Community action| An ethnographic study of occupational idealism and cynicism

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COMMUNITY ACTION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY
OF OCCUPATIONAL IDEALISM AND CYNICISM

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ABSTRACT

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This ethnographic study of a specific Community Action Program examines the effects of social programs upon the individuals who are supposed to carry out and administer the programs. The programs involved are the "war on poverty" programs which were passed in the early sixties in order to abolish poverty in the United States. The study addresses the individuals' interpretation of their work rather than concentrating on structural components of such programs.

The study is based on interviews with a selected number of individuals who were working in the CAP program at the time. The interviews were conducted in 1976. Twenty-two separate individuals were interviewed. Each interview was tape-recorded and then transcribed. Unstructured interviews were conducted to let the individuals express themselves freely and without prejudgment.

Once the analysis was completed it became apparent that social programs affect not only the people targeted by the programs, but also affect the persons involved in carrying out the programs.

The study's impact to sociologists is twofold: first, the study is a microcosmic social history, and second, it uncovers the social dynamics of social change in a specific situation.
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The purpose of my thesis is to study a Community Action Program (CAP). I propose to study the individuals within the agency and their conceptions of themselves and others, and how their conceptions are influenced by their work situation. Since the purpose of the CAP program is to deal with social change and to change people's social class concepts of themselves, the CAP workers are in constant examination of their conceptions of themselves, the people they serve, and the community. Hence, the definition of the situation by the CAP worker reveals important concepts which deal both with the program and the individuals in it.

At the time of the research, the CAP agency was on the brink of dissolution; the total discontinuance of all funds. The cover of the annual report for that period shows the sun being covered by dark clouds. It was also a dark period for the people of the agency. Everyone was waiting for the Federal coup de grace. The power of redemption rested with Congress. It became a tense waiting game. The Congress seemed slow and muddling and the agency was anxious and seething. Congress did not deliver the final blow, but resurrected the CAP agencies. The CAP program nationwide was reorganized.

Despite the reinstatement of the CAP agencies by Congress, the CAP agencies lost their former Office of Economic Opportunity, OEO, status. The mandate to solve poverty was removed and from then on the CAP agencies became ad hoc appendages of established government bureau-
cracy. The glamour and separateness of the original OEO status were eliminated and with them went the mystique of the "war on poverty" and the "great society."

The radical notion of a people's bureaucracy was gone. The concept of political struggle was also gone. The struggle now took on the spectre of economic survival; a vainglorious and reactionary situation.

The ideological groundwork that had been established throughout the ten-year history of the CAP program was removed, leaving the staff of the CAP program on the edge of a social abyss. It was during this time that the staff of the CAP program began to ask itself such questions as: what has the agency accomplished; what is the community's concept of us as professionals; and why are we isolated from our own staff and administrators, and also from the community? These questions represent the CAP workers' attempt to recover the lost ground and re-substantiate themselves and their program. These questions also constitute the main theme of the thesis.
INTRODUCTION

The Community Action Program, CAP, is a complex, complicated system of social organization with interrelationships between programs and people.

The purpose of my thesis is not to study the agency's structure and functions, but rather to study the individuals within the agency and their conceptions of themselves and others, and how their conceptions are influenced by their work situation. Since the purpose of the CAP program is to deal with social change and to change people's social class concepts of themselves, the CAP workers are in constant examination of their conceptions of themselves, the people they serve, and the community. Hence, the definition of the situation by the CAP worker reveals important concepts which deal both with the program and the individuals in it.

I began the study after having worked in the Community Action Program for approximately two years. I did not intend to turn my employment in the Community Action Program into a research project; it just seemed to take this shape, especially after my intuitions and feelings about the program became more grounded and the ideas became more substantial. As I began to interview the participants, I found that their ideas, and also my discussions with them, added to further clarify and expand this emerging substance. The mutuality of the interest between the CAP workers and myself was able to give the study a distinct reality which not only developed my interest in the program,
but also appeared to motivate the CAP worker to gain a deeper understanding of his ideas about himself and the program.

The study is based upon two research methods: 1) personal interviews, and 2) participant observation. I conducted the participant observation during my work assignments; I observed the members of the CAP agency by paying close attention to their topics of conversation, both in informal and formal settings. I used the results from my participant observation for developing questions for my interviews and also to augment the topics revealed by the interviews.¹

The interview and participant observation are integrally related. Interviewing the CAP staff was made easier since I was one of them; that is, I did not have to gain the worker's confidence. My previous two years experience with the agency seemed to help me tremendously. With very little effort and explanation, I arranged interviews and gained admissions into the interviewees' confidence. Also, my prior experience was used as a test of consistency. That is, I questioned the interviewees about sensitive topics which I had noted during my non-researcher status. I then compared the respondents' formal answers (answers about questions to me as an interviewer) with their perspectives and opinions which I had noted when I was merely a CAP worker. I tried to resolve any discrepancies, although very few arose.

I began my study by conducting four preliminary interviews which provided the basis for further interviews; topics, questions and ideas were developed from these four interviews and then further

elaborated by the following interviews. In all, I interviewed 20 CAP people and conducted 23 interviews. I interviewed three people a second time because they displayed a desire to give more information and expressed a need to further explain themselves.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

The sixties began as years of prosperity. Despite the prosperousness of the economy, poverty was still common; in fact, approximately 30 million people were still impoverished. This was out of an estimated population of 200 million people. The solution, of course, was simple--increase the incomes of those people below the poverty level. Those people who did not make enough would be aided by the intervention of various government agencies.

Now that the program is finished, it is easy to examine the various methods used by the government to reduce poverty. However, at the time, no clear plan or program was envisioned which would solve poverty. The solution of poverty was a novel idea which was truly being implemented for the first time. Such an application was difficult to make.

In fact, the intellectual foundations of the community action involvement began in the 1950's. Authors such as William Whyte and Paul Goodman, as an example, in their respective works, *The Organization Man* and *Growing Up Absurd*, pointed to the inability of society to coordinate its large masses of members into functional or meaningful relationships with each other. Most clearly the failure of social institutions could be regarded as a direct product of the nineteenth century laissez-faire utilitarianism. Like many of its critics had predicted, the nineteenth century architectonic of the social world
left an "atomized mass" bereft of any sense of community.²

The various types of corruption, such as organized crime, McCarthyism, and payola in TV quiz shows, brought to the fore that American society needed revamping. However, this new social change was to come from the amalgamation of radical/liberal tradition with the revolutionary/reformist tradition. The new emphasis would be on behalf of civil rights and minority rights, rather than upon reforming capitalism. Paul Goodman's analogy of American society as "an apparently closed room in which there is a large rat race as the dominant center of attention" was considered thoroughly correct. Goodman's "rat race" and Whyte's "organization man" point to the social conception that men were conformist, social climbers, unscrupulous sorts whose only objective was to gain the appropriate social rewards for their behavior. People like Paul Goodman, Robert Nisbet, and William Whyte defined the problem. The test was in finding a solution.³

Through numerous changes, such as the "knowledge explosion", the expansion of government, and the professionalization of work, the solution to poverty took on a new form—social/economic reform.⁴

The primary problem to solve was juvenile delinquency. In keeping with the problem, as described by people like Goodman and Whyte, the working person was really benefiting less from the "rat race" than was the "organization man". The working person could look forward to staying up with the bill collector through his endless monotony

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³Ibid., p. 17

⁴Ibid., p. 21
in the factory or low-skilled job. The juvenile delinquent, however, was even a step below the "working man" because the juvenile delinquent was seen as being kept from even achieving the status of the working man. The social institutions prevented the juvenile from utilizing the legitimate forms of social achievement. Hence, the "juvenile problem" was taken to be of primary importance. In this case, the solution is more important than the problem. Two programs—the Ford Foundation's "grey areas" program for urban renewal and the "Mobilization for Youth" program on the lower East Side of New York—brought the new solution: a community agency designed to involve individuals in the control of their destinies. This new social architecture called for a tax exempt agency controlled and directed by the interests of "its own members". This new agency, partly conservative and partly radical, sought to preserve individualism by institutional intervention; a hybrid notion born out of conservative agencies such as the Ford Foundation and radical definitions of Goodman, Whyte, Nisbet, and other social theorists.

The community action model was established and its mystique would be sought as a solution to numerous social problems, especially the problem of poverty. The model would be used even though its effectiveness and utility were questionable. However, in 1964 the Economic Opportunity Act was passed and it sanctioned the beginning of the new social reform. The new project abandoned the traditional forms of dealing with social problems such as group work, casework and the social service methods. The new project (Community Action) went beyond the immediate problems of either poverty or juvenile delinquency, for instance, and sought to understand these problems in respect to civil
rights, and also in relation to the fundamental questions of social and political power.

Involvement and participation were the call words for community action. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 called for:

"to provide stimulation and incentive for urban and rural communities to mobilize their resources (public and private) to combat poverty through community action programs."

Community action programs were defined as: 1) the mobilization and utilization of public and private resources, 2) the provision of services and assistance for "improving human performance, motivation and productivity," 3) the "maximum feasible participation" of the intended beneficiaries of these programs, 4) the administration and coordination of these programs by a public non-profit agency (community action organization) which is broadly representative of the community.5

From its inception, however, the CAP program suffered from numerous ambiguities. First, there was the statutory ambiguity. Statutory law did not specifically define the limits or parameters of the purposes as stated in the law. Daniel Moynihan succinctly states the problem in his phrase "the maximum feasible misunderstanding". This is an adaptation of the phrase "maximum feasible participation" which appears in the statute. According to Moynihan, the concept of "maximum feasible participation" was transformed into the ambiguous concept of "maximum feasible misunderstanding". The main factors responsible for such a transformation were political and social.6


6Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding, p. 150.
These ambiguities would weaken the CAP program and possibly even contribute to its ineffectiveness and downfall.

As mentioned previously, the CAP programs were historical; that is, the concepts addressed by the CAP programs preceded the CAP program and formed its foundation. The social welfare concepts which preceded the CAP program have been categorized into three main divisions:

1) The Puritan-Horatio Alger Tradition. This tradition defines personal success according to two assumptions. First, personal success depends upon thrift, firm will, and good moral character, and second, public help precipitates weakness.

2) The Good Samaritan-Lady Bountiful Tradition. The main assumption of this tradition accepts that poverty is the result of human weakness, circumstance, and not the fault of the victim. The solution to poverty under this tradition calls for compassion.

3) The Prophet Amos-New Deal Tradition. The main assumption of this tradition defines poverty as the consequence of social conditions. The role of the poor is to break the social conditions. The rich are supposed to share their wealth.7

Consequently, the social institutions, the government, business "community"--each of which accepts one of these three different traditions--creates a situation of countervailing forces which pull the poverty problem into three separate directions; each of them different from the other. The problem then is how to uniformly define the poverty problem. At least this is the problem the CAP program had and was never able to resolve. Throughout the United States marked differences characterized the CAP programs. For instance, some were controlled by social welfare agencies. In other cities CAP programs were in direct opposition to social welfare agencies. Some programs adopted political policies, while other programs adopted social service policies. As

7A Relevant War, pp. 19-20.
experts of community action have agreed, their different approaches would pull the CAP programs apart.

The ambiguities of the poverty definition, however, were not the sole detractors of the CAP social reform. The political environment also contributed.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was part of a larger program; the "great society" of Lyndon Johnson. The main objective of the "great society" was to eradicate poverty in the United States. However, in addition to the "great society" programs, Johnson also embarked upon the Vietnam War. The major impetus of Johnson's administration was to be directed at these two issues. Economically, only one of these issues would become feasible--the Vietnam War. The Johnson administration itself set this limit to the "great society" by its budgetary restraints. As Vietnam accelerated, more of the budget had to be expended at the expense of other programs. Hence, the poverty budget and program became impoverished.

In addition, the ideological demands of the poverty radicals threatened the Congress. Congress, a basically conservative body, with a preference for hiding its power rather than flaunting it, was antipathetic to the flaunting of powerlessness by the poverty radicals.8

Consequently, in 1966 Congress cut the budget for OEO by 460 million dollars less than requested by President Johnson. As a result, the war on poverty was dealt a fatal blow. The budget reduction set salary limits and limited the total amount of money available to the poverty program. This was a precedent which would continue to the present.

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8Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding, p. 150.
Significantly, the present CAP programs which have survived the budget cuts and political antipathy, exist not in spite of these historical traditions, but as inheritors of the traditions. Why these CAP programs have survived is not the purpose of this thesis. However, there is some evidence that the surviving remnants of the poverty program are a result of such factors as the multiplier effect--bringing in Federal monies to local areas, thus, boosting local economies.

Even the present CAP programs reflect the ambiguities of their historical predecessors. The present organization of the CAP program reflects this historical ambiguity quite clearly. For instance, CAP programs have projects which contain different objectives:

1) Community Development was the basic participatory device which sought to involve the poor in solving their own problems;

2) Neighborhood Youth Corps addressed the delinquency and youth unemployment problem;

3) Planning, which was responsible for taking the problems expressed by the poor at the community development meetings; and,

4) The Manpower Program which was supposed to find employment for minority and poverty individuals.

Each of these programs has continued to define the poverty problem in its own way. The community development program assumes that participation of the poor is necessary for solving poverty. The Neighborhood Youth Corps assumes the social opportunity concept reminiscent of the mobilization for youth program; the planning program presumes lobbying and surveys as the solution to poverty; and the manpower program conceives of poverty as the lack of jobs. Hence, the present CAP programs
are very similar to their predecessors in that the ambiguity still persists.

Quite importantly, a new concept also seems to be emerging—the rational pragmatic approach to poverty. This dispassionate approach uses "objective" methods--such as research and needs assessment--to solve poverty, rather than involvement of the poor. The emerging poverty issues no longer involve civil rights, but now are centered around the distribution of limited natural resources and the share low income people are to have. This objective has been accepted by the community development departments and planning departments of the present CAP programs. (Their concern with energy is a poignant example of this.)

The CAP program, which is the subject of this thesis, reflects their ambiguities which have been described. Quite importantly, these traditions will be defined by the actual participants of the CAP program. Hence, the subject of this thesis will be the story of Community Action as seen by its participant workers.
THE WORK

The kind of work that occurs in a community action agency is very general--its goal is the elimination of poverty. However, the work one does for the agency depends upon where one works in the agency. The best way to explain what is done in the agency, then, is to examine the specific purpose of each program and describe the general work categories which occur throughout the community action agency.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps

The purpose of the NYC is to help low-income youth adjust to society. Because low-income youth are seen as deficient in their adjustment to society, the NYC program was designed to prevent delinquency, crime, and psychological problems of youth. NYC is a work-experience program designed to alleviate these social/psychological problems by allowing low-income youth to gain experience working and earning money. The work experience and the money they earn are supposed to help youth adjust to society. The work experience does this by putting youth into a controlled work model situation from which they will learn the necessary social adjustment skills. The earned money helps youth adjust to society in general by eliminating financial need. Money is supposed to eliminate economic maladjustment; through it "low-income" youth supposedly become like "middle class" youth who have money for their needs and wants. This, then, is the NYC program.

The Planning Program

The purpose of the planning program is extremely diversified. The main duty of the planning program is to plan programs for the poor
by determining what the needs of the poor are and then designing programs which will solve these problems and needs. There are some more specific tasks, such as seeing that grants and contracts are renewed on time, and that they comply. Also, the planning program does some research and prepares reports for the other programs in the agency. This, then, is the planning program.

The Manpower Program

The purpose of the manpower program is to get involved in the employment problems of the underskilled, unemployed, low-income individuals. This consists of administering certain contracts which are specifically directed at a particular group; for example, the prison pre-release program, the farm migrant program, and the public service careers program. The manpower program is also like an employment agency and attempts to find jobs for low-income and minority individuals who need work. This, then, is the manpower program.

The Family Planning Program

The purpose of the family planning program is to make family planning techniques available to low-income individuals and also to improve the health of low-income individuals through the provision of a limited number of services. The family planning program also offers counseling services to individuals who have social and psychological problems precipitated by family planning practices. This, then, is the family planning program.

The Community Development Program

The purpose of the community development program is quite broad; its general purpose is to bring about social and economic changes within
the community by informing low-income individuals about welfare rights, influencing legislators to favor the low-income (recently this has been concentrated in the area of housing), and becoming involved in alternative forms of energy. This, then, is the community development program.

The Administration

The purpose of the administration is to manage the CAP agency. This essentially means overseeing the specific programs of the CAP agency, working out the formal relationships of staff, and watching over the personnel matters such as pay, fringe benefits, and personnel policy. The most unique feature of administration is that it determines the general budget for the CAP program. This involves deciding how much money will be spent and what it will be spent for.

Each preceding CAP program that has been described requires a staff in order to do its work. The following is a description of the general work categories within a CAP agency.

The Secretary

The work of a secretary or receptionist requires typing, answering phones, filing, and other general office work. A secretarial position in a CAP program requires the same skills as any other secretarial position in any kind of office. The minimum qualification for a secretary is the ability to type. In most CAP agencies, even this ability does not have to be great.

The Bookkeeper

The main duty of the CAP bookkeeper is to keep financial records and accounts of agency matters. A bookkeeper in a CAP program does not necessarily have to have bookkeeping skills when hired, but can usually be trained to acquire the specific skills needed for the agency.
The Counselors

Counselors are really only used in two programs—the Manpower Program and the Neighborhood Youth Corps Program. These are the only two programs that have sustained and consistent client relationships which require a counseling situation.

The counselors are supposed to be the "middle men" between the client, the program, and society. The counselor is supposed to guide the client when a problem occurs and when the client is not properly adjusting to society. The purpose of the counselor is to support the client during this adjustment.

The counselor's importance lies in maintaining a sustained and continual relationship with the particular client on a one-to-one basis. The client and the counselor get to know each other quite well. Their interaction involves working with the client's personal, social, family, medical and financial problems.

There are no rigid requirements an individual has to meet in order to be hired as a counselor. A college education or a high school education is not necessary. The prospective worker merely has to convince others that he can do the job. This involves selling yourself rather than showing your accomplishments.

The Director

As the overseer of a particular program, the director's main duty is to coordinate the staff and duties of that program. Mainly, this involves attending meetings, carrying back information to the staff, and seeing that the staff do their allotted work.

Like other jobs in a CAP program, there are no pre-established professional requirements for becoming a director. Usually directors
are recruited from lower ranks within the agency—the counselors and secretaries. The agency hypothesizes that individuals, after having worked in the lower ranks, will have enough knowledge of the agency and its programs to become a competent director. Then, again, some directors have been hired who have never worked within the agency and do not have the same "experiential" sense as that of other directors.

The General Worker

This is an individual who does general office tasks, routines, or duties for a program which do not specifically require close contact with an established clientele. This includes individuals who work in the planning division and community development. Their primary duties are to conduct some elementary research, to write reports, and to attend meetings whose topics and problems concern the agency.

The Outreach Worker

The primary duty of the outreach worker is to initiate and maintain contact with low-income individuals for the purpose of informing them about the community and various services and social programs for low-income individuals.

Neither the outreach worker nor the general worker position requires any special training or professional background. Rather, the agency usually trains the person it hires for these jobs.

The Administrators

The main duty of the administration is to oversee the specific programs which constitute the CAP agency. Administrators are primarily concerned with budgetary and personnel matters. They decide how much money will be spent, where (on which programs) it will be spent, and what the various relationships will be between personnel and programs.
The administrator, again, like the other workers of the CAP program, does not require any formal, professional training. Like directors, administrators are usually hired from the low ranks, although this practice is not consistently adhered to.

This particular CAP program has two administrators who divide the administrative tasks of the agency between them.

In summary, the personnel of the observed CAP program can be visualized in terms of the following diagram.

```
       Administrators
         |     Directors
         |     Workers
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The "workers" category includes secretaries, bookkeepers, counselors, and general workers. These individuals comprise one category because of two reasons: first, they do the daily business of the agency, and second, they are paid similar salaries. That is, directors and administrators are paid considerably more than the workers. In fact, a statistical analysis of the observed agency revealed that 12% of the staff earn $10,000 a year or more. This 12% corresponds exactly to the number of directors and administrators. The other 86% of the staff salaries are below $10,000 a year, which corresponds exactly to the number of workers. In fact, the average worker earns approximately $8,000 a year.

The purpose of this chapter has been to describe the CAP agency through its programs and job positions. The exact meaning that the work has to the people of the agency will be the subject of the following chapters, which will present the individuals' interpretations of their work.
CHAPTER II

BEGINNINGS

To begin to understand work in a CAP agency, it is best to start with the CAP workers' accounts of their beginnings. Here is the story in their own words.

"Well, I was a bookkeeper for three years at a finance company and I always wanted to be working with people. That particular position was working with people, but it got to the point where I was not able to talk to a lot of customers who would come in, on a kind of personable basis at all. Not only that, but the pay was certainly not enough to provide--$260 a month. I decided I would like something different, more challenging, where I could meet the public. The Community Action Programs were just coming into existence at that time. Great Falls had not had one. They were advertised in the newspaper and also at the employment service. I had been there and they had talked to me about a possible position as a receptionist/secretary (for the Community Action Program), so I decided to go ahead and give it a try, and I was interviewed by three directors here at the time. (I was really nervous at that time.) I decided to go ahead and take the position they had offered me. It only started at $280 a month, which was 9½ years ago, but I thought if it would work out, there would be a lot more benefits as far as higher income coming in 'cause it would be working with part of the Federal government--funds, grants, state grants--more chance of opportunities and meeting the public; something new that was different and challenging. At that time the grant was only for a year program (poverty program), and we were not sure we would be funded again. It was a very uncertain thing. I have always been a person who liked to have something secure on the other side--I wanted to make sure that there was a position there that I could take and be there 10 years if I wanted to be. That position did not happen, but I did try to give it a try anyway. I took that position on (sigh)........... ..that's how it started."

There is uncertainty to the CAP worker about starting work in a CAP program. As this respondent points out, CAP programs are compared to more established social service programs. As a result, there is less
job security in working in a CAP agency. But, despite this lack of security, workers are seemingly willing to take a job in a CAP agency and "give it a try".

Working in a CAP agency apparently represents a new start for the CAP worker—he explores that which he has never done before and that which is not a familiar part of his background.

Q. What made you get into the work you're doing? Why did you pick being a secretary?

"Well, I was just more or less roaming the streets, checking every place in town to find a job, 'cause I desperately needed to work, and I don't know, I'm just the type of person who likes to be with people, and I know I'm kind of a hard person to get along with. I try the easy going... as far as... . I just like to be with people, and work with people. I also like bookkeeping, but I like a variation of that with other secretarial duties. I don't necessarily like being crammed with a book eight hours a day either. I like to relate to people. I've thought of possibly going into counseling, you know, with people, but I do like the secretarial skills I'm in now."

As this respondent clearly represents, working in a CAP program can begin by accident. Before they were hired, most of the people working in the program were unemployed and looking for work--any work that could be done by an average person with no professional skills. Since the lower rung jobs in the CAP program require no special training, low skilled job seekers are able to find work there. Sometimes getting a job is not only the end of unemployment and desperation, but also the beginning of a future. Here is an excellent example of how one worker expressed this feeling:

"Well, I was a good athlete in school, made varsity basketball team in sophomore year, went to a big high school, dated all the jock girls, and got into college and I was one of the few freshmen who played on senior intramural basketball team. I was a jock in college the first two years. Dated one girl I was
engaged to later. Then when I was 19 years old I got in a car accident. I spent my 20th birthday in a coma, on my death bed for 21 days. When I woke up I was on the bottom; I was emotionally upset. I laid around for a couple of years after that. I got really fat; first time in my life I really got fat. Had a hard time accepting myself. Lot of people never have accepted me. I was on the bottom. The last few years I have picked myself up by the bootstrap, and I'm on top again. I'm working, got a career, doing well, women get close to me, and they can't keep their hands off me. The point is, I know what it's like to be on top; when I say on top, I mean emotionally secure, feeling healthy, physically, mentally, and emotionally. When I say on the bottom, I mean just the opposite of that. I have been on top, I went to the bottom 8½ years ago. I've picked myself up and worked my way back to the top, so I have a very deep understanding of what it's like to be living in despair; in the bottom of the economic strata—I did in Arizona for 2 years. I never made over $2,000 a year when I was down there. I was a pimp, prostitute, junky, thief, asshole; you name it. I lived with them and I learned a lot, but it was a rough time. My values and my principles were threatened everyday. But I gutted it out, and I'm back on top now. My values and principles are still with me and my faith in God is probably the biggest thing that's helped me through these past years. OK, so I did get crippled up when I'm 20; supposed to graduate in '69. I got hurt in '67 and didn't graduate until '72."

To those people working in a CAP program, their job's purpose is not just to make money, but also to gain personal experience which can give them hope, comfort, and a renewed belief in themselves and their abilities. As the above respondent expressed, he was at the bottom socially and psychologically. He was threatened by a lack of status, money, and work.

"OK, when I got out of college I found all my buddies are making eight and ten grand a year, doing well, got families, and I'm still on the bottom; I got no career. I got a bachelor's degree in social studies which is literally useless, and so I moved to Arizona, lived there two years, worked there. I never did get on my feet financially; never did get into a decent job down there."

Getting started, then, represents a step up from the "bottom" and a move toward social and psychological respectability.
Getting In

As in all work organizations, this CAP agency requires some type of entrance standards for those seeking employment. Formally, it can be qualifications such as education, experience, and expertise. Informally, it can mean having contact with someone higher up in the organization. Whatever the formula, an individual must strive to discover what type of entrance requirements an organization has if he is to enter it. Here are the CAP workers' accounts of their entrance formulas.

Empathy for the Low-Income

One of the primary requirements for working in a CAP program is empathy for the low-income. A worker has to realize that he must express this idea if he is to be admitted into the inner circle of CAP workers as empathy for the low-income is the prevalent ideology which gauges workers' commitment to their work. If an aspiring employee does not realize that he has to verbally express and demonstrate his empathy for the low-income, he will not be hired. Thus, CAP workers go out of their way to prove their empathy for the low-income. They will say how they used to be one of the low-income and how they have now committed themselves to helping those people they have left behind. In this sense, empathy for the low-income can mean being one of them while also not being one of them. But empathy for the low-income is not necessarily based upon income or wealth. On the contrary, many of the people working in the CAP program are middle class people who earn good salaries and are very well off financially.

Entrance into a CAP program is quite informal. That is, there are no rigid educational or professional requirements to being hired.
On the contrary, the agency was organized and designed to allow individuals with little or no training, expertise or background an entrance into the social world of work.

As a result, entry into a CAP program depends less on formality and more on informality. Although "empathy for the low-income" is a rigid requirement for entrance, it is not formal--not measurable by objective standards. Rather, entrance usually depends upon the potential worker's familiarity with the small inner circle of CAP workers. Consequently, getting a job in a CAP program depends upon what one worker called "a gimmick"--something special that can distinguish one individual from the others. "A gimmick" can include an accent, disability, or any other unusual characteristic that will draw attention to a person and make others aware of him. Once the inner circle of CAP workers is aware of an individual, his chances of being hired are greater. One respondent put it this way:

"C. R. who was about--if she was 20 I'll eat my shirt--she was a college graduate with long red hair who came on with a glamour; not a sexy glamour, but a very clean glamour. And then later, as she began to identify with the poor, she started wearing things that looked like they belonged to the poor. In fact, they dressed better than she did. Anyway, I was impressed by her. I was very impressed with the fact...here's a girl who's 19 or 20 with a college degree and she was coordinating this survey I was doing. I didn't know that much when I was her age; well, of course, I didn't go to college."

"Getting in" is very important. Most of the CAP workers, as it has already been pointed out, were out of a job, looking for work, on the "bottom", or without special skills before they were hired. A person in these situations feels a great deal of uncertainty and insecurity. His knowing someone in the CAP organization can take away a lot of
worry and relieve a lot of uncertainty about "getting in". The following quote of a CAP worker relates a frequently used method for getting into a CAP program:

"I heard about CAP through my cousin. She was in the same job I have now three or four years ago, and I came down here one time, and I decided to come back. And checking to see if there was a job, different jobs, and got to know some of the people in the agency, and they kind of helped me out. Finally, I got in one section. And once you've got your foot in the door, then you can practically go any place in the agency you want to if you have the qualifications."

As this pointed out, his knowing someone already inside the organization assisted him in becoming acquainted with others in that circle. This familiarity finally led to a job. This formula for entrance is often used.

A more extreme, and to the CAP workers, a less palatable method for entry into a CAP program is "nepotism" or tokenism. In the instance of nepotism or tokenism, relatives, friends, or cronies are hired by influential people within the agency solely because of their friendship. Tokenism and nepotism are felt to exist in the agency. Everyone interviewed expressed their belief that this was happening. The workers thought this unfortunate because it weakened the program.

"Hiring because of personality or family relationships hurts the program's image. It is a bad thing--turning down people who could make the progress better. You'll find this everywhere. Our program is a highly sensitive program. They deal with the community, and also they deal with problems. When they deal with someone with problems they're going to be a lot more sensitive to what they are going to say and do."

Nepotism was felt to be "bad" not only because competent people were turned away, but also because its use detracted from the agency's image in the community. Nepotism angered and frustrated CAP workers to
the point where they quit their jobs. It became obvious to one worker that he would not get promoted or advanced as he had been promised. He saw that any higher position that opened up was soon filled by a friend of the director or administrator. He felt helpless and quit. Those who remained behind expressed their frustration at not being able to eliminate tokenism.

Due to the lack of professional standards, favoritism merely becomes a matter of promotion; getting the boss to like you. This is how one respondent put it:

"Of course I feel about hiring and firing as the same way I feel about congress. To me, when they gave the power to hire and fire to J., I like J., but he wasn't fair either. He didn't realize what he was doing, but it wasn't fair. They were wrong to give him the power. He didn't compare the fact that there were 10 people over here with the same salary as these people over here--because these people squeaked so loud and these people got the raise in salary and these people who didn't say anything didn't get anything, and they were probably doing all the work."

On the Inside

Once a CAP worker is in the agency, two things become important: moving up and moving out.

Moving Up

Moving up means starting "at the bottom", or rather, taking an entry position which has minimum requirements, salary, and prestige. Entry positions are adequate, but not desirable positions. Most new CAP workers realize that these entry positions are merely a start and they are eager to seek better positions within the agency. However, when a person is on the bottom of the work ladder, he is usually looked down upon.
"Yea, I think a lot of people do try to put secretaries down. Oh, they'll do anything for you, or they just kind of do what you can't. Like the counselors; they go out to the job sites and recruit the kids and counsel the kids and talk to the supervisors, and talk to the parents. Different things like that; associate with the different people at the school. Sure, they send out all the letters to the kids, the secretaries do, but I feel that some things the counselors sometimes do are too demanding on me. They expect me to do a lot of their paper work. Where some of it is I have direct knowledge of the kids, so I cannot necessarily fill their paper work out for them, but I appreciate it when I get bogged down with work and the counselors aren't doing anything, that they'll help, and they know at times I'll help them. So, like I say, it pretty much balances out."

Being on the "bottom" is a liability because it means having to do others' dirty work or having to take orders from others. Since one is on the "bottom", he cannot use his authority or position to defend himself from these other people. In essence, the person on the bottom has to conform.

Although getting to the "top" eliminates the frustrations of being on the bottom, the actual move up has its own frustrations since it requires changing jobs, getting promotions, and receiving pay raises. The only way to move up in a CAP program is to get a promotion to a more responsible position, but there are so few prestigious positions in number that moving up is not a chance all workers get. The few prestigious positions of director and administrator add up to a total of only ten positions. Since individuals do not move out of the higher positions regularly, "moving up" can be a frustrating and slow ascent to the aspiring worker. The ascent is also uncertain due to funding--the program is always seen to be in threat of being discontinued.

Salary is an important part of moving up. Those with "high" positions are usually the ones who benefit the most from salary
increases. This was another example of the frustration in "moving up."

As one respondent put it:

"Oh, I think it was that...it started out that where secretaries and any clerical workers were paid on the same par as Outreach people. And then all of a sudden it was the Outreach people who got the raises. I know the clerical representative on the career development board challenged this and the answer was that the Outreach people were doing the job that the agency was supposed to be doing. It never made sense to me because they needed all the help they could get and unless they have it, the rest of the staff doesn't look good."

The CAP worker has a constant desire to better himself by moving into these more prestigious and better paying positions. Although they do not like the idea of certain positions getting higher salaries, CAP workers have realized the futility of trying to change the agency structure which they feel is responsible for the limited distribution of high salaried positions. Until the CAP worker attains a higher position, he is constantly reminded that he is on the bottom occupationally; once a CAP worker attains a prestigious position, he then reminds those below him of their lower status. This cycle of reminding and being reminded of one's status within the organization is a constant challenge to one's identity. A CAP worker has two choices: to accept his status and wait for a promotion (an acceptable attitude within the sanctions of the agency), or to openly strive for higher status, which is not so acceptable.

"They see me as a terribly aggressive person at the moment, which I am, and I'm damn proud of it because I was at the bottom 8½ years ago and I'm at the top now, and I didn't get there by being Mr. Timid. I got there by being as aggressive as hell, and just crawling my ass up all the way, and I agree--sometimes--that I do come on too strong, I understand, but I am aware of that liability, and I work at it, and I try to catch it, but you know they have a lot of liabilities too. We're human beings".
Being too concerned about moving up is a liability that others in the agency define as aggressive and lacking commitment to the ideals of the agency. Therefore, those who do not accept the slow pace of advancement in a CAP program are defined as undesirables and they, as a result, can experience a very difficult time.

Moving Out

"I personally believe that my job here is more of a training experience. Because of the way it's set up, and budgetary problems, status with the Federal government through the years, it's probably, in the long run, just a short term experience. As for a stepping stone to any other future employment, like I say, it's training experience I like a lot here."

This respondent is expressing the second alternative "moving out." To CAP workers who have the idea of "moving out", staying and working within the agency is only temporary. As this respondent pointed out, "My job here is more of a training experience." Once an individual feels he has gained the necessary experience, he will apply for other outside jobs outside of the agency; then leave.

Moving out is difficult since one has to leave behind something to which he has become attached; working in a CAP program requires an attachment or commitment to CAP ideals and its clients. After awhile the CAP workers come to identify themselves with the ideals of the agency. Compromising, or giving up these ideals, is not an easy task for the CAP worker because, in effect, he is giving up part of himself as well as his involvement in the agency. One respondent who was in the process of leaving had this to say about this experience:

Q. Does your leaving reflect lack of commitment to the agency?

"No, because I have expressed to management what my commitment was, and the fact there are obligations
to my family. My family comes first and helping the low-income, second. But above other things, commitment to the low-income comes first, after the family, well, no, I don't think it shows lack of commitment because I've told them that I did need more money and they were unable to pay me more. I told them it wasn't due to lack of commitment. In fact, with my new job with this program, I expect to carry on that commitment to still assist the low-income."

Leaving the agency is difficult for the individual: there is the threat that that worker will not be considered to be committed to the low-income. Rather than make a complete break and forget the CAP agency totally, the CAP worker promises, and points out, that once in his new job he will still be able to help the low-income. Hence, the worker will still be committed to the ideals of CAP even though he is no longer a CAP employee. The employees cannot bring themselves to completely sever their bond with the agency. This suggests that the agency has a strong influence on its members. Moving out challenges the CAP worker's reputation with his occupational group. He was once one of them, but now he no longer belongs to their group. A worker's leaving must be modified. He will still be one of them, only he will now be farther away.
CHAPTER III

THE "AS IF" CHARACTER OF WORK

The previous chapter dealt with how individuals start in a CAP program and how they adjust to the program. This chapter will be concerned with how individuals do their work, what the workers' conceptions of themselves are, what their interpretations of their work are, and how these interpretations define the work.

The "as if" character of work is a conceptualization which is adapted from Georg Simmel's theory of society. In the CAP context, the "as if" character of work refers to the CAP workers' concern with belief in their work and also with dedication to their work. The various topics which illustrate these "as if" (hypothetical) qualities of the job constitute the subject of this chapter.

Participation

Getting some CAP workers to participate in the CAP program is not an easy task, especially from a supervisor perspective. One supervisor expressed the problem quite specifically:

"I have a few on my staff that feel it's a joke and I'm dealing with them right now. I usually call them in, talk to them, and give them another chance, a verbal commitment between the two of us. If that doesn't work, I

put them on two-week probation. And if that doesn't work, I talk to the administrator about relieving them of their duties."

As this supervisor illustrates, getting some of the staff to participate is very difficult. In this case, the supervisor is discussing the problem of getting staff to come to work and also getting the staff to work once on the job. Some of the staff felt that such expectations were a joke. That is, the workers no longer felt it was important to recognize the demands of the work group. Much of the burden of working in a CAP program is the pervasive individualism. For instance, as a whole, workers regularly come to work at least fifteen minutes to one-half hour late. Some even come to work one or two hours late; then, once at work, they will sit around and BS the time away. Doing personal business on office time is commonly accepted. As this example about coming to work on time illustrates, the CAP workers' participation is quite different from more standard work situations which stress promptness and punctuality.

Professionalism vs Non-professionalism

Establishing an image as a professional is one of the CAP worker's constant problems. Years of bad publicity, "incompetent" staff, and even dishonest staff, have almost completely destroyed the definition of professionalism. The CAP worker has to constantly demonstrate and instill the fact that he is a professional who is competent and able to do the job.

It is difficult to be a professional if one does not have any physical document or degree to signify this status. Usually, social service workers from other agencies within the community have one or two college degrees, but the CAP worker is usually unskilled, has no advanced
formal education when he starts. His competence is derived from experience rather than from formal education and learning. In fact, the CAP agency actually looks down upon education and training. The individual who has education and training is suspect; he is seen as an exploiter of the program who will eventually get another job; he will be envied mainly because he can get things done and can bring innovative ideas into the agency that challenge the status quo. In a way, the professional model of a CAP worker is a non-professional.

Professionalism is a threat to the CAP worker because it challenges his self-conception and respectability. Since the CAP worker does not have the credentials to show that he is competent, he has to prove his competence in other ways. One of the most accepted methods for proving compensation of professional deficiencies is to be a "talker" -- outspoken and unafraid to let one's opinion and the opinion of the CAP program be heard at meetings. This is an excellent demonstrative device since CAP workers attend many public meetings. By "talking up" CAP opinions and ideas, the CAP worker feels he can show to others who doubt his competence that he has expertise and knowledge. CAP workers are constantly attending meetings where they will come into contact with professionals and can demonstrate their abilities.

Another demonstrative device is "showing them". Here again, the audience is made up of other professionals from the community assembled at various meetings. "Showing them" is different from "talking up" in that "showing them" is a written presentation or proposal which contains some minor statistical representation of data and derivations from some type of "survey". Also, "showing them" is more formal than talking. Unfortunately, talking can be over done. This has
happened frequently to CAP workers who appear to attendants of the meetings to be people who go to meetings only to talk. In other words, "talking up" has shown CAP workers to merely be facile rather than professional. By "showing them" the CAP workers are able to demonstrate that they have writing, organizational, and thinking skills that other professionals possess and to document it on paper so that everyone can see. "Showing them", however, can also have its drawbacks -- a bad presentation on paper is more lasting than a bad verbal presentation. The written document is not ephemeral like the spoken word. When the CAP workers are "showing them", there is always the constant threat that the entire presentation will come off as "Mickey Mouse". That is, others will realize that they really did not do a very good job -- due to either lack of commitment or lack of expertise. Being "Mickey Mouse" is threatening to the CAP worker.

"Showing them" not only demonstrates the CAP worker's professionalism to others, but also allows the CAP workers to literally show others, that is, to "show up" other professionals. "Showing them" allows the CAP worker to get back at the prejudices and conceptions other professionals in the community have of the average CAP worker. In other words, "showing them" also means proving others wrong. CAP workers achieve a great deal of satisfaction when "showing them" is pulled off properly. The technique of "showing them" is best used when non-CAP groups make judgements about low-income people. Due to their immediate experiences with low-income people, CAP workers can engender undisputed credibility on such occasions.

"Showing them" and "talking it up" are two alternative (demonstrative) devices that CAP workers use to illustrate their "profession-
alism." These two methods, however, can be a liability as well as an asset. The methods are a liability when they are responsible for pettiness and jealousy within the agency among the CAP workers themselves. "Showing them" or "talking it up" cannot be done by everyone in the agency. Only certain individuals (workers) can speak on certain issues; not everyone can be in the limelight. The difficulty arises when it is not clear who should be doing the "showing them" or "talking it up." As the CAP workers have said in the interviews, there is a lack of direction from administrators and directors. It proves crucial in this instance. For example, if a presentation or report on youth is to be done, it must be decided who should give it and who should prepare it—the youth section or the planning section. The report obviously is about youth and the report also requires planning skills to put it together. But due to lack of direction and the need for these CAP divisions to be the one to "talk it up" or "show them", a great deal of pettiness and jealousy results which cannot be settled rationally due to the lack of bureaucratic authority. Both planning and youth may want the credit for doing the report and show that they are knowledgeable and professional. Hence, these demonstrative devices for professionalism can be socially treacherous. They are capable of bringing the members of the agency together into a unit which has other professionals as its adversary but they can also pit the same members of the agency against each other.

Advocates for the Low-Income

The primary job of the CAP program is advocacy; the purpose of which is to represent low-income people and disadvantaged individuals in order to improve their conditions. The advocate is entrusted with
this duty of changing and bettering the lives of his clients. This is a demanding task since, in a way, he is a social liberator or redeemer to his clients. Since his clients depend upon him, the CAP worker has to constantly address himself to the question of whether or not he is doing a good job or being a good worker.

The Good Worker

The good advocate and the good job are part of the same good worker conception that the CAP worker addresses himself to as he does his work and interacts with others. The opposite of the "good" worker is the "bad" worker. The implication is that if one is not doing a good job, or is not a good worker, then he is a poor or bad worker. The CAP worker is constantly trying to show others that he is worthy of being a CAP worker and is a good worker. Here, then, are the elements that make up the good worker.

Since the purpose of CAP is to represent the low-income, commitment to this ideal is an important aspect of being a good worker. CAP workers are eager to show how they are dedicated and even compete with each other as to who is more committed. Doubts about the scope of another member's actual commitment were expressed by one of the respondents:

"I would see an improvement...Bud, whom I love....he was a threat to him at the time, but I love him. He's a sweet guy. He says he's terribly committed; I don't always see it. I have my serious doubts whether he's committed. He's terribly committed to his little program but anybody else, I don't think he gives a shit. That doesn't make any difference, that's neither here nor there. In his position as associate administrator I think he is lying."

To point out a CAP worker as being uncommitted is a serious accusation since it means that he is not committed to the agency as a
whole or to his particular program or job. Real commitment and good work mean the following to this worker:

"Nine years ago I saw myself as a person that was very dedicated and would do anything to do...to help the program get along. I remember many nights not even getting to bed until 5 o'clock in the morning, not worrying whether I got overtime, or not worrying if I got the next day off with pay."

In other words, dedication to the program indicates personal preferences and desires. The "good" CAP worker should work beyond five o'clock without regard to himself as a worker; his overriding concern should be with the interests of the program.

"I feel that someone that is dedicated to the agency is one that you know that you can depend on...when there is a crisis, when you have to work late, when there's...doesn't have to make an excuse to not work; there are definitely some times that they cannot, and I can understand that, but when it happens periodically, all the time, a person does not have interest in what the whole total agency is doing. They want to stay within their own little world. I feel that a person is dedicated only if they want totally to help, not just their program, but the whole concept of the whole agency, and I think you can find that out by the kind of attitude your staff has when you make remarks about certain things, as far as like a meeting that can be held, or is going to be held, what kind of comments you get, as if to say, "if I don't get paid, I won't go 'attitude'." I do feel, though, even with equal rights, you should get paid for their time now, even though we didn't ten years ago. I do feel that that is a good aspect of it. I don't feel that they should be expected to donate their time, but I do feel that you have to know that you've got that built into your staff, that they would or they could if you have to even if they got paid, you would know they'd be there. I think that's dedication, even if it may be dedication as far as even money, I feel at least they're there, they could pitch in, they can give you suggestions, they're helpful; when there's problems in an agency, they're not the first to say "let me get out of here." They help solve the problem--I think those are the dedicated people."

Dependability is not only a quality of a good worker, as seen by the CAP workers themselves, but it is also a part of the good worker concept
as expressed by people from other agencies. But, dependability has not been associated with CAP workers by those outsiders; in fact, CAP workers have been thought of as being undependable. Rather than seeing them as individuals who work beyond five o'clock without regard to pay, the community has seen the CAP workers as individuals who rarely work until five o'clock. One person put it this way:

"At CAP they have an eight to five coffee break with a fifteen minute work break."

In being a "good" worker, the CAP worker must constantly overcome the idea that he is a bad worker. There have been a considerable number of CAP workers who have been lax and have diminished the good worker concept of the CAP worker. This laxness has involved chronic tardiness: CAP people are late to work and appointments or don't even bother to keep appointments at all:

"I feel there's a very general lack of being punctual in this entire building; like if you're supposed to be here at a certain time taking care of things, and secretaries are supposed to be there to answer the phone--they're at the bank or something. They got to be on time. Here things are awful lax for punctuality. People come in late; they leave early. Lunches are a little bit longer than normal; even the staff meetings are a perfect example. That's one thing that they should really work on. As for taking off time for personal problems, up in community development it's been pretty legitimate. We haven't had any----a few cases, but most of them are pretty good. In fact, they get away, makes it really nice for the employees, but...I don't know about the rest of the building, but because it is so lax in creative development, something goes wrong. Never an objection, unless we're doing something. There might be a tendency to get away with any excuse, and I don't know if this is the whole building or not. Like me, I've become less punctual; when I first came here I was pretty punctual. I came here at eight, and left at five. Now I come in later, knowing the fact that everyone else is coming in later, so why should I be here on time? In fact, half the time I can't get through the doors because I don't have a key, and so to avoid that, I come
in a little bit later, and normally I stay until five, but it's so void. It's just dead--you got to get away or you'll crack up."

Q. What do you think of that in terms of work behavior? Do you think it's important for you to be punctual? Do you think you can do your job even though you are 15 minutes or a half hour late?

"Well, it's like this: it's creating a bad habit for me, 'cause I'm late here for work, I'm late everywhere else now. As for public relations, it's bad. People are here at 8 o'clock and expecting us to be here, but we don't show up until 8:35 or something like that. It's a bad image--if you go from here to another job, you've got a bad habit to break, and I feel that everybody had some legitimate excuse, but this, to me, is a business office. It should be much more punctual than it is. Five or ten minutes is no big deal, but some don't show up 'til 8:30 and some people leave at 4:30, and to me you're not putting in what's a full day's work."

As this respondent has illustrated, fighting off and overcoming both the laxness within the agency, and the concept of a bad worker, is a difficult task since the entire agency is like this.

Being a good worker involves doing the extra things that are not part of the job; the bad worker, in contrast, does not even do his job. In addition, while he does these "extra things", the good worker also gets involved in community affairs. He attends meetings at night, during his off-duty hours, although it is not his duty or job to attend these meetings. He goes so others can see that CAP is interested in other community affairs besides those concerning the low-income. The good CAP worker has visibility--he must show himself to the public and show his concern for social service. The good CAP worker is supposed to do this in an unselfish manner, regardless of his personal commitments.

The CAP worker is considerably underpaid when compared to other
social service workers, excluding directors and administrators. This
is a condition all the CAP workers are aware of and have to reconcile
with their good worker concept. One respondent expressed this aware­
ness:

"Money is a real funny question; like I can say financial
rewards, but money to me is not that important. But just
to be honest, and say when I compare the pay scale of this
job, for instance, with a similar position elsewhere, there's
a big discrepancy. Then I'll have to say that for my educa­
tion, my service here, and so on, and match one salary, I'd
have to be underpaid. But to say I'm underpaid for what I'm
doing, I can't say that because my value of money is...I'm
not greedy, but when I look at it in comparison to other
positions in other agencies elsewhere, I'll have to say
that I'm underpaid for that."

When compared with the other social services workers, the CAP
worker is underpaid; but when he assesses the amount and kind of work
with his pay, then there is no longer any discrepancy. The CAP worker
can accept his lower pay and maintain his good worker conception,
knowing that he is not really doing as much as other social service
workers.

Regardless of how much a CAP worker works, or how little he is
paid for it, he is nevertheless judged as to whether or not he is
committed. This judgement comes from other CAP workers themselves.

Q. Do you feel commitment to the agency?

"Absolutely. To get the job done. Unfortunately I look
at this as being necessary to help low-income people.
And that's not true of most of them. So that's why it's
not getting done. Because they don't have total commit­
ment. They're just here to get their $500, $600, $700
a month."

As this CAP worker says, commitment is needed, not only for the sake
of doing the job, but also because of the nature of CAP and its rela­
tionship to low-income people.
Q. That's important?

"Oh, absolutely! When you've got problems you have to have change. Understanding for low-income is important. I believe it's imperative."

Q. Can you gauge understanding?

"It's hard to draw a picture of it. I would say unless you have this feeling for low-income, you can't put 100% of your effort into it. If this is what it takes to get something done with as much as many brick walls as you run into trying to get anything for the low-income. You have to give 100% to make any type of dent at all."

The worker who just sits and waits for things to happen is not a committed worker. In the same sense, the worker who does not actively engage himself in his work is doing a poor job. The undedicated worker is not carrying out the mandate to change the lives of the low-income--the clients of the CAP program.

**Lack of Opportunity**

Working for a CAP program is not seen as a lifetime career, but as temporary work--a stop along the way during one's career. There are better opportunities outside CAP. Until these opportunities become available, most workers will wait it out. Here is how one worker explained it:

"To further my personal growth, and to get my financial reward, it's limited here. There's no real way I can see that I can stay here maybe five or ten years and make a lifetime job out of it. I could see being here two years, and then moving on, but that's about it."

There are a number of reasons why CAP workers move on. One of them is money. As the above respondent has indicated, there just is not enough money in working for CAP. Also intertwined with money as a reason for leaving is education. As workers get more formal education and also realize that they can get better paying jobs with more
education, they move out of CAP as their education increases and the possibility for better salaries materializes. One respondent explained it in the following words:

Q. Do you plan to move on to something else?

"Oh, definitely. I'm actually looking at this time. But I found that not having a degree is not a real hindrance because an awful lot of people would rather hire you for experience. But if you really do want to get a position which—that you've gone to college to get, you should have at least your BA. I just took the CS pace test and that's one area I'm looking at. I would like to get into something with a little more stability and a little bit less hectic."

As this respondent also pointed out, work in a CAP is not very stable since funding is a constant struggle; the CAP program is constantly threatened with the possibility of cancellation, thus, one's job could be eliminated at any time. The lack of funding in CAP has become a traditional problem and a major concern of the CAP worker. It is something that he would rather not deal with. Finding another job would eliminate the problem.

However, as long as the CAP worker is in the agency, money is a problem than he constantly deals with. To a certain extent, the CAP worker accepts the lack of money as a traditional CAP problem that no one can change. In a more emotional respect, however, the CAP worker blames the administration for the lack of money.

"When you come to a point where there's no funds, you wonder how it happened. That's what they're getting paid for (the administrators). If they're not doing that job then they should be helping us do our job. But you don't find them doing that either."

Administrators are seen as far-removed, distant, and uninterested in the workers' situation.
"When I worked here before, I had a super who was willing to get out and really work with us. But now we seldom see our super, which is really a bad deal, and she has somebody over the top of her and he's doing something you don't know anything about. You don't see these people. They're on the fourth floor, we're on the first. We should be a lot closer. We never see them. I thought it was good for awhile. We were able to do our job and everything, but pretty soon--bam--they decided we're the ones they're going to lay off. They picked the ones to stay with the most seniority. But it irritates us who are getting laid off because there is money that could be gotten, but it isn't. So that's what we are going to do. But it makes us mad because we're not getting paid to do that."

Moving on looks even better when the CAP worker sees that by leaving the agency he can escape the insecurity of the CAP program and the administrators who are aloof to his plight.

SUMMARY

Work in a Community Action Program is trying and challenging to CAP workers, as they themselves have made it quite evident. Work in a CAP program is difficult since many of the "as if" qualities of sociation are non-existent. It is almost impossible to think of CAP as a unit due to the diversity and lack of uniform commitment to the CAP program.
CHAPTER IV

IDEALISM

Idealism is an important element of community action, as well it should be, since community action began as a result of extremely idealistic principles. The idealism of community action is basically the elimination of poverty; low-income people who are in poverty are the recipients of services of community action. However, the elimination of poverty is not a simple or commonly accepted concept. To eliminate poverty, certain low-income individuals have to receive services and assistance which other individuals cannot receive because of their higher income. In essence, CAP programs create a privileged class; a class which is envied, disliked, and criticized.

In doing his job, the CAP worker has to reconcile the idealism of the CAP program, which includes his job, with the criticisms of others. Here, then, are the various aspects of this reconciliation as the CAP worker strives to create a complimentary image of himself and his job.

Eliminating Poverty

The elimination of poverty is the purpose of CAP programs. But merely eliminating poverty by such methods as "give-away-handouts" is generally not acceptable to the community. To properly eliminate poverty, the CAP worker, instead, seeks to "let the low-income help themselves."
This is how one idealistic CAP worker stated it:

"I think you do it like Paul says: you don't give them a fish, you teach them how to fish. In other words, you don't strip them of more of their pride. You don't just say, 'Hey, just take the fish and I'll help you and I'll do it for you'; you say, 'Listen you dummy, I'm going to teach you how to fish. You go out and catch your own damn meal. OK?' That gives them pride, man, and he says, "Hey, I don't need that guy's help anymore. I can do it myself." OK, we get him a job, or into a career, or we help him through some rough times, and like human beings, we all need to be helped at one time or another in our lives. No man is an island only to himself; which I'm sure you're familiar with John saying...We all need it; it's not necessarily taking charity, it's just being human, 'cause all human beings need...now, there are some that say they don't, but those are the kind that don't think they're human and they try to be better than human."

As this worker points out, the "letting low-income help themselves" is not only good for the CAP program, but also for the client. That is, "letting the low-income help themselves" allows the client to retain his self-pride and self-confidence. This is something welfare cannot do.

"Letting the low-income help themselves" allows the CAP worker to mediate the give-away aspects of the program and also to quiet the criticisms. After all, giving charity is a clever ploy while helping others is merely being human--and who would want to willingly admit to being inhuman? No one, really; at least the CAP worker hopes for that.

The CAP worker uses a number of other concepts to mediate criticisms of his job: empathy is one of them.

"I was at the bottom emotionally, everyway...sigh...but I've always had good friends who were really good people. I went to Arizona; met a lot of really beautiful people. Met some real meat-heads down there...Dr. Livix. He was there, and...I kept fighting. You know, the self-image of these clients we had are not good, I'm on the bottom. I'm not good; I'm just the slime that they scrape up off the sidewalk. If that's what we have to do, this agency, that's
what we gotta do is say, 'Hey, you're not scum. You're a human being and you've got feelings, man, and you got goodness inside of ya.' See, I don't think there's such a thing as a bad person."

The CAP worker empathizes with his clients, as this respondent illustrates. He was one of the people on the bottom just a short time ago. However, through the help of others, he has been able to come back on top. Likewise, the CAP worker will be able to bring other deprived individuals up to his level.

Also, as this respondent points out, "There's no such thing as a bad person." These low-income people are "good" people: they have just had hard luck or have merely been misdirected.

The Reality of Low-Income Problems

The CAP worker is eager to point out that low-income people are real. They are not made-up, trivial characters. On the contrary, the problems of the low-income are acutely more real than those of other individuals.

"I mean people that are on the bottom—that are not rich. They got to bust their ass just to make ends meet. This is my favorite neighborhood in Great Falls. I love this neighborhood. I don't want to go down by Gibson Park, but up here, right around here are people I like. Well, I'll tell you, upper middle-class strata society have a strong propensity to invent problems for themselves. They do stupid things, purposely, so they'll bring on problems. Unless a person has problems, he doesn't feel as though he is living, so these rich people don't have any problems, they don't got any problems, so they invent little problems. They get nervous, they get ulcers, and they invent little things to get problems. OK, gut-level people are people on the low-income strata that don't have problems, and they are also sensitive to others. When I walked down the street—I've traveled all over the world, and I've seen a lot of garbage—a lot of garbage—been in some of the worst ghettos in the world, have friends who live there: I mean I slept overnight in Bedford-Steyssvent (a black ghetto in Brooklyn) with a couple of black dude friends of mine. In their house I saw a rat that was as big as a coyote: I mean a rat--
The CAP worker wants to show that the low-income deserve the services that they receive. By showing this, the CAP worker is in effect justifying his job. These low-income people, as the CAP worker represents them, do not "invent" their problems; they are problems they cannot control. As the above respondent points out, they are "gut-level people." That is, these low-income are deprived people who have no frills or extras in their lives or their personalities. They are basically good people who can be trusted, and who, although lacking the comforts and frills in life, are still sensitive to others. This, of course, is an extremely idealistic representation of the low-income client; it does not present any of the shortcomings of the low-income. The low-income do have shortcomings, but the CAP worker will usually not admit them to himself or to other workers.

To suggest that the low-income do not need the help from the CAP program is an insult to the CAP worker, as well as to the low-income people themselves.

Q. Do some people say that they don't need help?

"Right, they're the ones who say they think they're above everybody. I have no toleration, I have no time, I have very little feelings for somebody who thinks they're above everybody. No matter who I'm sitting next to, Al, I'm equal. The one thing that I would like my clients to feel is this: that who I'm sitting next to, I'm equal to him, but no better. I don't care if it's a wino sitting next to me, H. Thoreau, a millionaire.... humanly speaking, you're equal. Other ways, you're obviously not. But as human beings, you are...you both have feelings, you both have a soul, hearts that bleed, and ..."

As this typical respondent points out, those who accuse the low-income of not needing help or services are intolerant. As it is
pointed out in the above response, low-income people are equal—equal to anyone and everyone. That is, if one person in this country receives a service for whatever reason, then the low-income person should receive an equivalent service.

**Convincing Others**

Of course, not everyone believes in this philosophy. In fact, the CAP worker has to constantly struggle to convince people that his is an accurate attitude. According to the CAP worker, there are really three types of people he has to deal with in regard to the low-income philosophy: those who listen, those who do not listen, and those who are not sure. Those who listen are sympathizers and usually offer assistance to the CAP worker. Those who do not listen are considered a lost cause. These types are passed off as typical hard-core troublemakers. Rather than confront this type of person, the CAP worker takes the stance, 'go around him, let them go their own way.' This, of course, leaves the people who are not sure and do not have their minds made up one way or another. This is the type of person the CAP worker constantly caters to—he is ever eager to show them how good the program is. This type of person is excellent for the CAP idealism because they usually are very ignorant of such programs, especially of the CAP program and its history. So, with this type of person, the CAP worker has an audience that will listen and perhaps even believe the low-income philosophy. There are endless field trips through the program showing these people how the CAP program works. The tours are brought from section to section, where each program is explained while the program staff stands or sits about being friendly and helpful to the visitors. In each presentation, the designated CAP worker narrates
the program, explaining its history and also how it has done so much with very little. The CAP worker points out how inexpensive these programs are; administrative costs are low; about 10%, whereas other social programs have administrative costs of 15% - 20%. The narration also includes the ways in which the CAP program has financially contributed to the community by bringing in large amounts of money in terms of services and wages. The narration will also point out how the building was completely remodeled and improved by CAP workers who donated their time. And at times, the narration points out that the coffee everyone is drinking is bought by the CAP workers themselves; not with program money, but with their own.

The tours and the audience let the CAP worker and the CAP program shine. Explaining the program allows the CAP worker to be idealist. Listening to CAP workers would make one believe that poverty would have been eliminated five years ago if only the CAP program had been given enough money and cooperation from the bureaucrats--the state and federal officials. Bureaucratic separateness is important to the CAP worker's idealism in that it allows the CAP worker to talk about the bureaucrats as "them" and CAP as "us." Of course, the CAP program is the underdog because it does not have the programs it should have; in effect, CAP workers' excellent ideas have been overlooked. "Us" and "them" allows the CAP program to be the visionary that is not listened to; the dreamer that is laughed at; "us and them" lets the CAP workers unwind their favorite idealistic conceptions of themselves. After listening to this subtle but fervent woeful plea, who could dislike the CAP program or refuse them anything? No one, least of all the CAP workers, would want it that way.
Cooperation

Depending upon others' approval is a long standing tradition with CAP programs. The CAP programs not only seek the approval of the general public through tours and other public relations gimmicks, but they also depend on the approval of other agencies in the community. The overall CAP program offers very few direct services. As a result, CAP clients who need certain services that the CAP program does not provide must be referred to other social service programs within the city. This is what the CAP program calls information and referral, and it does a lot of this type of work. Ever since the CAP program first started, about eleven years ago, information and referral have been a priority. Quite obviously, information and referral depends upon the cooperation of other social service programs. Cooperation is an extremely idealistic component of community action; it is important not only to the CAP program, but also to the interaction of CAP workers with others. Getting other agencies to cooperate is not a simple, straightforward task; rather, these other agency people must be convinced that present cooperation is the best possible. Cooperation provides an excellent course for the CAP worker to not only do his job, but to also portray himself and his program favorably. The CAP worker will go around to various agencies asking for assistance, either for general principle or for a particular client. It is at meetings like these that the CAP worker is able to point out how working together can help eliminate poverty. Reflecting on creating cooperation, a respondent said:

"I would say probably the most important thing about myself is my excitement and enthusiasm. I feel I have zeal. My own personal excitement for my work, my zeal, is insatiable. I mean they are unequivocally insatiable, most people, when you settle down on a job, your excitement settles down."
The more settled in I get, the more I work. I hope it's always that way. Once I get to the regression, I'm in trouble. For most people that settle down, their excitement settles down. I'm just the opposite--now I'm not saying I'm bragging. I'm just saying that's me. I'm not better than anybody, and that is good for me; it may not be good for you, but I don't care, it ain't you, it's me, so you know, so...and it seems the more I get into my work, the more excited I get, and I'd say that's by far the most important thing. Excitement is one of the most contagious things in the world. Now, I firmly believe that until this whole staff gets terribly excited, and the whole building just hums with excitement, the community is never going to get excited. Once this staff is excited when they're in here and when they're out, and they work and they live, and they love it, man, that's going to be contagious pretty soon. This whole community is going to be jumping up and down. That's what I'm trying to do with my C.R. A lot of people on the staff—that really takes them back, so I'm trying to do it very subtly; I'm trying to be a sneaky bastard. I'm trying to get them excited in little ways, and not before they come around. But I know, Al, that that community is not going to get excited until we are excited. How can they get excited about it if we're not? There's a lot of people in here who are not excited. They do their work; they go home; they are not excited about what they do. I am."

As the respondent indicates, getting cooperation involves creating enthusiasm and excitement. Likewise, this is an exciting and enthusiastic part of working for a CAP program. It is also enjoyable:

"Yes, people have really changed over the years. Their attitude toward our agency is a lot better than it was. They seem more ready to cooperate. It makes it more enjoyable to work with other agencies rather than to fight them."

As the above response indicates, cooperating is more enjoyable than "fighting them." When the CAP worker gains cooperation, he knows that he has projected a complimentary image. Getting the job done is important to the CAP worker, but getting others' approval is important to the job. The CAP worker takes a dim view of compromising the ideal of cooperation.
"With Aftercare, we approached them in spring and told them that we needed their cooperation and if they didn't provide it we would have a tendency not to hire their kids. Because if they weren't going to back us and make us take their kids we weren't going to cooperate with them."

As this quote indicates, sometimes the CAP worker has to compromise in order to get the cooperation he wants; this compromise can involve a trade-off or a threat. This is something the CAP worker does not enjoy doing. It is compromising his ideal of cooperation. Even compromise, however, is accepted for the sake of the client.

"Utilizing community resources helps get a good name. Sometimes we don't agree with what they have to say, but we do coordinate activities to help the client."

Another aspect of the ideal of cooperation is "knowledge of community resources." This is how a concerned respondent explained it.

Q. Do you get cooperation from the staff?

"It just depends. I can't expect too much from summertime counselors. But full-time staff--anything they can get involved in--just being aware if something comes up NYC can use. It doesn't have to be the bigwigs. Just individuals who are interested in kids."

Having knowledge about community resources in order to acquire assistance is just part of being a dedicated CAP worker. As the respondent indicates, having concern for clients and doing one's job in such a way so that this concern is perceivable do not require being a "bigwig."

Humanistic Standards

As has been pointed out, CAP workers are extremely idealistic; so much that they do not usually measure things by objective standards. Rather, they use their ideals as the measuring instrument. The previous respondent indicated this extremely well. Another important example of the CAP idealism concerns clients:
"Actually, what I did was work with people in the bureau of apprenticeship training. We had contracts with them, and we placed people in work positions. He would go out and have a talk with employers and try to get them to open up a training position in their agency. In those days, the fact that out of ten people, one succeeded, it was a success. I don't think they go for that now-a-days. Handicapped trainees would come in and stay until the last day so they wouldn't have to take a permanent position, but at least they were getting all this training."

Successful programs do not indicate that every low-income client was helped. Rather, as the above respondent indicates, even if only one person out of ten succeeds, then the entire program is a success. In other words, the CAP worker does not measure his success by objectives or norms which are standardized. However, as the respondent also indicates, "I don't think they go for that nowadays."

A CAP program deviates from the normal standard in that the CAP worker likes to think he is more flexible and understanding because he does not reject needy individuals. Rather, the CAP program philosophy is to give the needy a chance, even if they have failed, or have the potential for failure. Another CAP worker put it this way:

"I think that's ridiculous. There's only one criteria that I think that qualifies for this agency...and that should be that you really know what it's like to suffer; what it's like to be on the bottom; that you really know what it's like to be in despair, and, that most of all, that you really care about those people that you're serving. If you don't care about them, you're not going to do the job. But if you can be really gut-level, inasmuch as you really care about what you're doing, and you want to help these people, and if you have that, I really think that's cool. I don't care if you're expert, or what, no matter what you are."

As it has been pointed out in this chapter, idealism is an important concept for the CAP worker. It should be remembered that the CAP worker is a low-status, marginally educated individual who does not always get the respect that he thinks he deserves. Being
idealistic is his way of showing others his goodness as a worker and professional. Idealism helps to gain the CAP worker respect.
CHAPTER V

DISILLUSIONMENT

Q. Why are you leaving?

"The biggest reason is that the pay is too low here. I have a large family; there are six of us. I have my own home. I have a house payment. Financially, I just can't make it here. Second would be disenchantment with the way things are run around here."

Q. What are you disenchanted with?

"I think the lack of good management is my biggest reason for disenchantment. Perhaps my background. I came here from a bureaucratic type agency, the ES, where punctuality is stressed. I'm a very punctual type person. I want to make sure I'm here every morning at 7:45, and when I see people drift in at 10:30, 11:00, 12:00, when things are really pressing to be done, really irks me. It's right up the line."

Disenchantment or disillusionment, like idealism, is part of the CAP workers' experience within a CAP program.

Whereas idealism reveals adherence to a belief, disillusionment reveals a separation from a belief. Where idealism is positive, disillusionment is negative. This chapter deals with the CAP workers' disillusionment with the program and even with some of its members. Revealed in this chapter is the CAP worker during his most critical and negative situations and encounters.

The CAP Ideology

The purpose of the CAP program is to eliminate poverty by assisting those people who do not have work, adequate housing, adequate
medical care, or enough food to eat. This is the job of community action. When community action began, its job was quite clear: help these people. So programs and strategies were devised to alleviate the conditions that contributed to poverty, and money was appropriated to be used for the elimination of poverty.

CAP programs were entrusted to carry out their responsibilities and spend money for the elimination of poverty. The impetus for the CAP program came from the federal level, not the local level. That is, the idea of community action was imported.

Since its inception, community action has had to depend upon others for its existence. Money for programs must be legislated and approved on a federal, state, and even county level before the CAP program is able to use or even receive funds. Consequently, the CAP program depends upon others for its existence. The CAP does not mind cooperating and working with others, but when to do so means giving them virtual control over a program, the CAP worker finds such a prospect irksome and distasteful. Instead of helping, the interaction of the CAP program with state and federal government, it is felt, actually hinders the CAP programs. Other government agencies can also provide the CAP worker with a source of disillusionment. This is how one respondent put it:

"Gosh, you ask for help, you get it. Of course, that's because we go directly to the person who has that. I don't think it's the fault of the people, it's the fault of the federal government. In the first place, why throw out a dangling worm for the poor and then you get the poor to come in here and get to hanging on the worm; you might say, feeding on it. Is that what they do in HEW? No. I don't mean they didn't have pressure at one time. If our staff in H.S. had received the HSST training
that they were supposed to be getting, they would have been in excellent shape today."

In the figurative speech of the CAP respondent, the federal government provides the bait and the CAP program goes after the hook. The CAP workers dislike being on the "hook." They feel that the feds have compromised the idea of community action; that they have withdrawn their support for the program which has left the CAP worker with nothing to do but beg for his money. The CAP worker resents this fact.

"Well, because our funding comes down month to month, year to year, and it's totally contingent on political reasons, I doubt very much our needs assessment is ever read. If it is, probably two years after our grant. Basically, we use stats which are six years old because this is considered adequate by the government; and I'm not saying it isn't good; it's a basically good profile."

This CAP worker has indicated that, due to the political nature of the funding, the CAP worker feels the "needs assessment" of his clients will probably not even be used; rather, the CAP worker believes that funds are doled out to political friends. In essence, the CAP worker resents this situation because he is actually being managed by a political funding process. This is an extremely unidealistic method of management. As our frustrated respondent put it:

"But yet we might go for that funding because we know that funding is available. So, you see, actually we are being managed by where the funding is, not by what our needs assessment says. I find it really frustrating when I know I'm doing something that really wouldn't be used or looked at. It's not the state's fault either: it's the fed's. We're not really managing by MBO. We really--today we'll get a call from the state and they say, 'There is money here. Get your proposal in.' They have to look at where the funding is too. The state is a little unorganized, at times, but I think they are getting better."

Ironically, what the work the CAP worker and the CAP program
are supposed to accomplish appears to be summarily dismissed by the political nature of the funding mechanism. Under such conditions, CAP workers find it hard to believe that CAP programs are supposed to help eliminate poverty, or even assess conditions. Rather, as it has been expressed by the CAP workers, a desperate situation has been created; funding has been gained just to continue staffing and programs, rather than to help low-income people or solve their problems. This is how one respondent put it:

"But half of it is see....funding in the areas that already exist and need and, of course, also...the main role is to make sure to find out what the real problems of the poor are, and develop a system to determine proof--you know--not something that somebody is dreaming up. And, of course, applying for things that you need and not for things to put your staff on."

Q. Does that happen often--applying for money just to carry staff?

"Well, I think we do to a degree. In the first place, as soon as we know what congress is thinking in allocating money, we think that's where we should be."

According to the CAP workers, then, the political nature of funding has destroyed some of the idealism of the CAP program and created disillusionment within the minds of the workers. This lack of ideals of the CAP program is important, not only to the program itself, but also to the CAP workers' interaction with others. That is, CAP workers can no longer decide for themselves what they should do or how they should present themselves or their programs. Rather, some politician, who has no knowledge and very little concern for their program, has the authority to allocate funds which will mean the continuance or discontinuance of the CAP program.

Historically, the purpose of community action was to give
low-income people representation for the purpose of bettering their lives. But as is obvious from the CAP workers' comments, much of this principle has been lost thus far. Why it has been lost is not as important as the fact that it no longer is a part of the CAP program; it is a memory or something longed for. In this vein, CAP workers are not only aware that these principles no longer exist in the program, but that the program itself is no longer viable. This is how one concerned worker stated it:

"I don't mean that energy isn't the thing we shouldn't be concerned about. But suppose we didn't do energy at all. Energy, to me, is the money that should have passed the council instead of the energy resource committee. Of course, as Carl put it, and I believe he's right, CAP was meant to die within ten years, because they keep taking money from one area and tying it up and then sticking it in another area, keeping you so confused. How could you really follow up and do a good job unless you stayed right with the federal regulations to determine when the money is available...keeping on top of new legislation and the president. I don't think that money was meant to be so hard to get. If it was, they'd take it out of the hands of a non-profit corporation, make a public agency out of it, and let's get the money to the people who need it. It ain't that you don't believe in the agency or the program. I do."

The lack of support and funding for the CAP program has taken away much of the meaning for the CAP workers and ideals that they once had. The present CAP worker has little confidence that his work has any meaning—that it will eliminate poverty. This is how one disillusioned worker expressed the feeling:

"What kind of a dent have we really made? Lately we haven't made a lot of change. Maybe we don't have the participation of the low-income group anymore. We no longer accomplish anything. People maybe don't care. Maybe people don't come to meetings anymore because they don't accomplish anything anymore."
The Administration

The CAP worker also finds the administration disillusioning.

This is how one worker put it:

"I feel our agency's administration has failed now in their staff. I don't feel the program, in general, has failed, but I think it's because of the administration."

The failure of the CAP program, in the eyes of the CAP worker, then is also blamed upon the administrators, as well as upon the lack of funding and support. Another worker expressed the same idea in a different manner:

Q. Compare the agency with the way it used to be and the way it is now.

"In the last three to four months I would have to say it has gotten worse. Especially in the last three to four months it has gotten worse, going downhill from the time of the new administration was appointed. I think we've accomplished a lot more in the past."

As these workers have shown, the administrators are important to the ideals of the CAP workers in that they carry out the ideals of the CAP program. If the administrators do not do their jobs properly and carry out these ideals, the CAP worker feels that the CAP program is not successful. To the CAP worker, having "good" administrators means having a "good" CAP program. However, this is a different image for the CAP worker to uphold since he holds a low opinion of the CAP administration.

Part of the CAP worker's disillusionment stems from the administrator's perceived incompetence. This is how a concerned respondent phrased his concern:

"Administration is trying to get involved into too many things that they don't know anything about. They weren't right there to see what was going on. They tended to get too picky on programs they knew nothing about. Like the time we were trying to plan for youth. Then administration
took down a completely different plan. We spent a lot of time going on the needs of what we could use revenue sharing for. And they turned it around the other way."

In occupational hierarchies, there are no doubt some positions which are entrusted with lofty principles and ideals of behavior. Any hint of a compromise of these ideals is disillusioning. The administration of the CAP program represents such a compromise. The workers of the CAP program expect objective, concerned administrators who are above pettiness, partiality, and favoritism. However, the workers of the CAP program do not believe that their administration meets these ideals.

The CAP workers conceive of an ideal administration as a guiding instrument which possesses enough knowledge and wisdom to direct the CAP program on a sure and steady course. But the present administration, in the eyes of the worker, does not fulfill this ideal conception in that it supposedly lacks the ability to be supportive and aware of the programs' needs. Rather than guiding and helping the CAP workers under them, the present administration is seen as misdirecting and compromising the needs of the programs they administer. Their influence on programs is seen as "meddlesome" and their involvement is considered to be guided by ignorance rather than wisdom.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the CAP worker's disillusionment. Community action is many things to the workers whose workaday life is constituted by the CAP program. To the beginning worker, CAP is seen as a hope, a promise of change. To the person who has become involved with CAP and worked in it for ten years, this hope has vanished and been replaced with disillusionment and the realization that
work in a CAP program is a social learning process in which the social motives and preoccupations of individuals become truly transparent.

These are the words of a dedicated ten-year veteran of the program:

"It was just an entirely different kind of dedication than it is today; and now, today, even though I am a director and can't receive a lot of benefits as are, as time off, I, myself, feel that I deserve some time off, and I see myself as more selfish than nine years ago. I feel that that was built into me as that was going through holding the bag, and doing all the work and other people got all the benefits. I felt it was kind of a ---- well, I imagine it was a growing process for me, but it made me learn to be more bitter towards people and not trust people as much as I'd wanted to. I felt nine years ago I was totally naive about people doing things because they thought it was the right thing to do. Today I don't feel that way. I see people as out to get anything they can get out of any person. It's a very realistic look at it today which I did not look at nine years ago. I was in very much of a dream world, even though I lived through it and it worked fine for nine years. I do feel, and see, it was not a realistic look at things because no one else that worked with or associated with involving the job in any way felt that way at all. It seemed like I was the only one. There were a few of us that had the same kind of feelings, the same concept--wanted to help each other--always helped each other and always helped the people that always didn't help anyone else. Today's world is really changing. People that are here that started in the beginning--there's possibly three or four people that have been right from the beginning of the program--they are still the dedicated people; but they still feel--and I'm sure that I am speaking for them because they voiced to me how they feel, and I feel very much the same way--that I should not, and they should not have to take all the brunt end of everything; that we should have rights too. Why get all the fringe benefits and all the gravy--good raises--and we, who have been here and struggled for years under anxieties and wondering if we're going to be here from one month to the next, suffer and not even get any raises for the quality work we have been able to produce?"
CHAPTER VI

THE CLIENT

The community action worker's task is difficult to forget; the clients make sure that the CAP worker is always thinking of them.

The CAP client is the actual recipient or possible recipient of services. Social service workers from different agencies are considered co-professionals, not clients. The CAP client is the person who comes in and asks for assistance or requests services for himself or his family. Requesting services makes the client different from the CAP worker--the client and the CAP worker both have to reconcile the fact that the client is needy and that he should also be ministered to. Quite consistently, the client/worker relationship eventually assumes the form of the client asking for help and the CAP worker trying to fulfill his job by assisting the client. However, not every client is treated or defined identically; different clients are treated differently, essentially because one client may not fulfill the "ideal client" role.

The ideal client is an abstract idea which is expressed conceptually, but is never realized. Clients do not have "real" properties which are objectifiable. Rather, clients are defined in terms of idealized expectations, and this definition of the client is used by the CAP worker when he interacts with co-workers and the client.

To the CAP worker, there are essentially three types of clients.
First is the "good" client; second is the "pitiful" client; and third is the "bad" client.

The Good Client

The "good" client exemplifies the "ideal" client. This is how the good client was described:

"I guess I like people that try, or at least give the impression of trying. I don't care about their skills. I only care about if they are willing to work with me and try. And being honest with me. I don't like to play the games and find out two days later that what they said wasn't true. But anyone who is willing to try."

The good client, as defined by the CAP worker, is the one who tries. Regardless of the client's background or skills, the CAP worker is eager to consider the willing client as a worthy individual who deserves to be served. Also, the good client does not lie to the CAP worker. Dishonest clients or questionable clients are not unusual to the CAP worker since he has to evaluate clients in order to distinguish honest from dishonest ones. The good client makes best use of the CAP worker's time and supports the claim that he is a good judge of people. The good client reinforces the CAP worker's conception of himself. This is how an exemplary worker stated it:

"So, I don't know how to determine success."

Q. Does it give you satisfaction to be successful?

"Yeah. If you see some kid who starts changing, that's really good. My primary goal, even if a kid doesn't succeed--he knows he has a choice. Even if he wants to quit school, he knows he can go out and get a job and develop some self-confidence so he doesn't have to go through high school. Kids who were considered a lost cause have become successful."

Although success is an important modality of experience in dealing with clients, the CAP workers are hard pressed to objectify
their measurement of success with clients. In fact, the CAP worker's definition of a successful client and a good client is quite disembodied, without standard qualities. As the above respondent reveals, success is quite relative. Even if the client fails, or in this case, even if the client drops out of school, the CAP worker will feel confident that his work has been influential if his client is able to realize alternatives, assess his situation, and devise possibilities which are suitable to him, but may not necessarily be middle class. The client's dropping out of school may eliminate the possibility of his becoming a white collar worker; such as a teacher, lawyer, sociologist, etc., but despite the client's failure to achieve professional status, he is able to meet the responsibilities of the occupation he has chosen. Regardless of the client's choice, the CAP worker admires him for his ability to recognize that he has responsibilities to his choices.

The CAP worker has a humanistic conception of the client; he sees the client as a victim of circumstances or one who has succumbed to certain social conditions. In this sense, the client is considered unique; that is, different from other low-income people. A concerned and open-minded CAP worker described it thusly:

Q. What do you think of the clients? You've probably come into contact with a lot of them. What's your impression of them?

"Well, I lived with them. Now, if I lived like our clients do--well, take this for example. When I was in Arizona, I was living in ten steps below these; I was in the gutter. You better believe it. OK. I've lived with them. I think we have to go back and we have to bring a few psychological terms into this. When you're on the bottom and you're low-income, and you're poverty, you live in despair. It can't be escaped. You're whole life is despair. You just feel like you're never going to make it. Another important thing--
we're trying to get people to be productive human beings, so that they're secure emotionally, and they're happy, and they're good human beings. I don't care whether they ever become tax payers. I do care that these people are productive human beings. Not productive in a monetary sense, but in a human sense—a human way, so I think the only way that we can do that is to give them that pride, self-esteem, dignity that they have been stripped of. OK. Now what happens when clients say, 'I don't want to fight.' Well, their environment, man, they don't have the inner strength and so they give up. And what happens when they give up? They don't care. And when they don't care? They quit a job, and they get messed up and drinking booze, and they let their morals go to hell...and so, you know. I think it's sad, and I think the only way we're going to get these people to be productive people is...and so many people think we're trying to get people to be productive citizens, taxpayers, and all this. We are, that's true, but that's not, BY FAR, the most important thing."

In his humanistic manner, the CAP worker does not want to encumber the client with his job prejudices; he would rather maintain a client-centered relationship. The CAP worker, however, demands only that the client "fight"—muster the courage to be—regardless of the situation or social condition. The CAP worker wants the client to put the past behind and to concentrate on the future. In the eyes of the CAP worker, the good client is able to fulfill this ideal conception.

The Pitiful Client

Between the two polar extremes of the good client and the bad client is the intermediary category of the pitiful client. The good client is the honest, deserving client. The bad client is the undeserving con-artist. The pitiful client can best be described as the "klutz"—the person who does not fit in; who does not know the appropriate manners of presentation and demeanor. The pitiful client's slip-ups are considered antics and comprise humorous and entertaining topics of conversation during coffee breaks. The good client contrib-
utes pridefulness to the CAP worker; the bad client, as will be seen, contributes problems; and the pitiful client provides entertainment.

The pitiful client is not seen as having any type of volition, either good or bad. Rather, the pitiful client is seen as a bumbling individual who must be guided and taken care of because he lacks the awareness and judgment to do it himself. The pitiful client allows the CAP worker to exercise his paternalistic prerogative. The pitiful client can be manipulated and helped, but the essential difference is that the CAP worker can feel that he, not the client, is in control.

Professionalism may possibly be at the heart of the relationship with the pitiful client since the pitiful client fits the ideal conception of a low-income person, in the sense that he appears to be at the mercy of the social conditions which surround him. The pitiful client's lack of volition and good sense make him a prime target for the professional services and programs offered by the CAP program.

The "Bad Client"

"Last month one of those hippie people from the Rainbow Family. The guy had been here since one o'clock. They needed food because the lady was pregnant and they wanted to get out of town and hurry up, hurry up. All the time he was here he was talking about the system—kept running it down. And I thought, 'Why are you here? You're coming to the system and asking them to help you and you're just putting us down.' And he was so upset. He couldn't imagine why, when he snapped his fingers, he didn't get what he wanted right now. Like we had to go through three different agencies to get what he wanted. At the end, we got them food; a place to stay overnight—because it was too late to leave—we got them a bus ticket to Choteau; we got them breakfast the next morning, and he was running it down the whole time. So we figured there would be more people coming through Great Falls like that—and there's no way we can keep doing that. You just have to work with him whether he likes it or not; he has to accept what you give people and see that their needs are taken care of."
As this concerned respondent shows, the bad client is ungrateful for the services he receives from the CAP program. To the bad client, the CAP worker is merely a servant who is there to cater to his needs. The CAP worker resents such a definition. From my observations, the CAP worker feels he has to answer only to his peers and others within the same section or program. Any criticisms or manipulations from the client will allow the CAP worker to define the client as a bad client, a nuisance. Once the CAP worker defines a client as a nuisance, he will use various schemes to get rid of the client. First, if the client calls, the CAP worker will have the secretary screen the calls so that he will not have to talk to the client. This may go on for a couple of days. The CAP worker will then either talk to the client or try to have someone else talk to him. Usually the CAP worker will have to talk to the client since the CAP workers have their own personal case load.

If the client comes in and corners the CAP worker in his office, the CAP worker has a number of schemes to get out of the corner; he may say that he has an appointment in a few minutes, or he may give a distress signal to another worker who will then call the cornered CAP worker on the phone on some false pretense. The cornered worker can then make an excuse to the unwanted client that he has some pressing business to handle.

Staying clear of the bad client is the main preoccupation of the CAP worker. Another method for staying clear of the bad client is to give him the "run around" by conveniently referring him to other agencies. In this way, the CAP worker can disguise his motives very
well. First, he can appear to be cooperative with other agencies, and second, he can appear to be helpful to the client.

The CAP worker desires to appear as helpful and concerned, even to the bad client, since he does not want to get the reputation that he does not care about clients. This would put him in poor standing with other service agency personnel. One method for avoiding a bad reputation as a worker is to stay clear of bad clients altogether. Pawning off bad clients to other workers is an often used ploy. A CAP worker who wants to rid himself of a bad client will usually make an excuse to another worker—such as being busy or having more urgent business—and ask him to take over the client as a favor. The bad client is not only important in himself, but also as a form of socialization for other CAP workers. After awhile most CAP workers will understand the ploys and try to politely decline. The declining of help to another worker is quite difficult since cooperation is one of the ideals of the CAP program. There are, however, a number of counterploys CAP workers can use.

Being too busy with other matters is an excellent counterploy for avoiding a client. This method works best if the worker who declines has an appointment outside the building; even if he does not, he can make one up and make sure that he will be gone an appropriate length of time.

Incompatibility with the client is another excuse a worker can give to avoid working with a bad client. The CAP worker will say that he and his client do not get along because they have incompatible personalities, or that he cannot work with the client because they do not get along.
If the CAP worker does not decline in a convincing manner, the other worker can go to a director and try to use the director as leverage to get rid of the bad client. This method is a last resort since most directors try to avoid interfering in such matters.

To summarize, clients are important contingencies in the CAP worker's career. The CAP worker is defined through the clients he works with. Consequently, the CAP worker tries to fulfill the ideal conceptions of his occupation while also being selective about his clients. He has to negotiate this relationship delicately or have his reputation with clients tarnished.
CHAPTER VII

THE IMAGE OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Community Action workers have to define themselves according to what others think of them. The community constitutes one of the audiences that define the community action worker and the nature of his work, so the community action worker takes it into significant account. The ideal that mediates the interaction between the CAP worker and his community audience is the "image of community action."

The Image of Community Action

The image of community action is an interesting one sociologically. The phrase "the image of community action" can best be understood analogously. For instance, if psychiatrists are spoken of as an occupational group the public image could be 'head shriners'; the public image of professors would be 'eggheads' or 'those guys in their ivory towers'; and the public image of laborers would be 'red-necks'. The names and images for particular occupational groups are infinite. Nevertheless, sociologically, individuals act toward various occupational groups with an idealized conception in mind. My research experiences with the community action worker have revealed a similar pattern of interaction.

The community action worker, like other occupational groups, is labeled according to the occupational class to which he belongs. In
his own case, however, the community action worker expressed a very important problem—he felt that the community has "no image" of him. A lack of an image interferes with the community action worker's conception of himself as a professional since he likes to think of himself as a professional—a visible and recognized contributor to the community. However, a "no image" conception is a threat to the community action worker's concept of himself as a significant person. Part of the reason why he may not have an image is due to the CAP program's history. This is how one concerned respondent stated the problem:

Q. Do you think you have a lot of cooperation with other agencies or on state level?

"Oh, we have some cooperation with other agencies in town, but undoubtedly and beyond anywhere, these other agencies feel we are not professionals. I think all the other agencies in town look down on us."

Q. Why?

"Past action. Lack of follow-through. This agency is great for picking up the ball, running with it for a while, and just dropping it. I didn't realize I'd have so many negative things to say and so few positive ones."

As this respondent has pointed out, the unprofessional image of community action is due to a lack of professional behavior in the past. This is an historical fact the CAP worker has to contend with. One worker was so sensitive to what the community thought of him that he felt like violently expressing his thoughts:

"No, I almost came to the point of being violent instead of....I feel like first punching them in the nose because I do have a sense of loyalty. Then I feel obligated to explain...no, this is wrong...this is what we should do and this is what I do. I don't do the punching. Rather than this, I defend the agency and tell them exactly what we do. I stress some of our accomplishments like NYC, Family Planning....."
The lack of a professional image both alienates and also creates a sense of loyalty and obligation to the agency. Most of the people interviewed felt that an image of professionalism in community action was lacking, but could be improved to the point where outsiders would gain confidence in the agency. The following respondent summarizes the problem of no image and its solution very well:

"I honestly believe that the middle class individual in the community has a very low opinion and regard for us. We have seen since its inception, since 1965, a lot of mismanagement, a lot of bad things happening and these bad tastes are like the bad apple in the barrel: they just stay there. To give you a prime example, I went to the dentist back in January. When I walked in the woman asked, 'Are you still working for the employment office?' I said, 'No, I'm with O.I.' And she went, 'Oh, no.' She says, 'Nothing personal, but I sure think that place is blankety, blankety, blank.' You know, just an ordinary person but they have a very low opinion of the agency."

Q. What are they negative about?

"Misconception as to what we actually do. They think we're a give-away program. The welfare department, in their opinion, is give-away, with restrictions. We are a give-away program with no restrictions. That is the opinion they have; anybody who comes in."

Q. How do you overcome that?

"They believe there are a lot of incompetents who work here because through the years we have had some incompetents and have made the headlines. I'm sure that the agency needs a real good PR program, but I don't think that the one we have is adequate."

Q. What's inadequate about it?

"Saturation. Really get over accomplishments."

As this respondent points out, if the community action worker is to instill professionalism and be defined as a professional, then the CAP worker has to show himself as being more competent. In relation to that competence the CAP worker also felt that a public relations
scheme should be developed which would redefine the CAP worker and make the public more aware of his work. The public is seen as redeemable and not completely alienated from community action.

The image others have of community action is not only important to the CAP worker's professional image, but also to his relationship with others. One important part of the CAP worker's social relationships was his family, who, like the community, were also quite aware of the negative image the CAP program had and were quite concerned about it. This is how one respondent expressed it:

Q. What does your family think about your working for CAP?

"My husband is still stressed. He had no idea or concept of CAP. My family didn't like it at all. There are welfare biases in my own family. And--those Indians. My family didn't understand food stamps; that they help agriculture as well as welfare. They didn't have any idea why it was set up. They don't know what I'm doing, but believe in it more. They've become more interested and open. They see my clients better but they see our efforts as futile."

As this respondent illustrates, the family also has a negative image of the CAP program. The families of the CAP worker express a negative image of the CAP program because of the clients that it serves. The low-income and minorities are seen as hopeless and lazy, and anyone who works with them is seen as worthless. The CAP worker feels he has to modify his family's negative image of the program if he is to consider himself and his job worthwhile.

Public Relations Campaign

In addition to his family, the CAP worker must also deal with others on the staff in the agency concerning the image of community action. At the time of these interviews, a community relations position
opened and a public relations person was hired. This is how he describes interaction with others concerning public relations:

Q. What is your campaign going to be? How are you going to start it off? Can you tell me a little bit about it?

"Don't forget: 'You make the difference!' That's my slogan. I'll tell you the reason I showed that. We can go out in the community and somebody in the community complains to us about the agency. We make the difference because we're the ones out there who do it. But we can turn around to them and say, 'You make the difference!' because they do. Because our job, in proportion as to how much they are involved. If they really get involved and help us volunteer-wise, financially, then they make the difference. See, in other words, you can say that to anybody and it applies. OK, you want to know about community relations? January second I kick off with an appearance on Audrey Creasy A.M. Great Falls Show. Then I'm starting in on luncheon dates, to speak, to service organizations. I will do a lot of appearances and speak for us."

Q. What's the problem?

"Well, I don't know if this is the place to tell you or not."

Q. It's all going to be very confidential.

"I know it will, or else...(threat)(joking). There's just a couple of things that I'm totally intolerant of:

1. People hurting other people just because--no, this is just for my own personal reasons...and,
2. Somebody who breaks the bond of confidence. Because I guard confidence with my life, man. I'd never tell anybody. Little white Datsun run right over you...anybody.

OK. He doesn't want me going out there and answering questions about stuff I don't know about; I'm telling you, I ain't going to do that. If I don't know about it, I won't tell them. This is going to be a general overview. In other words, basically...what is there? Six divisions, I think, which is a healthy program...YEC, which helps low-income young people make a little extra money. They have to be in school. They got to be in school. We don't get them jobs if they're not in school. That's an incentive for them to get back into school. Manpower, who helps in the area of
of employment. Planning, who takes care of the agency's funding proposals and three-year objectives sets our goals by meeting with us. We're not going to be in trouble; that's very general. Anybody's who has been here, hell, I've only been here a few months, and I can answer questions, general ones like those. Bud says that work in community development, how you going to answer questions about it? I'm not! I'm not, for my sake...I said, that's down the road. After the first appearance to all these service organizations, I want to be basic, rudimentary information, 'Opp. Inc. is...a community service organization with funds from state/federal government and block grants through the state and local funds.'

Q. Do you think your supervisor may be kind of jealous, defensive?

"Yeah, I think he (supervisor) may be a little. He feels a little threatened because he will tell you, if you ask him, that he has taught speech for seven years. Now, I can tell by talking to the man that he is not a superb speaker. I was tutored in speaking for twenty years by one of the finest tutors in this country, and I lived with him damn near, and now, I'm not saying that Bud may be a better speaker than I am...I'm not saying that. I am giving a speech workshop starting next week. Anybody on the staff. I'm going to give a workshop, each for two hours."

Q. Oh, this is for the public?

"Right, right...Now, Bud says, 'Sure, you've taught and I haven't, and you may be a better speaker than me, but all I'm saying is this: I know the techniques on how to give an excellent public speech; whether I do or not is another thing. Now, if I don't, it's not because I can't, it's because I was timid or I didn't give a shit or just screwed around. I do know how to do it, so if I don't, it isn't because I don't know how. And all I'm going to do in this workshop is work on delivery...you know, a little bit. Some people over gesture and they distract. People are watching their arms flying around and they're not listening...some people never gesture; others, it's distracting...a reasonable amount...I was going to help them this way."

The Need for Reconciliation

As this respondent illustrates, the community relations program also creates negative feelings among the staff. In this case, it is a matter of competition between worker and administrator; there is a
conflict as to who is more qualified to do the community relations program. Hence, the professional image of the CAP worker also interferes with his colleague relationships.

The community relations scheme does not rally the employees of the CAP program together. Rather, the various individuals of the CAP program must be convinced to take part in the project. Ironically, the program which is supposed to rally the community into a unified support for the agency cannot even get unified support from the workers within the agency. This is how the community relations person expressed his frustrations:

"One of the worst things that I've found about my superiors here that makes me ill-at-ease sometimes— it doesn't bother me because I don't allow it to—is they're negative. I want new ideas, a lot of times. I have a lot of new ideas. We haven't a community relations department or a man in here for close to three years. So I've got a lot of new ideas and we've all been sitting back here in our little building doing our work and everybody's cool, calm, and collected, and got it together, but what I'm after is I'm trying to break down the shell. I'm saying, 'Get out on the streets, man, TALK, TELL them, I want everybody...(interruption)

Q. How are the people in the agency accepting it?

"They're coming around slowly, but they're coming around. I think at the beginning they just weren't sure what I could do. They're starting to see I can produce now, and I'm starting to run my own program."

The community action worker is trying to better his professional image in the community as is exemplified by the development of a public relations campaign, the aim of which is to dispell a bad image. However, despite the positive intent of the community relations campaign, negative effects have occurred. The community relations campaign has
brought about dissent and division within the agency. Departments and programs cannot reach a consensus as to what the program should accomplish. Fellow workers are suspicious and envious of each other because of the program. The net result is social divisiveness.

Improving the image CAP has in the community is fraught with irony. The CAP program sought to change its image professionally, to represent an image of a unified program with professional staff independent of petty bickering. Instead, the community relations program has merely let the negative elements of the CAP program re-emerge even more intensely. Hence, the CAP worker is left without a positive or unified conception of himself and his job. As has been pointed out in this chapter, this lack of professional image is quite disturbing to the CAP worker.
CHAPTER VIII

SYNOPSIS

Even as this conclusion is being written, many of the workers who contributed to this study through their interviews are no longer with the CAP program. The lack of money for programs, dissatisfaction, better opportunities, and even the need to merely move on, has contributed to this turnover. However, the work of the Community Action program remains; it is merely being done by different people. And if this study has struck a universal cord, these new people are having similar, if not identical, social experiences within their working roles.

The faces may have changed, but the work continues to be the same. Community Action work is basically an 8 to 5 job with occasional meetings. And the goal of Community Action is still advocacy for the low-income. The bureaucratic organization of the CAP program continues to be self-reliant and independent. Typically, it is not difficult to understand why many workers feel isolated and separated from the bureaucratic structure. In addition to the bureaucratic structure, the CAP worker also has to contend with a number of personal, but nevertheless, troubling audiences, each of which makes special demands upon him. First, there are other social service workers. These are members of other community agencies who put forth alternative professional
models with which the CAP worker has to contend. Critical of the CAP worker, these other professionals create models to which the CAP worker has to address himself although the alternative model differs from his own.

Although an intangible audience, history also has a hold upon the CAP worker. Those workers who preceded left a legendary and sometimes marred, presentation of Community Action, which still exists today. The CAP worker is still addressing himself to these shadows of history.

As is most professions, conceptions "good" and "bad" work also have their claim upon the CAP worker. Negotiating the likeness of a "good worker" requires consummate skill and tenacity. Somewhat due to present practices--laxness in coming to work on time, not keeping appointments--and also because of the adherence to the nontraditional attitude that orthodox practices are not important, the CAP worker has to constantly impress that he is indeed a "good" worker; appearances to the contrary notwithstanding.

The CAP worker begins his job with more faith and idealism than knowledge. He is uncertain about himself and also has little knowledge of the actual technical requirements; but since his entrance is more informal--related to his fervor for the program--the CAP worker begins his job with dedication to the ideals of advocacy for the low-income.

Idealism is a large part of CAP work. The CAP worker has to reconcile giving the low-income obvious financial aid and advantages which the middle-class working people do not have. The reconciliation is instrumented with the concept of "letting the low-income help
themselves." In other words, the low-income do not receive handouts but must work for whatever financial assistance they may receive. Regardless of whether the low-income truly should work for the assistance they receive, or even whether they really do "help themselves," the CAP worker has to justify his helping role to others outside and within the CAP program who are skeptical.

When a CAP worker can no longer maintain an "idealistic face" to others, then disenchantment has occurred.

Disenchantment assumes a number of forms for the CAP worker. The political nature of the CAP program is devastatingly disenchanting. The administration is also responsible for some of the disenchantment. The CAP worker feels that the administration has failed to give the CAP program proper direction. Instead of being committed to the CAP program, the CAP worker feels that the administration is incompetent and meddlesome. This incompetence, hence, prevents the carrying out of the professional and program ideals as conceived by the CAP workers.

Clients are also important to the CAP worker. There are three types of clients: 1) the good client; the client who honestly adheres to the ideal of the CAP program that "the low-income helping themselves" and appreciates the efforts of CAP workers; 2) the pitiful client; the client who is socially awkward and sometimes lacking common discretion; and, 3) the bad client; the con-artist who tries to extort whatever he can from the CAP program. The CAP worker has to carefully deal with each one of these types of clients. First, the CAP worker has to decide which type of client a person is. Then the CAP worker develops his
strategy for dealing with him. Good clients and pitiful clients are sometimes referred to others and bad clients are disposed of. The disposal of the bad client is usually done by "staying clear" or giving the "run around." However, disposal of the bad client has to be disguised; the CAP worker has to maintain a favorable professional image.

It is hoped that this study has shown how an instrument of social change can not only affect those for whom the program was intended, but also those who are given charge of the program. It has become evident, then, that a complex social program for change and economic opportunity can be studied through the professional dilemmas of those involved in carrying out its goals.

SUMMARY

The CAP agency and its staff have made an historical full circle. They have made the journey from a mandated, fully-supported, and believed-in entity to a non-mandated, whimsically supported, and disillusioned entity. The CAP agency is presently an ad hoc organization whose survival is dependent upon political trade-offs. In other words, the nationwide CAP program no longer exists because of its "great society" ideology; rather it exists because of its political and economic utility. The CAP program is now a kind of political football which keeps the low-income lobby quiet and also draws votes for the local politicians. However, human needs and concerns are no longer important. They have become subservient to the invisible non-human hand of economics. The end result is work alienation.

In its initial days, the CAP program possessed an inspiring
radicalism. In remembering their original moments, many of the staff remember how they told other agencies to "get lost" and got away with it. Those times of independence and political battles are now replaced with economic survival. The agencies that were previously told to "get lost" are now the possible benefactors of the CAP agency since these other agencies now possess more money and political power than the CAP agency. Hence, the CAP agency has to be friendly to its former enemies. This is a disillusioning experience to those imbued with the original CAP spirit.

Historically, the CAP agency has had an idealistic and almost unattainable objective—the elimination of poverty. Such an objective has been hard on the CAP staff since it is hard to determine when a person has been removed from poverty or whether an individual has been helped. The original objectives of the CAP program were too nebulous and diverse to objectify. Hence, after ten years the CAP program had very little to show for its work. This is a difficult situation professionally. For instance, a brick layer can point to a house he has built or a doctor may speak of the patients he has cured, but a CAP worker cannot directly point to the people he has helped. For the CAP worker there is no clear cut remedy for helping his clients nor is there a clear determination of what constitutes a "cure."

Confounding this professional problem is the "client problem." That is, not all clients want to be helped. Some just want a handout. At best, the CAP worker can only point to a few exemplary cases of success. However, these few cases are not enough to justify large expenditures of funds and the maintenance of a professional image.
The situation of the CAP staff is exemplary of many social programs. Legislation, federal funds, and a generous public create programs for the solution of many public problems. However, when the public mood changes and legislation changes, federal funds and support are removed and the programs flounder and die. One important social question to ask of such a process is: what happens to the people of the programs; both the staff and the clients of these ad hoc agencies? Hopefully, this particular ethnography will be instructive for understanding other social organizations of an ad hoc nature.


Black, Bryan. Lecture notes from Philosophy 390 - The Early Philosophy of Bertrand Russell.


