REFERENCES


**ON PROFESSIONAL PRIDE: A REJOINDER TO \'PROFESSIONAL MORALE AND SOCIAL WORK TRAINING\'**

Discussion by Toba Schwaber Kerson

According to Laura Reiter's study, "Professional Morale and Social Work Training," morale is low for the members of the Connecticut Society for Clinical Social Work. Even more troubling than the report of low morale is that of dissatisfaction with career choice. The findings are especially distressing in this particu-
lar population. They are people with a strong professional identification since they choose to belong to the Society. A little less than half of the members of the Society returned the questionnaires that Ms. Reiter distributed, so they are interested in the kinds of questions examined in the study. They are probably mature practitioners since their average age is 44. Thus, their maturity and their professional identification make them excellent subjects for this research.

Reading the paper raises three issues for discussion. First, is self study with social workers as subject a productive research direction? It is true that the questions Ms. Rieter asks are real and practical. They continue to occupy professionals in every area of social work. But I, for one, am beginning to question the questions. Like adolescents, we, as a profession, seem to spend an inordinate amount of time looking at ourselves, and we are rarely kind. Therefore, in light of my own concerns, this discussion has woven through it a positive review of social work and a request that we spend more time studying clinical and social problems and less time studying ourselves.

The second issue for discussion is the author's interpretation of the findings. In the paper, findings and conclusions are presented in terms of four subjects: professional label, income and work satisfaction, social work prestige, and professional morale and social work supervision. Each area raises some question of its own. First, in terms of professional label, the researcher asks, "In general, when someone asks you, 'What do you do for a living?' which single response would be your usual answer?" On the one hand, she is surprised by her data because people do not call themselves 'clinical' in overwhelming numbers. I, on the other hand, am reassured. If, instead of categorizing responses as 'clinical' or 'other' she calls her categories 'social worker' or 'psychotherapist,' she will find that a resounding 87% of the subjects chose a category that carried social worker as part of their title. One might even say that people who were doing work that would allow them to be very inventive, nontraditional, and/or vague about their titles chose to commit themselves to the field, to call themselves social workers. The term psychotherapist actually reveals nothing about, or might even succeed in hiding, professional identity.

Thus, only 5% of the subjects chose a title which did not identify them as social workers. Presenting the statistic in this manner leads to a different kind of conclusion from the one drawn in the paper. What one chooses to call oneself is so interesting, so tied to questions of identification and identity. Think of children who insist on being called something other than their given name or immigrants who change their surnames when they arrive in this country. Think of Rock Hudson or Erik Erikson.

Another question I would view differently from the researcher is that dealing with income satisfaction. In this day and age, with the cost of living spiraling upwards and social workers never being highly paid, of course most of the respondents are dissatisfied with their income. My question here would be not why are so few people satisfied with their income, by why are any of the subjects satisfied with their remuneration? Almost no one that I know in any field expresses income satisfaction today. In addition, being satisfied with your income does not necessarily relate to the value you place on your work or your profession.

By the same token, I would draw conclusions different from Ms. Reiter's in the question dealing with social work prestige. She asked, 'How much prestige do