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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Silberman
School of Social Work

HUNTER

A photograph of two women sitting at a desk in an office, engaged in a conversation. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The woman on the left is wearing a plaid shirt, and the woman on the right is wearing a light-colored sweater. A computer monitor is visible on the desk between them.

Business as Usual? A Wake-Up Call for The Human Services

Results from the Human Service
Workforce Study

Mimi Abramovitz

Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, CUNY

Jennifer Zelnick

Touro College Graduate School of Social Work

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Human service agencies are the “first responders” for people in need. However, during the last three decades, new policies that draw on business principles, methods, and goals have restructured the human services in ways that dramatically affect agencies, workers, and clients in both the public and non-profit sectors. Increasingly referred to as Managerialism, these trends have created a sea change in social work, and thus are the subject of this report.

In the United States and internationally, Managerialism adds the business perspective to human service organizational practices. Typically initiated by public and private funders, Managerialism encourages human service staff – front line workers, program managers and agency directors – to maximize agency productivity, accountability, and efficiency. Focused on outcomes, it calls for the use of quantified measures and standardized procedures to assess and evaluate the performance of agencies, workers, services, and clients.¹

Managerial responses to ongoing human service dilemmas evoke debate. Existing workforce studies, mostly conducted outside the U.S., find that Managerialism pleases some workers and troubles others. Supporters credit the increased reliance on evidence, standards, quantifiable outcomes, and value-based payments¹ with producing more effective and less costly services, ensuring responsible accounting of public funds and providing added benefits to people in need. They often highlight that these practices lead to new breakthroughs for historically intractable social problems.²

Critics counter that Managerial incentives encourage human service workers to internalize and favor the business-driven “logic of the market” over the mission-driven “logic of social work.” They fear that this approach risks leading the human services to focus on organizational targets rather than client needs;³ to promote cookie cutter services, limit advocacy, and otherwise “strip the care out of social work.”⁴ The focus on business values and principles led Salamon⁵ to refer to current changes as the “marketization” of the non-profit sector.

Scholars from various disciplines and many countries have studied the impact of Managerialism on the scale and scope of social welfare programs and client outcomes.⁶ Far fewer have asked front line workers, supervisors, program managers, and agency directors – tasked with translating policy into practice – about their experience with this new model.⁷ That is, we rarely study ourselves. To correct for this, we turned to human service workers to find out what, if any, features of Managerialism were operative in their workplaces and to learn, if present, how Managerialism affected their work on the front lines. Through the eyes of nearly 3,000 New York City human service workers, we learned how dedicated practitioners assess and manage the impact Managerialism has on the provision of services, the well-being of workers, and the capacity of agencies to serve those most in need.

¹ Value-Based Payment, currently used most often in health care but recently also in behavioral health, shifts from volume-based or fee-for service payments to outcome related payments based on pay-for-performance metrics or other measures. (see <https://revcycleintelligence.com/features/what-is-value-based-care-what-it-means-for-providers>)

Background

The rise of Managerialism was neither sudden nor accidental. Rather, Managerialism is associated with privatization, one of the five tactics introduced in the mid-1970s to roll back the U.S. welfare state. This latest effort to dismantle the social welfare system grew in response to the *second* major economic crisis of the 20th century. In contrast, in response to *first* major economic crisis – the economic collapse of 1929 and Great Depression of the 1930s – the nation’s leaders blamed their economic woes on the failure of the market economy and called on the government to step in. As a result, from the 1930’s to the mid-1970s, the U.S. welfare state expanded. An array of New Deal and Great Society programs addressed the crisis by *redistributing income downward, de-privatizing social provision, and expanding the role of state.*⁸

Everything changed in the mid-1970s, when the nation experienced the second major economic crisis of the 20th century. National leaders in business and government decided to solve this new crisis by replacing the programs and policies of the New Deal and Great Society with a different political-economic paradigm. Known as Neoliberalism, their approach emphasized free markets, individualism, and fiscal austerity. The resulting *U-Turn* in public policy sought to *redistribute income upwards and downsize the state*. The main tactics included now-familiar tax cuts, budget cuts, privatization (i.e., shifting social welfare responsibility from the federal government to the private sector), devolution (i.e., shifting social welfare responsibility from the federal government to the states), and reducing the influence of social movements. At the same time, the political Right called for a singular version of “family values” and a color-blind social order.⁹

Privatization is most often associated with ongoing efforts to privatize entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare – displacing government-funded and - managed programs with private sector funds and programs, entirely or to some degree. This report examines Managerialism, an expression of privatization that operates within human service organizations.

Study Design and Methods

Six partners – selected to represent diverse settings, program foci, and personnel – helped to design and implement a survey aimed at the human service workforce: *The National Association of Social Workers-NYC Chapter; the Human Services Council; United Neighborhood Houses; The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies; the Social Service Employees Union Local 371; and the New York Non-Profit Press*. Based on an extensive literature review and focus groups hosted by agency partners, we identified 45 indicators of Managerialism that affect human service organizations. To capture the wide range of experiences of human service workers at all levels, we included front line workers, supervisors, program managers and agency directors employed in a variety of settings. The survey asked all workers if the selected indicators of Managerialism were a “major problem”, a “minor problem”, “not a problem at all”, or were not present at their agency (“Doesn’t happen here”).

The *Human Service Workforce Study: Your Voice is Needed* was distributed through partners using their membership lists, websites, and internal emails. *The New York Non-Profit Press* also publicized the study and provided a link to the survey in its electronic newspaper. Survey distribution occurred in waves between study was approved by the Institutional Review Boards of Hunter College, CUNY and Touro College and analyzed using SPSS version 22. For the purpose of our summary of the data, the major and minor problem categories were combined to represent the fact that workers identified an issue as “problematic.” Percentages represent those who indicated that the issue was present in their workplace.

Most studies of Managerialism include specific agencies or groups of workers, rely on qualitative data, and focus on the individual workers. One of the few quantitative studies of Managerialism and human service workers in a major U.S. city, this study focuses on the impact of Managerialism on working conditions, service provision, and other organizational issues. On average, participants took 45 minutes to complete the survey. They also used the opportunity provided to add their own comments. Comments such as *“Thanks for letting me vent and share my thoughts!”* affirmed the goal of this study – to give a platform to the voices of human service workers.

RESULTS FROM THE HUMAN SERVICE WORKFORCE STUDY

Participant and Workplace Characteristics

The nearly 3,000 study participants represented the programmatic and demographic diversity of the human services in New York City (Table 1). Over 82% were female. Almost half were persons-of-color (POC) (47.2%), while the remainder identified as white (52.8%). Seventy percent held a master’s degree or higher and over half of all the respondents (53.0%) held an MSW. The respondents were fairly evenly distributed by age, though somewhat tilted towards older workers and those with job longevity. Nearly a third (32.7%) were new to the field (fewer than 10 years), 28.3% reported 10-19 years of experience, and 39% had more than 20 years on the job. Roughly sixty percent of respondents were younger or in their prime working years, while nearly 40% were 56 and older.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics

Gender	% Total	Education	% Total
Female	82.2	<Bachelors	7.8
Male	17.0	Bachelors	14.6
Other	0.8	≥Masters	70.4
		MSW	53.3
Race	% Total	Years in Human Services	% Total
White	52.8	0-9	32.7
Black/African American	20.3	10-19	28.3
Latino/Hispanic	15.2	20+	39.0
Asian	4.0	Age	% Total
Multiracial	5.4	18-35	32.7
Other	1.5	35-55	28.3
		56+	39.0

(N=2732)

Survey respondents represented a range of workers, social service sectors, and settings (Table 2). Sixty percent worked on the front lines and 40% worked as program managers or directors. More than two-thirds worked in a non-profit agency, while over 26% worked in the public sector. Fewer than 5% worked

in a for-profit organization. Respondents worked in 19 different service settings, but tended to cluster in mental health (23.3%) and health (13.8%), housing/homelessness (10.2%), child welfare (9.1%), education (8.7%), senior/older adult services, (8.3%) family services (7.7%), youth (6.6%), substance abuse (5.9) and public assistance/food assistance (5.4%). Agency leadership also varied. Sixty percent of the respondents reported that their director or CEO had a human service background while 36% reported directors with a business, public administration or law background (referred to hereafter as a business background). About one third of all respondents belonged to a union, mostly in the public sector.

Table 2
Workplace Characteristics

Characteristics	% Total	Characteristics	% Total
Current Position		Program Focus*	
Front line	59.7	Mental Health	23.8
Program Director	20.3	Health Care	13.8
Upper Manager	16.1	Housing/Homeless	10.2
Executive director	3.9	Child Welfare	9.1
		Education	8.7
Sector		Older Adults	8.3
Public	26.6	Family Services	7.7
Non- Profit	68.3	Youth Services	6.6
Private For-Profit	4.7	Substance Abuse	5.9
Other	0.4	Public& Food Assistance	5.4
Union		Director Background	
Yes	32.6	Business	36.1
No	67.4	Human Service	63.9

(N=2732) *Includes N >100; Therefore, excludes DV, criminal justice, childcare, military, employment/training, disability, immigrant services, legal, advocacy

Current Job Position by Race and Gender of Workers

The respondents' job positions reflected imbalanced staff hierarchies (Table 3). Among persons of color, 66% were frontline workers/supervisors, compared to 54.4% whites. Meanwhile, 39.5% of people of color but 46.6% of whites worked in administrative capacities. This hierarchal trend was similar for gender. Among women, 60.4% worked on the frontlines or as supervisors, and 39.6% in administration, while among men 46.2% held an administrative position and 53.8% worked on the frontline or as supervisors. Differences by race and gender consistently show whites twice as likely as persons-of-color, and men twice as likely as women, to work as an executive director.

Table 3
Position by race and gender

Position	% White in position	% POC in position	% Men in position	% Women in position	N 2454
Frontline & Supervisors	54.4	66.0*	53.8	60.4*	1456
Administrators	46.6*	39.5	46.2*	39.6	998
Program Director	22.3*	18.7	21.3*	17.4	506
Upper Level Manager	19.4*	12.7	21.7*	15.1	398
Executive Director	4.9*	2.6	7.1*	3.1	94

* $P < 0.001$ - p values computed by χ^2

Workers were aware of the racialized and gendered ranking. A youth worker noted:

“I feel I can do more on the job to benefit the agency’s goals and mission but because I am Black, a woman, and even though I have a degree, I am overlooked for jobs that require judgment and advanced thinking strategies.”

A child welfare worker observed: *“My agency is predominantly minorities; this is rarely reflected in executive level management positions. The managerial positions [in the field] continue to be misrepresented by race and gender in this City and it is a shame.”*

THE WIDER CONTEXT: THE AUSTERITY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ENVIRONMENTS

The Austerity Environment

Managerialism gained ground in the 1970s and 1980s just as high poverty rates increased the demand for human services among more distressed clients while public policy increasingly focused on paying less for services provided.¹⁰ These trends, often referred to as “austerity”, have persisted, drained public and non-profit agencies of critical resources, and made it more difficult to effectively address the needs of people who turn to the human services for help. In response to this survey, close to 90% said that clients are presenting with more complex needs, and nearly 80% said that clients are more stressed. At the same time, government austerity policies – including tax and budget cuts – fell heavily on their agencies, especially those serving the poor. Federal non-defense discretionary spending (which includes the social services) dropped from a high of 5.1% of the GDP in 1980 to 3.2 % in 2017, and is expected to drop to 3.0% in 2019 – the lowest level on record dating back to 1962, before the war on poverty. It is projected to drop even lower, to 2.6% of the GDP, in 2027.¹¹

Beginning in 1962, Title XX of the Social Security Act permitted the government to purchase services from non-profit social service agencies. Thus, federal budget cuts have meant 1) reduced dollars available to state and local governments for grants and contracts with New York City human service providers, and 2) insufficient support from government revenues. In 2015, some 60% of New York State agencies reported that government contracts often failed to cover the full cost of service provision. Some in the non-profits

say that, due to these funding shortfalls, “the non-profits are, in effect, subsidizing the state.”¹²

The austerity environment has forced most non-profits into a crisis mode; much like the clients they serve (Table 4). Today, New York City workers, agencies, and clients must “do more with less”: less revenue, less staff, less skilled workforce, less pay, and fewer programs. Fifty-five percent of respondents reported program and staff cutbacks, and over one third reported program closures. More than three quarters of the respondents indicated that their program was inadequately funded and nearly 54% reported that too many agency resources were spent keeping the organization funded. Nearly 71% felt that the focus on the bottom line interfered with the quality of services.

Table 4
Austerity Environment: funding, cuts, closures and impact on bottom line

Indicators	% Yes	% No	N
Program is inadequately funded	77.6	22.4	2416
Too many resources go to keeping agency funded	53.6	46.4	2156
Focus on bottom line interferes with quality of services	70.8	29.2	2310
Staff cutbacks	55.0	45.0	2731
Program cuts	56.0	44.0	2731
Program closures	34.0	66.0	2701

The Managerial/Performance Environment

A new human service language has accompanied the rise of Managerialism. In addition to hiring MBAs to run agencies, this includes.¹³

- Retitling executive directors as CEOs
- Referring to clients as “customers” or “consumers”
- Branding services as “products”
- Developing a “market niche”
- Regarding social work as “an enterprise”

The rise of the Managerial environment significantly increased funders interest in performance outcomes.¹⁴ Many private and public funders previously paid providers to deliver services based on need. Today’s funders prefer to reimburse agencies on a value-based or pay-for-performance basis.¹⁵ They also tie payments to the successful achievement of preset, quantifiable outcomes.¹⁶ The resulting call for more data collection, measurable outcomes, and documentation has sparked controversy in the human services.

Few human service workers oppose evidence or measurement, and most support greater accountability. When used in support of professional values and goals, performance measurement can improve service quality, enhance employee motivation, support agency mission, and promote positive client outcomes among other important benefits.¹⁷ However, some object to the exclusion of human service workers from decisions about what to measure. They also question the merits of quantifying outcomes, especially if they supplant the less-easily measured aspects of client progress. Human service workers fear that managerial requirements risk reducing provider and worker control over the agency’s mission, services,

procedures, and practices. They worry that the growing focus on measurement, meeting benchmarks, and routinizing service provision pulls practitioners away from building relationships with clients, the hallmark of their professional practice.¹⁸

The performance environment is widespread in New York City human service agencies. Many more respondents reported working in a performance environment than not (Table 5). More than 77% indicate increased documentation requirements, 65.9% reported an increased emphasis on measurement-based evaluation, 65.7% reported use of performance-based measures, and more than 60% practice using evidence-based models.

Table 5
Performance environment indicators reported by workers

Indicators	% Present	% Not Present	N
Evidence-Based Models	60.8	39.2	2284
Use of Performance based measures	65.7	34.3	2709
	% Increased	% Not Increased	
Emphasis on measurement-based evaluation	65.9	34.1	2576
Amount of Documentation	77.6	22.4	2604

WORKER’S ASSESSMENT OF MANAGERIALISM

The rest of this report explores respondents’ assessments of practices associated with Managerialism. Our analysis focuses on 30 of the 45 managerial items deemed problematic by 50% or more respondents.² These 30 indicators of Managerialism fell into four conceptual clusters that reflect key concerns depicted in the literature on the human service workplace: Productivity (or speed-up), Accountability (measurement counts), efficiency (cost saving/bigger bang for the buck), and Relationship Building (the foundation of social work practice).

Productivity or Speed-Up

The productivity cluster contains five issues related to the pace of work viewed as problematic by 80% or more of the respondents. They include “too much work,” “not enough staff,” “not enough time,” “too fast a pace” and the perennial “too much paperwork.” These added time pressures create problems as more time spent on measurement can result in less time for clients (Table 6).

²As previously noted, the major and minor problem responses were combined into a single category- “problematic”.

Table 6
Indicators of Managerialism: Productivity variables

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Having too much work to do	88.9	11.1	2667
Focus on getting more done with same number of staff	88.2	11.8	2593
Focus on getting more work done in same amount of time	85.5	14.5	2579
Amount of time spent on paperwork	83.1	16.9	2617
Having to work too fast	81.1	18.9	2639

“Line clinicians are being pushed to see too many people, back to back each day, often without any administrative time, with greatly increased charting demands, with little or no lunch because who has time to take it. Then we are bullied over our productivity.” –Family service worker

“I miss the good old days when there was simply “too much paperwork!” There have been cutbacks, mergers and the like, and these have placed an enormous pressure on our administration to increase productivity. However, this has filtered down to the staff with constant changes in policy and procedures, and new forms to fill out and complete. Staff are overwhelmed and fed up yet work very hard on the patients' behalf.” – Mental health worker

Accountability or Count Down

Everyone wants to be accountable. In the past, human service accountability focused on professional ethics, social legislation, and community needs. Managerial accountability emphasizes monitoring effectiveness by measuring and auditing service outcomes.¹⁹ Between 70% and 79% of respondents said that they spent “too much time on documentation”, that the “measures used did not capture what staff think is important”, and that “too much time is spent on tracking and reporting”. Around two thirds found “the routinization of work”, “the emphasis on program results or outcomes”, and “reliance on quantifiable performance measures” to be problematic. They worried that prioritizing measurement, standardization, and quantifiable outcomes took the focus off client needs and practice goals (Table 7).

Table 7
Indicators of Managerialism: Accountability Variables

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Time documenting takes time from work with clients	79.4	21.0	2571
Way results are measured does not capture what staff thinks is important	77.8	22.2	2442
Too much focus on reporting	76.8	23.2	2590
Number of new policies that staff have to carry out	76.1	23.9	2504
Staff & funders have different definitions of successful outcomes	73.6	26.7	2431
Too much time spent tracking outcomes	70.7	29.3	2503
Extent to which work has become standardized/routinized	68.3	31.7	2407
Too much emphasis on program results	66.6	23.4	2411
Too much reliance on quantifiable performance measures	66.0	24.0	2397

“Work that is not easily quantifiable--such as a focus on quality, creative problem solving, assessment, diagnosis, client engagement and the power of relationship building-- is not recognized or valued. Yet these are the very tasks that are critical to making things happen and achieving successful outcomes.”- Substance abuse worker

“We are chained to our computers, our electronic records, which of course have benefits, but no client wants us staring at a screen for so much of their time -- even if there is some bogus evidence- based research that patients "like it." – Child welfare worker

Efficiency, the Biggest Bang for the Buck

Agencies need to be cost conscious. However, there is a tradeoff between getting the biggest bang for the buck and the effective use of agency resources. Regarding efficiency, over 77% stated that the program is inadequately funded; 75% reported they had “to increase the number of people seen”; 75.4% said they lacked the capacity to meet the needs of people served; 70.8% said the focus on “bottom line” undercuts quality. Nearly 60% considered the practice of replacing of higher paid with lower paid staff to do the same work as problematic (Table 8).

Table 8
Indicators of Managerialism: Efficiency variables

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Program is inadequately funded	77.6	22.4	2416
Need to increase the number of people seen	75.9	24.1	2439
Not enough program capacity to meet need.	75.4	24.6	2501
Focus on bottom line interferes with quality of service	70.8	29.2	2310
Replace higher paid with lower paid staff to do same work	59.0	41.0	2117
Too many agency resources used to keep agency funded	53.6	46.4	2156

“...efficiency experts are better served then the client who is need of housing and care for health and mental health needs” – Family service worker

Relationship Building

The therapeutic relationship is at the center of social work and human services practice. It is the foundation of high quality service provision and a predictor of positive client outcomes. However, 50% to 68% of respondents identified policies that interfered with building relationships (Table 9). The managerial context did not leave them with enough time to serve people in need (68.2%), to assess needs (57.2%), or to build trust (53.7%). Some 50.4% said that the computer comes between workers and clients. Others noted that clients have to meet too many program requirements (56.5%), were upset by the use of electronic records to monitor how they use their time (52.2%), and by the agency’s adoption of evidence-based practices (50.3%).

Table 9
Indicators of Managerialism: Relationship-building variables

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Not enough time to see the people we serve	68.2	31.8	2474
Need to open cases more frequently	65.0	35.0	2274
Wait time for services too long	60.9	39.1	2118
Emphasis on short term service goals	59.8	40.2	2414
Not enough time to assess needs	57.2	42.8	2491
People have to meet too many requirements	56.4	43.6	2234
Increased use of preset/ screening question	55.7	44.3	2219
No time to build trust with clients	53.7	46.3	2473
Use of electronic records to monitor how I use time	52.2	47.8	1851
Computers come between staff and clients	50.4	49.6	2296

“I have a high degree of job satisfaction and fulfillment in serving my clients. I believe, however, that in approximately the past three to five years there has been an organizational over-emphasis on financial issues and viability, evidence-based measures over more intangible therapeutic relationship factors and benefits, and on productivity, that is, numbers of clients treated in billable hours. I understand the financial necessities and imperatives, but believe this has led to a decreased attention on our mission of improving client’s functioning and quality of life.” –Mental health social worker

“I remember when it was possible to sit with my clients and develop a relationship without having to type in the middle of an interview. Now, if I have a client who is in crisis and need to focus on their immediate needs I am left with hours of paperwork and phone calls...” – Family service worker

MANAGERIALISM AND SERVICE PROVISION

The Managerial pressures noted above tend to foster trade-offs between practices that follow the “logic of social work” and those that adhere to the “logic of the market.” The former prioritizes success in meeting needs, the actualization of human well-being, and the common good. The latter emphasizes success in reducing costs, the commodification of human relationships, and private interests.²⁰ Given this tension, how does Managerialism affect the structure and operation of service provision in agencies? Given our interest in the impact of Managerialism on structural/organizational dimensions, several issues stood out as problematic for the provision of high quality services: 1) professional autonomy; 2) staffing; 3) supervision; 4) access to services; 5) advocacy; and 6) and how workers manage daily job pressures.

Professional Autonomy

Professional autonomy includes having the discretion to make independent decisions to act freely in accordance with one's professional knowledge and expertise on behalf of client well-being, as well as the authority to control the work process.²¹ More than 60% of respondents reported they have less professional autonomy related to 1) faster pace of work, 2) the standardization of practice interventions, and 3) the lack control on the job (Table 10). As noted earlier, over 80% said that they “have to work too fast.” This includes having to see more people and open cases more frequently, leaving less time for seeing clients and building trust with them. More than two thirds expressed deep concerns about the

“standardization” and “routinization” of their work. Over 60% agreed that they “don’t have enough control over their job.”

Table 10
Professional autonomy issues

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Less Professional Autonomy	60.0	40.0	2522
Pace of work: Having to work too fast	80.0	20.0	2639
Standardization: Extent Routinized	68.3	31.7	2407
Loss of control: I don’t have enough control over job	62.3	37.2	2529

Problems with Staffing

Two thirds of the respondents reported that their agency had faced staff and/or program cutbacks (Table 11). They also indicated that the need to do more work with the same number of staff was a problem (88.2%). Close to 60% reported agencies were replacing higher paid with lower paid staff raising the possibility of a related deskilling of the workforce.²²

Table 11
Staffing issues

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Staff and program cutbacks	67.9	32.1	2730
More work with the same number of staff	88.2	11.8	2593
Replace higher with lower paid staff	59.0	41.0	2117

The Learning Environment

Learning on the job supports effective services. This includes high quality supervision that integrates administrative, educational, and supportive functions, all of which help to protect unseasoned workers from “minefields” on the job, develop the next generation of practitioners, and strengthen the overall organizational culture. More than 53% of the respondents reported a lack of access to supervision (Table 12). Around 55% were also troubled by the lack of feedback on their work and more than 58% reported insufficient staff training.

Table 12
The Learning Environment: Training, feedback and supervision

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Not enough training	58.5	41.5	2435
Lack of feedback	55.0	45.0	2411
Lack of access to supervision	53.6	46.4	2489

Workplace Supports

Likewise, although workplace supports undergird the quality of care provided, workers found them lacking (Table 13). This included lack of supervisory support (62%) and lack of co-worker support (48%) as well as competition among co-workers (34.2%).

Table 13
Workplace support

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Lack of supervisor support	62.8	37.2	2529
Lack of co-worker support	48.1	51.9	2504
Competition among coworkers	34.2	65.8	2346

Less Access for Clients: Barriers and “Creaming”

Access to services promotes prevention, inclusivity, and client well-being.²³ Systemic barriers rooted in agency policies and practices limit access.

Barriers

More than 60% of the respondents expressed concern about long waiting lists, 56% said there were too many eligibility requirements, and 45% reported, respectively, that eligibility requirements were too strict and that fees and co-pays were too high (Table 14).

Table 14
Barriers to access

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Wait time for services is too long	60.9	39.1	2118
Too many eligibility requirements	56.4	43.6	2234
Fees and copays are too high	45.6	54.4	1541
Eligibility requirements are too strict	44.7	55.3	2068

“Creaming”

Creaming – the process by which agencies intentionally restrict services to those who are easier to serve – also limits clients’ access to services. Funder’s preferences for “paying for success” can also create incentives for agencies to screen clients based on their ability to pay or to succeed. About one third of the respondents pointed to some type of “creaming.” This includes termination of services to a client based on their inability to pay (35.3%), targeting services to less needy clients (33.4%), and selecting clients based on their potential to succeed (32.0 %) and/or their ability to pay (32.7%).

Advocacy Constrained

Advocacy has long been endorsed by the *NASW Code of Ethics* as a crucial dimension of social work. *The Code* states “social workers should pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and

oppressed individuals and groups of people” and “advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions so as to meet basic human needs and to promote social justice.”²⁴

In this report, advocacy refers to (1) community engagement (i.e., accountability to the community and involving clients in program development) and (2) resource mobilization (i.e., efforts to organize people and mobilize resources for social change). Most workers mentioned limited advocacy at their agencies (Table 15). About 48% indicated that their agency was not accountable enough to the community and did not ask clients for their opinions. Many more – 75% – believed that their agency devoted too few resources to changing government policies and made too few efforts to mobilize people for social change.

Table 15
Advocacy issues

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Not enough accountability to the community	48.4	51.6	2223
Doesn't ask clients for their opinion	53.4	46.6	2170
Not enough resources devoted to changing government policies	75.1	24.9	2190
Too few efforts to mobilize people for social change	74.3	24.7	2208

“My agency gives little attention and resources to advocacy and working for progressive social change, which I believe is one of its fundamental flaws and weaknesses.” – Homeless services worker

Workplace Dilemmas

Many workers also reported significant threats to their well-being and that of their co-workers (Table 16). Almost 73% experienced their job as stressful “often/very often.” Very high numbers also reported as problematic burnout (85.8%), low morale (83.1%), growing routinization of the work (68.3%), and ethical dilemmas (58.2%). By far, more workers perceived these issues to be problematic at their agencies than did not.

Table 16
Workplace dilemmas

	% Often/Very Often	% Never/Rarely	N
Job too stressful	72.6	27.4	2493
	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Burnout	85.8	14.2	2603
Low morale	83.1	16.9	2623
Extent routinized	68.3	31.7	2407
Ethical dilemmas	58.2	41.8	2514

These dilemmas affected participants differently if they were persons-of-color or women (Table 17). On the one hand, regardless of race, close to three quarters of both groups say that their job is too stressful “often/very often” and over 80% identified burnout and low morale. However, more POC than white persons reported ethical conflicts (62.7% vs. 53.4%), and routinization of work (72.5% vs. 63.9%) as agency problems.

Table 17
Workplace dilemmas reported as problematic by race

Workplace Dilemmas	% White	% POC	N
Burnout	85.3	84.1 (ns)	2366
Low morale	82.4	83.8 (ns)	2385
Job too stressful	73.3	72.0 (ns)	2443
Extent routinized	63.9	72.5*	2235
Ethical conflicts	53.4	62.7*	2290

* p <0.001, p values calculated by χ^2

While the problems of job stress, routinization, and ethical conflict are not reported differently by gender, more women than men noted burnout (85.7% vs. 80.2%) and low morale (84.9% vs. 79.6%) as an agency problem (Table 18).

Table 18
Workplace dilemmas reported as problematic by gender

Workplace Dilemmas	% Male	% Female	N
Burnout	80.2	85.7**	2369
Low Morale	79.6	83.9*	2387
Job too stressful	72.8	72.7 (ns)	2444
Extent routinized	67.2	68.5 (ns)	2235
Ethical Conflicts	55.2	58.3 (ns)	2292
Burnout	80.2	85.7**	2369

HOW DO WORKERS “MANAGE” MANAGERIALISM? BENDING THE RULES AND LEAVING THE PROFESSION

Mirroring the managerial and human services literature, respondents reported that agency workers often bent the rules to shield their clients and their agencies from the adverse effects of Managerialism.²⁵ When asked about managerial practices at their agencies, the majority of respondents (70%) reported that employees *often* or *very often* worked overtime without pay to meet client’s needs (70%). While not the majority, some respondents also reported that co-workers *often* or *very often* interpreted agency rules loosely (46%), changed reports to meet grant outcome requirements (43%), inflated statistics (30%), and ignored eligibility requirements (26%) (Table 19). Given the known reasons for reluctance to report activities that “bend the rules,” we suspect that these numbers may be under-reported.

Table 19
Bending the rules

Indicators	% Often/Very Often	% Never/Rarely	N
Staff works overtime without pay to meet client needs	70.1	29.9	2430
Loosely interprets program requirements	45.9	54.1	2426
Changes reports to meet performance outcome requirements	42.5	57.5	2443
Inflates statistics to satisfy reporting	29.9	70.1	2437
Ignored eligibility requirements	25.9	74.1	2446

“To manage a caseload consisting of 50 patients, facilitate weekly groups, daily productivity recording, health insurance verification, has become overwhelming. I feel stress and tension everyday...there is not enough time to meet and listen to the patient. I often stay at the office after work hours to finish my work, and I sometimes work on Saturdays.”-Human service worker in healthcare setting.

A second way that human services workers cope with the demands of Managerialism is to change jobs or leave the profession altogether. High rates of stress, burnout, and low morale can be read as a harbinger or an “early warning sign” of potential plans to quit. Many respondents seem to be on the “brink of leaving.” Some 45% reported decreased job satisfaction and more than 50% said that they were “*thinking of leaving the job.*” While these early warning signs do not necessarily translate into job exits, 67% of our respondents regarded turnover as problematic at their agencies (Table 20) as it threatens relationship building and continuity of care.

Table 20
Leaving the profession

Indicators	% Problematic	% Not a Problem	N
Turnover	67.1	32.9	2536
	% Agree	% Disagree	
Thinking of leaving my job	50.4	49.6	2421
	% Increased	% Decreased	
Job satisfaction	45.0	55.0	2531

AGENCY’S COMMITMENT TO MANAGERIALISM

Is there a link between an agency’s commitment to Managerialism and the experience of front line workers and program managers in the agency work environment? To deepen the understanding of the impact of Managerialism on the human service workforce, we constructed a score that measured the worker’s perception of their agency’s “commitment to Managerialism.” Based on the study’s 30 indicators of Managerialism, the score captured workers’ perceptions of agency commitments to Managerialism as high, medium, or low. A troubling trend emerged. Workers were more likely to experience workplace issues as problematic if they worked in an agency that they identified as having a high rather than a low

commitment to Managerialism. Conversely, workers in agencies identified with low Managerialism were less likely to experience workplace issues as problematic (Table 21).

Managerialism and Service Provision

Table 21
Service provision by worker’s perception of agency’s commitment to Managerialism

SERVICE PROVISION	% In High Managerial Settings	% In Medium Managerial Settings	% In Low Managerial Settings
LESS PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY			
% Problematic	47.3	35.6	17.0
% Not a problem	13.9	31.6	54.5
STAFFING CUTBACKS			
% Yes	40.4	34.5	25.1
% No	15.9	30.4	53.7
LACK OF ACCESS TO SUPERVISION			
% Problematic	45.7	33.8	20.5
% Not a problem	21.3	34.4	44.2
ACCESS: Wait time for services too long			
% Problematic	45.9	33.6	20.5
% Not a problem	25.1	34.2	40.7
ACCESS: Select clients based on potential to succeed			
% Problematic	56.2	30.7	13.1
% Not a problem	29.9	32.7	37.5
ADVOCACY: Not enough accountability/ community			
% Problematic	48.8	32.7	18.6
% Not a problem	23.2	35.7	41.1
ADVOCACY: Not enough resources devoted to changing government policies			
% Problematic	44.1	33.2	22.7
% Not a problem	14.6	35.0	50.4

Low: ≤ 49; Medium 50-64. high ≥ 65; P<0.001 p values calculated by χ^2 .

The pattern linking commitment to Managerialism and workplace problems held up for each of the above reported service provision issues: professional autonomy, staffing, supervision, access and advocacy.

For example, in agencies with a high commitment to Managerialism, workers were more likely to report “less professional autonomy” as problematic (47.3%) than those employed in low-managerial settings (17.9%). Likewise, for staffing: More workers employed in high-managerial agencies (40.4%) experienced “program and staff cutbacks” as problematic than those working in low-managerial setting (25.1%). Finally, more workers providing service in high managerial agencies reported the selection of clients based on their potential to succeed (i.e. access) than those working at a low-managerial setting (13.1%). At the same time, far fewer workers employed in low-managerial than in high-managerial agencies experienced a loss of professional autonomy, reduced staffing, or client access to services issues as problematic. That same pattern is repeated for each of the service provision areas presented in Table 21 and suggests that (1) the greater an agency’s commitment to Managerialism, the greater the workers’ concerns about the quality of service provision; and (2) the lower the agency’s commitment to Managerialism, the fewer workplace problems arise.

Managerialism and Workplace Dilemmas

Similarly, there is a strong relationship between an agency’s commitment to Managerialism and workplace dilemmas (Table 22). Workers in highly managerial agencies were more likely to experience frequent stress (53.4%) than those working in low-managerial settings (13.3%). More workers employed in high-managerial agencies also reported burn out (38.4%), low morale (38.6%), ethical conflicts (45.9%), and routinized work (48.1%). In contrast, these issues were far less problematic for those in low-managerial settings.

Table 22
Risks to wellbeing by worker’s perception of agency’s commitment to Managerialism

RISKS TO WELL-BEING	% In High Managerial Settings	% In Medium Managerial Settings	% In Low Managerial Settings
Job too stressful			
Often/Very often/Sometimes	53.4	33.3	13.3
Almost Never/Never	11.6	26.2	62.2
Burnout			
Problematic	38.4	37.0	24.6
Not problematic	6.1	18.2	75.8
Morale			
Problematic	38.6	37.0	24.4
Not problematic	7.8	19.0	73.2
Ethical Conflicts			
Problematic	45.9	34.1	20.0
Not problematic	18.0	33.1	48.9
Extent Routinized			
Problematic	48.1	36.2	15.8
Not problematic	6.9	32.2	60.9

Low: ≤ 49; Medium 50%-64 High >65; P<0.001 p values calculated by χ^2 .

Managing the Impact of Managerialism

As noted above, workers found different ways to manage workplace pressures. Table 23 shows that workers in high managerial agencies were more likely to “bend the rules” than workers employed in low managerial settings. In high managerial environments, they were more likely to interpret program rules loosely (43.9% vs. 23.3%), ignore eligibility requirements (49.8% vs. 20.0%), inflate statistics (48.5% vs. 20.4%), change reports (44.4% vs. 23.9%), and work overtime without pay (38.6 v, 26.5%).

Table 23

Bending the rules by worker’s perception of agency’s commitment to Managerialism

How Worker’s Bent the Rules	% In High Managerial Settings	% In Medium Managerial Settings	% In Low Managerial Settings
Loosely interpreted program requirements			
Often/sometimes	43.9	32.7	23.3
Never	22.5	34.0	43.5
Ignored eligibility requirement			
Often/sometimes	49.8	30.1	20.0
Never	26.3	34.7	39.1
Inflated statistics			
Often/sometimes	48.5	33.1	20.4
Never	20.4	34.4	40.0
Staff worked overtime without pay so that client needs are met			
Often/sometimes	38.6	34.9	26.5
Never	17.6	29.6	52.8
Changed reports to meet performance/outcome requirements			
Often/sometimes	44.0	32.1	23.9
Never	23.9	34.3	41.7

Low: ≤ 49; Medium 50%-64 High >_65, P<0.001 p values calculated by χ^2 .

Workers also managed workplace pressures by leaving their jobs, which raises questions about the impact of Managerialism on retention. Table 24 indicates that job dissatisfaction was greater in high managerial than in low-managerial settings (52.6% v 16.5%), and that more workers in high-managerial than in low-managerial environments were “*thinking of leaving their job*” (43.7% v 22.3%). Not surprisingly, more workers in high- than in low-managerial settings regarded turnover as an agency problem (43.3% v. 21.2%).

Table 24

Indicators of intention to leave by workers’ perception of agency’s commitment to Managerialism

Intention to leave indicators	% In High Managerial Settings	% In Medium Managerial Settings	% In Low Managerial Settings
Turnover			
Problematic	43.3	35.6	21.2
Not a problem	14.9	31.4	53.8
Job Satisfaction			
Unsatisfied	52.6	30.8	16.5
Satisfied	24.5	34.0	41.6
Thinking of leaving my job			
Agree	43.7	34.0	22.3
Disagree	21.5	32.2	46.2

Low: ≤ 49; Medium 50%-64 High >_65, P<0.001 p values calculated by χ^2 .

Commitment of Agency to its Mission and Managerialism

A strong relationship also emerged between workers' sense of the priority their agencies placed on *mission* and their views of the agency's commitment to Managerialism (Table 25). Agencies that did not place a high priority on mission tended to have high managerial commitment, while agencies where mission was a high priority were more likely to have a low managerial commitment. In effect, there was an inverse relationship between the priority an agency placed on mission and its managerial commitment. Likewise, positive sentiments toward work – “*I believe in their program*”, “*I think my work is important*”, and “*my work makes an important contribution to society*” – were more common among workers employed in low-Managerial than in high-Managerial environments.

Table 25
Agency mission by workers' perception of agency's commitment to Managerialism

Issues	% In High Managerial Settings	% In Medium Managerial Settings	% In Low Managerial Settings
Agency places priority on mission			
High Priority	26.3	34.6	39.1
Not a priority	60.2	18.4	21.4
My work makes an important contribution			
% Yes	31.1	33.7	35.2
% No	50.0	26.4	23.6
I think my work is important			
% Yes	29.3	34.4	36.3
% No	57.6	24.3	18.0
I believe in the program			
% Yes	29.7	33.9	36.4
% No	54.0	28.5	17.5

Low: ≤ 49 ; Medium 50%-64; High > 65 , $P < 0.001$ p values calculated by χ^2 .

Did the worker's experience with Managerialism vary by race and gender? Persons of color (POC) were more likely than white workers to be employed at agencies with a high commitment to Managerialism (Table 26). There were no significant differences by gender.

Table 26:
Race and gender of participants by workers' perception of agency's commitment to Managerialism

	% In High Managerial Settings	% In Medium Managerial Settings	% In Low Managerial Settings
Race			
White	29.3	36.1*	34.6
POC	36.4*	30.4	33.2
Gender			
Men	33.6	33.6	32.8
Women	32.2	33.6	34.1

Low: ≤ 49 ; Medium 50%-64; High > 65 , * $P < 0.001$ p values calculated by χ^2 .

TWO OTHER IMPORTANT DETERMINANTS OF SERVICE PROVISION AND WORKER WELL-BEING

Managerialism was further associated with two other important factors that determined its influence in the human service workplace: (1) a distinction between “deserving and undeserving” clients/programs, and (2) the impact of business leadership on the human services.

We categorized agency focus by the populations they served vis-a-vis the well-known, but troublesome, way that the public often characterizes human service clients as “deserving” or “undeserving” of help (Table 27). The agencies serving clients who are generally viewed as “least deserving” tended to have a high commitment to Managerialism – public assistance (49.5), child welfare (49.0) and family services (39.7). In contrast, agencies with the much lower commitment to Managerialism tended to serve those viewed as “most deserving” – such as older adults (24.7), education (15.2), and youth (13.4). The remaining settings fell into the category of “less deserving” that lies between the least and most deserving. In brief, more vulnerable clients (often stigmatized as “undeserving”) tend to be served in the more troublesome high-managerial environments where service provision may be more stigmatized and less responsive.

Table 27
Agency focus and view of clients as deserving/undeserving by worker perception of high commitment to Managerialism

AGENCY FOCUS	% IN HIGH MANGERIAL SETTINGS	N
“LEAST DESERVING”		
Public/food assistance	49.5	123
Child welfare	49.0	223
“LESS DESERVING”		
Family service	39.7	175
Homeless services	36.2	233
Substance abuse	35.6	134
Mental health	35.5	544
Healthcare	34.4	315
“MOST DESERVING”		
Older adults	24.7	190
Education	15.2	198
Youth	13.4	150

Background of Director

In recent years, human service agency executives with a human service background have been increasingly replaced by directors with a business background. Often recommended by agency boards interested in maximizing fundraising, this trend has raised concerns in the human services about a potential disconnect between the values, knowledge, and training of the agency leadership and how best to serve clients and communities.

The following comparison of the impact of Managerialism in both types of agencies may give us some pause (Table 28). While not all the findings are statistically significant, all point to a particular trend: More employees identify service provision as a problem in agencies whose director has a business background

than in those whose director has a human service background. In organizational settings where the executive has a business background, high proportions of employees are troubled by the use of performance measures (70.3%), staff and program cutbacks (69.2%), professional accountability (64.6%), and less access to supervision (57.2%). These employees also identify other aspects of service provision as problematic in their agencies: Access to services, i.e., long wait times (63.2%); selection of clients based on ability to pay (43.1%); advocacy limitations (i.e., not enough accountability to the community) (48.1%); and limited efforts to mobilize people for social change (76.1%).

Table 28
Service provision issues reported as problematic by background of director

Service Provision Issues	(%) Workers with business director	% Workers with human service director	N
Accountability: Use of performance measures	70.3**	64.2	2071
Staffing: Staff and program cutbacks	69.2 (ns)	68.4	2353
Less professional autonomy	64.6**	57.5	2170
Supervision: Lack of access to supervision	57.2*	51.9	2139
Access: Wait time for services too long	63.2 (ns)	60.3	1824
Access: Select clients based on ability to succeed	34.1 (ns)	29.9	1223
Advocacy: Not enough accountability to the community	48.1 (ns)	46.7	1909
Advocacy: Too few efforts to mobilize people for social change	76.1 (ns)	74.1	1905

* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$; p values calculated by χ^2

Table 29 shows that workers employed in agencies with a business-trained CEO were considerably more likely to experience the workplace dilemmas than those working in agencies with a human services-trained director.

Table 29
Workplace dilemmas as problematic by background of director

Dilemmas	(%) Workers with business director	% Workers with human service director	N
Job too Stressful	61.0*	54.5	2152
Burnout	88.6**	82.3	2243
Low Morale	86.1**	80.7	2257
Extent Routinized	72.2**	65.9	2077
Ethical Conflicts	60.5*	56.1	2162

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ *** $p \leq 0.001$, p values calculated by χ^2

Issues that challenge retention are reported by more workers in agencies led by a business-trained director than in agencies led by a human service-trained director (Table 30).

Table 30

Turnover, thinking of leaving, and job satisfaction reported as problematic by background of director

Dilemmas	(%) Workers with business director	% Workers with human service director	N
Turnover**	70.7**	64.6	2187
Thinking of leaving my job*	52.7*	47.3	2177
Satisfied with job**	68.7	74.3**	2197

*p≤0.05 ** p ≤ 0.01 *** p≤0.001, p values calculated by χ^2

LOOKING FORWARD - OPTIMISM PERSISTS

Despite the problems identified in this study, do workers remain optimistic? A Canadian social work scholar found that even as human service workers struggle with workplace changes, they still prize the opportunity to live their values through their work. They “consistently reported ... that they are drawn to the sector because of the opportunity it provides to help people, to work with dedicated co-workers, and within organizations that value care work, fairness, and social justice.”²⁶ Others have found that human service workers gained satisfaction, if not ‘joy,’ from their work because it gave them the opportunity to give back, to help others, to connect with clients, to develop relationships with colleagues, and to make a difference in society.²⁷

When asked why they stay on the job, our respondents expressed similar views. Some 94% reported finding the work interesting; 92% believe that their work makes an important contribution to society; 88.3% think their work is important; and 88.0% believe in the program within which they work. Work relationships also play a role: 97% said that they like to help people and 88.6% said that they enjoy working with other staff.

Table 31

What participants value in their jobs

Things workers value	% Yes	% No	N
Like to help people	97.0	3.0%	2728
Find the work interesting	94.0	6.0%	2673
I enjoy working with the other staff members	88.6	11.4%	2539
	% Agree	% Disagree	
My work makes an important contribution to society	91.9	8.1%	2539
I Think my work is important	88.3	11.2%	2529
I believe in the program	88.0	12%	2650

While human service work is never easy, it can be deeply rewarding and provide the basis for a meaningful career. According to one social worker from a community-based agency:

“I am very lucky to work for an agency with an unswerving mission of social justice, compassion, and commitment. I have been allowed to be creative in my position. I have been allowed to falter as well as to succeed. All of these [factors] have allowed me to weather frustration, feelings of futility, mediocre pay, and bureaucratic auditors. Nearing the end of my career, I believe that my training and work have mattered. A social worker couldn't ask for more”

WAKE UP! SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study indicate that Managerialism is having a profound effect on human services in New York City. Respondents frequently associated problems in service delivery and worker well-being with highly Managerial environments marked by a high trust in business methods and low trust in public servants.²⁸ The following summary of the study's key findings, on the impact of Managerialism and on barriers to quality service provision, might be a wake-up call for the human service community.

The Impact of Managerialism

The indicators of Managerialism were selected from empirical studies of changes that Managerialism has introduced to human service organizations in the US and internationally. These indicators fell into four categories that speak to organizational structures and practices: Productivity, Accountability, Efficiency, and Relationship-Building.

Productivity: Work speed-up is highly problematic for workers in any sector, but especially for those tasked with helping vulnerable, often traumatized individuals and communities. As an organizational strategy, "speed-up" is meant to maximize productivity, but in the process, it can intensify the impact of austerity-driven budget cuts on services and the workforce. The majority of respondents (>80%) across different positions, agencies, and types of services identified endless pressures for ever more productivity as highly problematic.

- Can we redefine productivity with an eye to maximizing the quality of services provided, while remaining realistic about staffing and program requirements?

Accountability: In the past, human service accountability focused on professional ethics, social legislation, and community needs. In today's performance environment, managerial accountability emphasizes effectiveness measured and monitored by auditing outcomes.²⁹ Everyone wants to be accountable. However, workers are worried about the pressure to quantify and measure outcomes, and the push to standardize and routinize interventions. Although Managerialism cannot squeeze all discretion from front line decisions, workers seem to be feeling what Brodtkin terms the "routinization of discretion."³⁰ Nearly 70% of our respondents reported that their work had become standardized or routinized.

- Can we develop approaches to accountability that further the human services mission, capture outcomes that are meaningful for clients, and exhibit trust in the skills and discretion of the workforce?

Efficiency: Managerialism's emphasis on efficiency has led to the re-organization of work and the adaptation of "lean and mean" management methods that exert increased control over workers and work processes. Fueled by budget cuts, these include staff reductions, greater flexibility in the deployment of remaining staff, and real-time technological monitoring of case management. The managerial emphasis on efficiency encourages human service agencies to compete with one another to provide services at the lowest cost. This may please funders but does not necessarily result in high-quality services. Over 70% of our respondents reported a range of problematic efficiency issues that impact the quality of services.

- Can we envision efficiency to maximize time spent on services that are valued by agencies, clients and workers?

Relationships: Relationship-building is the hallmark of the human services and key to attaining positive client outcomes.³¹ However, to the extent that Managerialism is operationalized in the workplace, it may compromise this fundamental dimension of human service practice. As the pressure increases to ensure productivity, accountability, and efficiency, the focus on measuring successful outcomes competes with the focus on building trusting relationships with clients and shifts time away from addressing complex client needs. Well over half the respondents identified several aspects of Managerialism that imperiled the therapeutic relationship, including time constraints, emphasis on short-term goals, and the need to open and close cases quickly.

- Can we evaluate service provision activities to make sure they support the value of human relationships?

Barriers to Quality Service Provision

A commitment to Managerialism interferes with the organizational factors that typically determine a high-quality work environment in the social and human services. By overriding the “logic of social work,” Managerialism threatens the conditions needed to ensure effective and responsive services and successful client outcomes. These conditions include professional autonomy, full staffing, time for supervision, co-worker support, access to services for clients, and the opportunity to advocate for needed change.

Less Professional Autonomy

Managerialism’s reliance on performance-based incentives, standardized questions, scripted interventions, and outcome measures can limit a worker’s professional autonomy and discretionary decision-making power regarding client needs and the provision of care.³² It also risks favoring organizational, bureaucratic, and market needs over professional ideals.

Staff Shortages

Managerialism’s promise to increase performance while cutting costs has made reducing staff and hiring less-skilled workers more appealing.³³ In a labor-intensive setting, such “thin staffing” results in reduced service provision, fewer resources for supervision and training,³⁴ less attention to client needs, and a potential deskilling of the human service workforce.

Lack of Time for Supervision

Quality supervision depends on the training, expertise, and experience of the supervisor,³⁵ and the capacity of the agency to allocate “unhurried and un-harried” time to the task.³⁶ When pressed to meet managerial demands for productivity, accountability, and efficiency, agencies often cut back on supervision of staff and student interns.

Absence of a Learning Environment

Managerialism’s incentives often make it more difficult for agencies to sustain an active learning environment. The emphasis on competition weakens the sense of community and the social fabric of the agency. The loss of access to supervision, along with reduced supervisor and coworker support, can also increase job stress, secondary trauma, and work/family conflicts.³⁷ Such an unsupportive environment can limit an agency’s ability to promote creativity, emotional well-being, and self-care.³⁸

Limited Access for Clients

Managerialism creates incentives for agencies to limit access to services by constructing entry barriers. To this end, it calls for high fees and strict eligibility rules, and results in long wait times, crowded waiting rooms, busy phone lines, and insensitivity to differences.³⁹ Access is also limited by “creaming,” the process by which agencies intentionally restrict services to those who are easier to serve; “skimping,” or limiting services for high cost clients; and “dumping,” or avoiding high-cost clients altogether.⁴⁰

Constrained Advocacy

Managerialism limits the scope of human services by constraining advocacy. It calls for prioritizing agency over community accountability, investing fewer resources in changing social policy, and substituting successful performance and measurable outcomes for social change and social justice goals.

Bending The Rules and Leaving the Profession

Managerial pressure toward high productivity and successful outcomes creates perverse incentives for workers to “bend the rules” by faking statistics, conducting work slow-downs, refusing to comply with paperwork demands, and/or consciously changing reports to meet performance expectations.⁴¹ To deal with these job-related dilemmas, some work overtime while others think about leaving their jobs, leading to organizational problems with high turnover and staff retention.

More Stress on the Job

The quality of working conditions under Managerialism—increased demands for accountability, reduced autonomy, increased routinization, staff shortages, inadequate supervision, and ethical challenges—are a recipe for stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction. The resulting turnover interrupts the continuity of care and threatens to decimate the ranks of the next generation of human service workers.

Agency Commitment to Managerialism

Managerialism shifts human services away from the logic of social work towards the logic of the market, creating tradeoffs that ultimately threaten the well-being of workers, the quality of services, and the common good. The strongest results in this study showed that workers employed by agencies with a low managerial commitment felt more positive about the quality of their work, its contribution to society, and support for agency mission. Those who worked in agencies with a high commitment to managerial priorities reported more problems with service provision and more workplace dilemmas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Respondents' voices guide these recommendations. They identify major problems with the Managerial environment that merit immediate discussion by the entire human service community.

They say:

"This survey is long overdue"

"I hope this information can help change the way human services are provided."

"We are so often overlooked and our needs are not addressed from a policy perspective."

"Helping to build a larger narrative of the direct service crisis we are experiencing is so important"

"Thank you for this survey. It means a lot to people who dedicate their lives to 'work in the trenches'"

We say:

Act on what we know: This *Wake-Up Call* can be used to inform agency practitioners, program directors and executives, social work deans, faculty and students, agency funders, policy makers, and elected officials about the impact of Managerialism on direct practice, service provision, worker well-being, and the future of the profession.

Build the evidence base: This report raises critical questions about the benefits of the business model for the human services. It demonstrates the potentially grave consequences of managerial practices on service provision, workers, and organizations. Social work research is needed to document Managerialism's true impacts on clients and services over time.

Listen to the Human Service Workforce: This report gathered insights from nearly 3,000 human service workers, who typically are 1) not part of designing performance and outcome measures that determine their day-to-day job tasks or agency goals; and 2) not part of designing the social policies that shape service provision and practice. Rather, these important decisions are left to funders, legislators, and others. Instead, let's draw on the wealth of knowledge, practice wisdom, and the experience of our skilled human service workforce and place social workers at the table where important decisions are made.

Stand up for women and people of color: This report identifies the differential impacts of Managerialism on women and people of color. More attention and an honest look are needed to ensure that the human service sector provides good quality jobs for women and people of color on the frontlines, in leadership and in top management positions.

Challenge the Business Model: This report discovered that many respondents found elements of Managerialism grounded in business principles and practices to be problematic. Workers perceived standardized practices, less professional autonomy, and increased reliance on performance measures as poorly aligned with social work practice and responsive service provision. At a time when clients' needs

are more complex and intense, human service workers can challenge the Managerial business model by advocating for human service professionals in agency leadership roles and strengthening our commitment to both the values and the mission of Social Work.

Stem the tide of Managerialism: The assumption that the private sector delivers more quality and accountability at a better price underlies the shift towards Managerialism. As noted above, respondents often conclude that business practices that are compatible with Managerialism may not be compatible with human service goals. Similar observations have been made in the education and healthcare sectors, leading to calls to resist Managerialism in areas where social justice and the public good are at stake. Human service workers can add significantly to this dialogue.

Mobilize the profession to renew commitment to mission: Some fear that organizational mission may become one of Managerialism's major casualties. To counter this, human service workers can help to mobilize the profession to renew its commitment to mission. One pathway is to mobilize around policies that support relationship-building and person-centered approaches to the human services. Grounded in the "logic of social work" rather than "the logic of the market," we can strengthen our capacity to be productive, accountable, efficient, and empirical, in ways that promote quality care, social justice and social change.

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THE FOLLOWING REVIEWERS PROVIDED IMPORTANT FEEDBACK ON THE FINAL REPORT

Susan H Berg, DSW,
Clinical Social Worker, Private Practice.

Pinchas C. Berger, LCSW
Jewish Community Services at the Jewish Board of
Family and Children; Services (Retired)

Donald Cohen
In the Public Interest

Jo Barrett Grellong, LCSW
Pride of Judea Mental Health Clinic
Jewish Board of Family & Children's Services
(Retired)

Bruce A. Grellong, PhD
Director, Child Development & Learning Division
Jewish Board of Family & Children's Services
(Retired)

Candida Brooks-Harrison, LCSW
President, National Association of Social Workers-
NYC
Principal, The Village Enrichment Associates, PLLC

Paul Landsbergis, PhD, MPH
SUNY Downstate School of Public Health

Deborah Mullin PhD Silberman School of Social Work
at Hunter College, City University of New York

Christy Parque
President & CEO
The Coalition for Behavioral Health, Inc.

Diane Rubin, LMSW
Chief Program Officer
Henry Street Settlement

Robert Schachter, DSW
Former Executive Director,
National Association of Social Workers, NYC Chapter
(Retired)

Allison Sesso
Executive Director
Human Services Council of New York

Martha Adams Sullivan, DSW, MA
Executive Director NYS Creedmoor Psychiatric
Center

Susan Stamler
Executive Director
United Neighborhood Houses

Yolanda Pumarejo, LMSW
Executive Vice President,
Social Service Employees Union Local 371

Nancy Wackstein, MSW
Director Community Engagement and Partnerships,
Fordham University Graduate School of Social
Service;

Anthony Wells
President
Social Service Employees Union Local 371

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“ Human service agencies
are the *first responders*
for people in need. ”

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