the professional's career can either enhance or undo the norms which he learned in an innovative professional school. We have clear evidence in the case of managers who graduate from innovative management schools, that if they work for large traditionally oriented business enterprises, they tend to unlearn some of the norms learned in school. If the graduates are sensitive to this kind of organizational socialization, they often resolve the conflict by leaving

the traditional organization and going into a smaller innovative organization or setting up their own company or consulting practice. This process is comparable to the architecture graduates refusing to take three-year drafting jobs in preparation for licensing examinations, and the law graduates refusing to work for traditional law firms as very junior "partners".

For the young professional to be able to sustain values which are in opposition to some of the norms of his profession requires a strong socialization process in school supported by early career routes which support the deviant values. Thus young law graduates must have opportunities such as joining "Nader's Raiders", and young psychiatrists must have opportunities to work in creative settings such as the Neuropsychiatry Division of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

3) What Kind of Socialization Process Will Increase Role Innovation in a Profession?

Let me now pull together some of the above points by focusing on some of the conditions which must obtain during the education and early career of the professional, if he is to become a role innovator. The conditions are to be viewed as a set of hypotheses about how professional education and training should be organized if we are to increase the number of role innovators in our society.

Underlying the specific hypotheses which I will present is a model of the socialization process which must be made explicit. I am assuming that in most professions, there are powerful socializ

forces which work toward a custodial orientation in the profession. This is especially true in professions like teaching, management, and engineering which are pursued in large bureaucratically organized settings rather than through private practice or small professional offices. In order to counteract these forces, it is necessary for the professional school to stimulate in its students the development of a strong value system which will be capable of withstanding conservative socialization forces. In addition, it is necessary for the profession itself to stimulate or at least tolerate early career paths which may deviate in varying degrees from the traditional ones. The profession itself and the professional schools will jointly have to create half-way houses in which the young practitioner can become exposed to some of the major social problems facing the profession without being so overwhelmed by them that he falls back on the tried and true models, and, in sheer panic develops a safe custodial orientation. In other words, professional socialization occurs both during school and the early career. If norms supportive of role innovation are to be developed, one must look both to the school and the early part of the career (Schein, in press).

Condition 1: The professional school faculty must be anchored in underlying disciplines and must be oriented toward content innovation (research/scholarship), rather than being anchored in professional practice per se. In other words, the professional school should avoid hiring the successful practitioner and concentrate

instead on hiring scholars and researchers. If too many teachers are successful practitioners, they will simply perpetuate the existing norms which govern the practice of that profession. Having successful businessmen or lawyers teach management or law enhances conservative custodial orientations, especially since the successful practitioner will be the more seductive teacher. In medical schools this phenomenon has been well documented by Becker et al (1961)--if students have a choice between listening to the research microbiologist and the successful internist, they will always pay attention to the latter, even though this may curtail their professional education in important ways.

Condition 2: The professional school faculty must be inter-disciplinary, even if professional practice rests on only one or two fields. In particular, the faculty should include the behavioral sciences and the humanities in order to stimulate intensive analysis of value issues, of humanistic questions, and of the role of the profession in society. The inter-disciplinary emphasis should be retained, even if it is difficult for students to integrate the various points of view during their time in school. It is my assumption that a pre-mature integration can be genuinely harmful in a rapidly changing society. Basically, the student does not know during his period of professional training what demands will be put upon him five to ten years hence when he is a practitioner. The broader the base of knowledge he is operating from, the better equipped he will be to cope with changing environmental demands.

The greater his understanding of value issues and the human consequences of professional practice, the better he will be able to deal with new and as yet unanticipated social problems. For example, one hopes that doctors being trained today will know how to handle the social problems of experimental genetics when our technology will make it possible to breed whatever kind of human being we choose to breed.

Condition 3: The professional school curriculum must be organized in such a manner that the student obtains frequent opportunities to engage in projects which force him to make intellectual and personal commitments, and in which he obtains immediate and relevant feedback on the consequences of these commitments. I believe strongly that self-knowledge and self-confidence are key ingredients to successful role innovation, and that the only way to build such knowledge and confidence is to provide opportunities for personal involvement combined with accurate and timely feedback. Another way to put this point is to say that the role innovator must take a "pro-active" role toward his career and that his professional education must stimulate and encourage pro-activity rather than passive learning (Kolb, 1968). Even though most of school has overtrained the average student to be reactive, it is my hypothesis that this trend can be reversed at any time by creating a learning environment which stimulates active involvement of the learner and gives him effective feedback on the consequences of his own behavior.

Condition 4: The professional school curriculum must train

the student in the ability to diagnose complex social systems. In all professions it is becoming clear that both the client and the practitioner are parts of larger social systems, and that these systems interact within society. The potential role innovator must be able to see clearly the connections between various social systems of the community and the society, and he must begin to think in terms of "client systems" such as organizations, groups, populations of people with a common interest, and the like. He must know about the probable effects of different kinds of interventions which he may make, and he must take into account the entire social nexus which surrounds his client (Schein, 1969).

Condition 5: The professional school curriculum must train the student in the skills of intervening in social systems and initiating constructive change processes through the utilization of behavioral science knowledge about change. For example, it is becoming clear that the delivery of health care, legal aid, and housing in the urban ghetto is as much a problem of initiating change in the social system of the city as it is a problem of medicine, law, or architecture. The practitioner who wants to work on such problems must have applied behavioral science skills along with his other professional skills if he is to reach his client in any effective manner. If he is to develop such skills, he must have both theoretical training in change theory and opportunities to engage in complex change projects. The Case-Western Reserve Medical School concept of having every medical school student work

with an entire family during his school years is an example of such a project focus.

Condition 6: The professional school curriculum must create opportunities to learn to work with other people in team or other group settings. As society becomes more complex, one can see an increasing need for social problems to be attacked by teams of professionals who come from different disciplines--the architect or doctor working with the social worker and sociologist on urban problems, or the juvenile court judge working with the psychiatrist and social worker on problems of delinquency. Most present-day professional training puts far too much emphasis on individual project and thesis work. Students do not learn any social psychology and they do not learn the attitudes and skills which go with team effort. When they later find themselves having to collaborate on practical problems with practitioners from other professions they have neither the inclination nor the skills for such collaboration, thus cutting off one very important avenue toward role innovation.

Condition 7: The professional school must help to manage the early career of its graduates to insure that the values and skills which are nurtured during school continue to be nurtured in the early formative years of the career. I have already mentioned professional half-way houses, settings where real clients and real problems can be faced, but under the tutelage of members of the professional school. Internship and residence in a University Teaching Hospital is probably one good model for such half-way house

Community health centers or legal aid centers partly staffed by professors from the nearby medical or law school would be another example. If it is not possible to develop special settings, the professional school should develop a program of continuing education which permits the graduate to return to school at annual or bi-annual intervals to discuss and review his work experiences, to be brought up-to-date on new developments, and to re-solidify the norms and values taught in school. If it is too difficult to bring graduates back to the school setting, it would still be possible to organize alumni activities regionally in such a way that revitalization and reaffirmation of norms takes place through continued contact with fellow graduates and visitors from the school.

If the socialization which occurs during professional school is to have enduring effects, the psychological contract between student and school should not be terminated at graduation. The school should think of itself as having a longer-range responsibility to its graduates, this responsibility to be discharged in a variety of ways: 1) More active help from the faculty in locating jobs which will permit role innovative activities; 2) Periodic coaching and counseling help from the faculty as graduates need it and call for it during their early career; 3) More involvement of the faculty with professional associations and large organizations in which their graduates work, i.e. the schools will have to begin to influence the environment within which their graduates work as well as influencing the graduates themselves; 4) More concern about and review of

licensing procedures which may exist in the profession to insure that graduates are not placed into a situation of having to unlearn some of the very things which they learned in professional school.

RECAPITULATION

I have argued that in our rapidly changing society we will increasingly generate social problems which the professions, as presently constituted, will be unable to handle. Therefore, we must stimulate and make possible an increasing rate of role innovation in all the professions. Role innovation involves certain attitudes, values, and skills which can be developed and nurtured during professional school and in the early career. Such nurturance will require special efforts on the part of professional schools. Schools will have to employ faculties which are committed to basic disciplines, to have inter-disciplinary curricula, to put special emphasis on project centered education which will permit the growth of self-insight, self-confidence, diagnostic skill, and a humanistic value orientation, to emphasize the applied behavioral sciences in order to train skills of working in and with group and complex social systems, to maintain a relationship with graduates through better career counseling, continuing education activities, and consulting services to alumni, and, finally, to monitor more closely the operation of the profession through its licensing procedures, professional association, and other related activities.

As a final note, I would like to mention that the kind of professional education for role innovation which I have tried to

describe above will, of course, require professors who are themselves motivated to be role innovators vis-a-vis their own teaching role. To become involved with students in project centered education, to work in an inter-disciplinary setting, to maintain relationships with graduates, and to become interested in social problems outside of the University will require a different set of attitudes on the part of professors. We must look, therefore, to the graduate training which we currently give to the individuals who will ultimately become the teachers, scholars, and researchers in our professional schools. If we cannot loosen up the concept of what is a professor, we will ultimately fail in loosening up the concept of what is a role innovative professional. Most of us involved in this conference are professors in professional schools. I would like to close this paper by challenging all of you to re-examine your own educational goals, values, and practices, by asking you whether you are training custodians, content innovators, or role innovators, and by asking you to re-assess whether your own style and the organization of your own professional school puts sufficient emphasis on training role innovators who, I believe, we will need in ever larger numbers if our professions are to survive and play a useful role in our increasingly complex society.

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