Concepts, Theories, and Classifications

The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.

Henri Bergson[1]

All-Families Services Center Conducts a Seminar

Gracia Mendoza introduced Dan Simmons, an organizational theorist whose special interest was nonprofit organizations. "This is the first of several sessions we'll have together," Simmons began. "Let's identify the issues that concern us and that we may want to understand better. Our goal for this session is to identify issues that affect the agency and you think should be addressed by agency members. At our second session, we'll decide what we want to learn more about and how we want to go about learning about it. Your job is to define the learning objectives and how to go about the learning process. My job is to help you find useful concepts from the social sciences to help you meet your objectives." Two hours later, Simmons brought the session to a close. "We covered a great many issues," he concluded. "Those issues dealt with people, programs, procedure, power, possibilities, and professionalism."

Harvey resisted the temptation to roll his eyes upward. *That's six Ps,* he reflected. *Feels like grad school. How's he going to use those to summarize what had been a really free-flowing discussion?* However, Harvey was, to his surprise, impressed by Simmons's summation.

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[1]Bergson (1934/1992).

"We talked about the tensions of fitting *people* (staff or clients) to the agency, or the agency to people, downsizing some *programs* to save others, changing some of the agency's *procedures* to reduce the times it takes to make needed changes. We agreed that the distribution of *power* within the agency seemed well balanced. This is an agency that takes its commitment to empowerment seriously," he paused. "But we worried that the power to make programmatic *policy* decisions (that's another P) is shifting to funders and regulatory bodies.

"All-Families defines itself primarily as a direct service agency, providing services to individuals, families, and community groups. It limits those services to a specific geographic area and to a number of specific population groups or communities of interest within them. But it also engages in indirect services, like client advocacy and services coordination, that lead it to collaborate extensively with other social agencies, both within and outside its service area. The agency is not limited to the service area in its recruitment of financial support and other resources.

"The agency's been good at responding to new *possibilities* brought on by changes in the environment, but not in anticipating or shaping those possibilities. You all agreed that the agency's level of *professionalism* is high; but some of you worried that its heavy reliance on aides (paraprofessionals) and untrained volunteers could, if not monitored, be harmful over time. And I sensed a real concern about how outsourcing might affect the professional level of agency *practice*. Hey, another P," he laughed.

Harvey joined in the laugher and clapped, along with his colleagues, as the session came to a close. He really pulled it off, Harvey said to himself. Amazing how an outsider can put his fingers on the critical issues. Especially if he has a few good concepts up his sleeve. And I would guess there's a lot more theory behind those Ps than the professor (another P) has yet shared with us.

USING ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

Organizational theory refers to the social and behavioral theories that can be applied to the understanding of formal and informal organizations. It draws from a number of different disciplines—sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, semiotics, communications science, cybernetics, history,[2] and others.

Theory and Practice[3]

In *Understanding Your Social Agency,* you will be introduced to a variety of theories that can be used for

- understanding your agency and the challenges it faces, and
- making personal, professional decisions about how to react to those challenges.

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[2]Yes, history is a social science, even though it is also a humanities discipline.

[3]More comprehensive treatments of social science and social theory are found in Berger (1963), Bruce (2000), Colander (2007), and March & Lave (1992).

You may also find that theory and practice are inseparable—that each contributes to the other.

Prescientific Knowledge

Until about a hundred years ago, your personal understanding of social agencies would have been primarily situational, drawn from your own and others' experiences, insights, and intuition. It might have included some relatively accessible facts (e.g., where the agency is located and whom it serves), lore (its real or manufactured history), and the wisdom of those whose judgments you respect. You would have known quite a bit about *what* the agency does to whom and with whom, and *how* it does what it does. However, little of that knowledge would have been empirically grounded.

The tools we now use to understand social agencies are a good deal more extensive. Personal experience has been supplemented by scientific methods. These include the gathering of data through observation and experimentation and organizing what we know into concepts and categories so that we can retrieve it, convey it, and use it to change the social realities studied.

New Ways of Knowing About Organizations

In this and subsequent chapters, we'll dig beneath the surface to understand how people behave in their organizational environments, and how organizations interact with others in their own environments. We will also find that the experts—scientists as well as experienced managers and practitioners—don't always agree on what they are seeing or even what is important to examine.

That is actually as it should be. One of the hallmarks of good science is that it upgrades earlier understandings as knowledge grows or conditions change. That is true in the social and behavioral sciences, and in both organizational and management theory. There will always be gaps in knowledge and inconsistencies in the way it is applied. This puts you in the driver's seat. Your challenge, if you should agree to accept it, is to find the concepts and tools useful in understanding your social agency and productive in improving the ways it functions. And that's no mission impossible!

Although various social and behavioral scientists and management theorists use different terms for similar phenomena, this tends to enrich meaning, even though it can confuse some readers.

In the pages that follow, I will try to strip away some jargon, if possible, and to use everyday language in its stead. But that is not always possible or, for that matter, desirable. Familiarity

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Some Useful Definitions

Behavioral science focuses primarily on decision-making and communication processes. It includes such disciplines as organization theory, psychology, biology, management science, and communications science, but it is not limited to human behavior.

The term **social science** refers to those disciplines that deal with the more structural-level processes in social systems. Included are sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics. It is limited to human behavior.

Conceptual frameworks are theoretical constructs that have the potential to connect multiple aspects of inquiry or behavior, including issues addressed, problem, purpose, and analysis. The term is sometimes used instead of theory or model.

Systems are composed of interacting parts that function as a whole, in a relatively orderly way, and which are distinguishable from their surroundings. **Open systems** are engaged in continuous exchange with other systems and their environments. **Social systems** are open systems composed of human beings and the products of their interaction over time.

with the jargon should make it easier to put yourself in the mind-set of the authors whose work I'll be describing.

Chapter Contents

Many of the challenges faced by social agencies were described in Chapter 1. In this chapter, you'll be introduced to

- Questions most commonly addressed by organizational and management theory
- Seminal theories and perspectives on organizations and their management that emerged over the last hundred years or so, and which continue to influence the ways in which we understand social agencies
- A glossary of terms commonly used by social and behavioral scientists to distinguish between what they refer to as concepts, theories, models, and so on
- A typology of social agencies that can be used to define and compare them to each other

The chapter includes an addendum, a primer on social systems theory. Those of you who are already familiar with systems theories might want to skip this section, or use it as a brief refresher. I've included it because it provides a foundation for many of the concepts, conceptual frameworks, and theories discussed in subsequent chapters.

A SHORT HISTORY OF ORGANIZATIONAL THEORIES

Although often identified with sociology, organizational theory is interdisciplinary. It addresses the reciprocal impacts of social organizations on the behavior, attitudes, and aspirations of organizational members and other insiders, and the relationships of organizations and their social, economic, and political environments. It is specifically interested in processes that shape (and can be used to shape) those relationships.

We'll begin by uncovering some of the questions that can be answered with organizational theory, and then describe how organizational theories developed over time in response to issues of concern, often presenting competing explanations and points of view.

Questions That Are Addressed by Organizational Theorists

Critical Issues? People and Processes

The All-Families seminars continued on a biweekly basis for several months. During the final session, Simmons asked participants to list the critical issues they'd explored under two categories: (1) people-to-people issues, and (2) processes and operations issues. He summarized them on two newsprint charts as follows:

(Continued)

(Continued)

People-to-People Issues at All-Families
Motivation, Effort, and Satisfaction at Work
Roles and Relationships
Personalities, Preferences, and Traits
Groups and Teams
Jobs and Careers
Professionalism and Volunteerism

Processes and Operations in Social Agencies
Power and Empowerment
Leadership, Management, and Governance
Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Gender
Your Agency's Culture
Structure and Design
Resource Procurement

Simmons may have selected the two categories strategically. The second category appears to deal with the logic of organizations, whereas the first focuses on the *psycho*logic of how people behave in organizations. You'll find both perspectives reflected in the organizational theories discussed in this book. There's an ongoing effort by many theorists to move back and forth between the two perspectives, or to integrate them into a more inclusive whole.

From Classic to Contemporary: Organizational Theory Making

The Classic and Neoclassic Theories of the First Half of the 20th Century

Among the early-20th-century theorists, three contributors stand out. Max Weber examined the relationships between formal rules, equity, and production. Frederick Taylor tended to focus on production tools, while Henri Fayol focused on behavioral outcomes of management practices and training.

Taylor's Theory of Scientific Management In 1911, an American mechanical engineer, Frederick Taylor, proposed the scientific design of work and the workplace and the selection and training of employees to improve effectiveness.[4] What came to be referred to as Taylorism emphasized the importance of both specialization and collaboration among workers and managers in achieving organizational goals. Taylor proposed that employees could be recruited and trained to fit the requirements of a job and that their efficiency and output could be increased by changing the conditions of work.

Despite Taylor's claims, *Taylorism* actually represented an engineering, rather than a scientific, approach to management. Taylor and his colleagues developed a variety of tools[5] to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Some of their innovations, like time-management studies and Gantt charts, remain in use to this day.

Fayol's Theories of Goal-oriented Management In the same period, Frenchman Henri Fayol proposed 14 principles for effective and efficient goal-oriented management. Drawing on the experiences of effective managers in Europe, he proposed training programs to improve the exercise of central authority, effective communication, equity and fairness in assignments and remuneration, and the promotion of initiative. Fayol's emphasis on promoting organizational harmony and cohesion[6] predated similar concerns by American theorists.

Weber's Bureaucratic Theory German historian and sociologist Max Weber bypassed both the charismatic and traditional notions of authority that were prevalent at the end of the 19th century. Instead, he focused on legal and rational authority in organizations. Weber believed that a hierarchically structured bureaucracy could be a permanent social force in modern society.

Bureaucracy's superiority over other forms of organization, he wrote at the end of the 19th century, stemmed from its rational organization, impartiality, and the placement of the organizational rules above the vested interests of individuals. By design, he explained, it had a built-in *formal rationality,*[7] which could protect the organization from irrational human behaviors. Weber's theory of bureaucracy took root in American sociology after it was translated into English by Harvard's Talcott Parsons, some four decades after it was first published in German.

Follett's Integrationalist Approach

As Taylorism was gaining influence among business managers, Mary Parker Follett was examining the impact that people, not rules, procedures, or engineered structures, have on organizations. Although not a social scientist, Follett was, at one stage in her career, a well-regarded lecturer on both business and social service management. Drawing on her experience as a community social worker, she spoke about organizations as *integrative units*, in which each person's contribution to the whole—workers, clients, and others—creates an entirely new entity.[8]

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[4]Taylor (1911).

[5]See also Clegg, Kornberger, & Pitsis (2005), Lauffer (1978), Chapters 7–10.

[6]Fayol (1949).

[7]Weber (1947). For a critique of Weber, see Abrahamsson (1977).

[8]Barclay (2005).

Follett observed that integration occurs when "individuals in the organization recognize their interdependence, joint responsibilities and common interests."[9] Those individuals might include employees and volunteers, clients, and others with whom they and the organization are interdependent. Her ideas presaged the work of the social and behavioral scientists subsequently associated with what Etzioni referred to as the *interactionalist* model.[10] In contrast to Taylor, and Weber (who placed the office above its incumbent), Follett was clearly focused on the *psychologic* rather than the logic of organizations.

The Impact of Interpersonal Relations

The Functions of the Executive Fast-forward a decade or so to 1938. In that year, Chester Barnard's book, *The Functions of the Executive,* helped unlock management theory from Taylorism's overly rational, engineering orientation to one in which teamwork, motivation, and leadership were described as keys to productivity.[11] Barnard built on his own experiences as a successful business executive as well as the research conducted at Western Electric's Hawthorne Works near Chicago. The studies conducted by Elton Mayo and his colleagues created quite a stir among organizational researchers and others. They argued that manipulating elements in the workplace's physical environment had little, if any, effect on productivity. This was a direct challenge to Taylorism.

The Hawthorne Effect What had come to be known as the *Hawthorne effect* demonstrated the unexpected impact of the research, itself, on work output. As a result of the internal dynamics of the work group being studied, its members shared a desire to please the researchers (who they assumed wanted them to reach a higher level of productivity).[12]

Later, Selznick's study of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)[13] demonstrated how informal interpersonal relations and power struggles within an organization could subvert official organizational goals. Simon, aware of both the Hawthorne and TVA studies, and familiar with Barnard's and Follett's work, proposed a theory of *limited rationality* to account for worker responses to management initiatives and organizational demands.[14]

Mid- to Late-20th-Century Theories: The Instrumental Understanding of Organizations

Prior to the mid-20th century, there continued to be some distance between organizational theorists, who sought to study organizations as a way of comprehending broad social and cultural processes, and management-oriented theorists who were more interested in understanding what goes on within and between organizations, so as to be able to better

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[9]Quoted in Hasenfeld (2009, p. 54).

[10]See Etzioni (1964/1997).

[11]Barnard (1938).

[12]Roethlisberger & Dickson (1939).

[13]Selznick (1949).

[14]Simon (1957).

manage them. This instrumental focus was intensified during and right after World War II, first as a component of the war effort, and later in efforts to reengineer industry to serve peacetime economic and ideological goals.

By the 1970s, many of the social scientists interested in how organizations work had migrated from academic departments (e.g., sociology, economics, and political science) to professional schools (in particular schools of business administration). They focused on such issues as resource acquisition and allocation, productivity, work motivation and satisfaction, exchange, organizational and interorganizational structure, and other concerns I identified earlier and will address more fully in the chapters to come.

Systems Theory

In the mid-1940s, Talcott Parsons applied general systems theory to organizations. Developed by Hungarian Ludwig Von Bertalanffy two decades earlier,[15] systems theory was an effort to unify thinking about the social, biological, and physical sciences, and even systems of thought (like mathematics). The term *system* refers to a configuration of parts connected and joined together by a web of relationships. Parsons was intrigued by the possibility that systems theory could be used both as a way of understanding society and of reconfiguring organizational theory.

Functional Rationality

In the mid-1950s, March and Simon borrowed a term from Parsons to address what they referred to as the *functional rationality* of organizations.[16] By this, they meant that organizations have a way of behaving that is largely independent of their human participants. Parsons had actually borrowed that term from Karl Manheim who had transposed it from Weber's "*formal" rationality,* thereby imbuing it with a more dynamic and less static quality. A bit later, James D. Thomson—aligning himself with Parsons—generated a number of propositions about how organizations, under norms of rationality, seek to overcome uncertainty and the consequences of limited control over their circumstances.[17]

Consolidating Organizational Theories Into Schools of Thought

In the mid-1960s, two theorists consolidated all the conceptual frameworks that were current at the time into several categories.

Etzioni's Four Models Amitai Etzioni postulated four models of organizational thought:

- The *rational model* of scientific management drew heavily on the work of Taylor and Fayol. It presumed that people operate out of rational motives, and emphasized work and workplace designs as ways of increasing efficiency and reducing costs.

- *Interactionalist models* were inspired by the work of Elton Mayo and his associates. They were supported by a number of sociologists at the University of Chicago and, later, by the work of Kurt Lewin and others.

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[15]Von Bertalanffy (1968).

[16]March & Simon (1958).

[17]Thompson (1967).

- The *structural model,* initially inspired by the work of Max Weber, was later taken up and modified by others like Mintzberg.[18] Its focus was on the tensions between individual and organizational needs, conflicts of interest, and organizational structural configurations.

- The *compliance model* emphasized the coercive, utilitarian, and normative aspects of power and control in organizations.[19]

Scott's Three Perspectives   W. Richard Scott and his colleagues were interested in the vantage point—the *perspective*—from which one views organizations.[20] They describe

- *A rational systems perspective* that perceived organizations as striving to achieve a degree of technical rationality with a logic of their own, regardless of the persons who work within.[21]

- A *natural systems perspective,* which observed that people *do* bring aspects of themselves into organizations, and that these aspects may overshadow the organizational roles they are expected to perform.[22] Subsequent research on *human relations* in the workplace addressed such concerns as motivation and satisfaction,[23] role and work group behavior,[24] and organizational culture.[25]

- The *open systems perspective,* which perceived organizations as likely to respond to external and internal environmental preferences, opportunities, and threats. Rapidly changing environments may require organizations to defer formalization of rules and structures in favor of flexibility and ad hoc arrangements.[26]

Field Theory   Kurt Lewin, influential in social psychology and sometimes referred to as the father of group dynamics, attempted to apply a theoretical framework (field theory) to cut across the divide between theory and action, and between the logic and the psychologic[27] In brief, Lewin viewed a person's social environment (life space) to be a dynamic field that is impacted by the interaction of human consciousness, and elements of the social environment. Just as an organizational environment can cause predictable types of psychological experience for its members (e.g., staff and clients), the psychosocial state of its key members can influence the agency milieu.

Like Lewin, many organizational theorists continued to move back and forth between using their studies of organizations to better understand society and to solve organizational problems.

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[18]Mintzberg (2007).

[19]Etzioni (1964/1997, 1975).

[20]Blau & Scott (1962/2003). Also Scott (1992), Scott & Davis (2006).

[21]Morgan (1997), Lewis, Packard, & Lewis (2007), Kettner, Moroney, & Martin (2009).

[22]Selznick (1949, 1992).

[23]Herzberg, Mauser, & Snyderman (1993), Hackman & Oldman (1980).

[24]Argyris (1964), Cartwright & Zander (1968), Katzenbach & Smith (2003).

[25]Schein (1990).

[26]Mintzberg (1983, 2007).

[27]Lewin's writngs on field theory and other contributions are reprinted in Lewin (1999).

Postmodernism

A postmodernist approach to organizational theory gained some prominence in the early 1990s, and continues to grow in influence. It contests the empirically based and positivist theories described. It eschews quantitative approaches to data collection in favor of gathering organizational stories, some of which may reflect multiple narratives.[28] Because postmodernists tend to see organizations as a patchwork quilt of multiple perceptions, they often refuse to take sides between narratives (descriptions and explanations).

Instead, they are likely to explore the potential outcomes of pursuing one or another of the narratives while also promoting discourse between those holding different perspectives, in the hopes of eventually arriving at a common understanding of what is correct or incorrect, true or false. For the postmodernists, truth is relative and may change with time and circumstances. This approach can lead to a radically different interpretation of reality.

USING CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

Organizing and Communicating Organizational Theory

As is true in all the sciences, organizational and management theorists observe reality, categorize it, and generalize from their observations. To do so, they use specific terms that are intended to convey their discoveries and/or understandings. These include:

- metaphors,
- typologies, and
- concepts, conceptual frameworks, paradigms, models, and theories.

Metaphors

Metaphors explain observations by implying a comparison to (or similarity with) something else. The word *organization,* itself, is a metaphor. It is drawn from a Greek root word associated with the concepts of work or tool, suggesting it has a purposive function and can be used for doing something. The term social *agency* implies action on someone else's behalf.

When we describe organizations as *machines,* we are implying that they have an instrumental purpose, require *resources* to *operate,* and can be *engineered* in such ways as to improve *performance* and reduce *costs.* When we talk about *mapping* the agency's *environment,* taking a *snapshot* of its current services, *linking* it with other agencies and *stakeholders, charting* its resource *flow,* its cultural *artifacts,* or describing its *inputs* and *outputs,* we are using other metaphors to convey a mental image that we see as representative of reality.

Typologies and Classifications

Typologies are used to categorize and compare ideal types so as to better understand their similarities and differences. Among the many typologies referred to in this text are those

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[28]Hatch (1997), Burrell (1992).

that address personality traits, motivation, organizational structures, sources of leadership authority, and systems functions. In the social and behavioral sciences, typologies have not yet achieved the rigor that taxonomies have achieved in the biological and physical sciences.[29]

However, without them it would be difficult to focus on phenomena that concern us. For example, later in this chapter, we'll be examining a typology of social agencies. It may help you differentiate your agency from others, and even suggest how the agency might change by adding to or reducing from its current characteristics.

Concepts, Conceptual Frameworks, Theories, and Models

In general, social scientists use the term *theory* to designate a systematized body of knowledge that is empirically grounded, and can be used for explanatory and predictive purposes. In contrast, the term *concept*, as used by some social scientists, refers to a general idea or mental image of some phenomenon.

The term *conceptual framework* is sometimes used to designate a pre-theory, which can be understood to be an effort to connect all the relevant information and concepts that can guide action or research. To confound things further, *conceptual frameworks* are sometimes referred to as models and at other times as working assumptions. To make all this even more perplexing, some social and behavioral scientists refer to theories and to clusters of theories as conceptual frameworks. Don't despair. The confusion in terminology is partly the result of differences in the uses of some terms in different social sciences and different time periods, but most of all, it's due to the inventiveness of people in the social sciences (to whom we should all be grateful).

Table 2.1 presents some of the most common understandings of the terminology used by organizational researchers and theorists.

A Typology of Social Agencies

If someone were to ask you *what kind* of agency you practice in, chances are your response might include something about

- The services it provides, or fields of service within which it could be located
- The economic sector within which it operates
- The characteristics of its clients and client systems
- The processes it uses and outcomes it seeks
- Its size, location, and structural configuration
- Minority relevance

We'll take these one at a time

Grouping Social Agencies by Fields or Types of Service

Fields of Service Social agencies tend to be associated with certain *fields of service.* Examples are presented in Table 2.2.[30]

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[29]For example, biological taxonomic classifications include *kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus,* and *species.*
[30]See Jansson (2008), Midgley, Tracey, & Livermore (2000), and Glicken (2007).

Table 2.1   Some Understandings About Theories, Conceptual Frameworks, and Models

Term	*Description and Discussion*
Concept	**A *concept* is a mental image or general notion of something.** It summarizes observations and ideas about all the characteristics of that image. Some concepts, like age and gender, are easily understood. Others, like *group* or *organizational behavior,* can be observed, whereas some like *attitudes* and *motivations* are, at best, inferred.
Conceptual Framework	**A *conceptual framework* is a grouping of interrelated concepts used to explain a particular pattern or behavior.** The term is also used in lieu of *theory, model,* and *paradigm.* Examples: Porter's job characteristics *model* or Maslow's common human needs *theory.*
Model	**A *model* is a representation of reality.** Some examples: • *Causal* model—abstraction of a cause-and-effect relationship • *Program* model—a service or intervention approach • *Role* model—a person who serves as a behavioral or moral example • *Statistical* model—a set of mathematical equations that describe behavior in terms of probability distributions • *Working* model—a preliminary formulation of a theory or program that is used as an initial guide for thought or action • *Business* model—a framework expressing the administrative logic of the agency
Paradigm	**The term *paradigm* is often used as a synonym for either a *model* or a *conceptual framework.*** A *paradigm shift* is an entirely new way in which a concept is understood or defined.
Perspective	**A *perspective* is a point of view related to one's vantage point or experience.** Perspectives can be individual or shared.
Theory	**A *theory* is a grouping of related facts, concepts, and hypotheses that is both descriptive and interpretive.** Example: systems theory. When causal theories are framed as guides to action in professional situations, they are referred to as (professional) practice principles, or practice theories.

Both the fields and what they are called emerged over time, often in response to the historic developments summarized in Chapter 1. Their names tend to reflect the populations served and problems addressed. A list of fields in other countries might differ from those found in the United States. Some less-developed countries might have very few formalized service programs, whereas highly developed societies are likely to have diverse and specialized fields of service.

Direct or Indirect Services   Direct services are aimed at helping people improve their quality of life through capacity building and empowerment. Indirect services are designed to affect those conditions that limit client access to the sources of well-being, and to support the work of direct services.[31] See Table 2.3 for examples of each.

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[31]Garvin & Tropman (1997).

Table 2.2   Fields of Service in the United States

• Child Welfare • Income and Employment • Health Care • Corrections • Disabilities • Education	• Family Issues • Mental Health • Leisure and Recreation • Housing and Community Development • Aging

Table 2.3   Distinguishing Between Direct and Indirect Services

Service Focus	Change Aim	Examples
Direct Services	Client Capacity Building and Empowerment	• Family counseling to enable parents and children to communicate more effectively • Job training and placement of disabled adults • Engaging neighborhood residents in community building
Indirect Services	Improving Conditions That Impact Well-Being	• Advocacy aimed at eliminating discrimination in housing • Fundraising to create camper scholarships • Community coalition building to reduce competition and increase coordination and service effectiveness • Managerial intervention to assure that services are effectively coordinated and efficiently provided

Grouping Social Agencies by Economic Sector

The sector within which an agency operates—public, nonprofit, or proprietary—can have a significant impact on what services are provided and how they are delivered.

Public Social Agencies   Public social service agencies operate as units of the federal, state, and substate, or local governments. Authorized to provide services within specific jurisdictions, their services are monitored by public commissions that oversee their quality of services as well as agency productivity and efficiency. In general, public social services are designed to

- *Protect* people at risk—especially those with insufficient access to nutrition, health, housing, and other resources
- *Equalize* opportunities for self-advancement and *eliminate barriers* to service through antidiscrimination and affirmative action legislation or through educational services

Proprietary Service Providers Although proprietary social agencies have no special obligations to the public welfare or to the communities within which they operate, they are obliged to provide good quality services at reasonable costs and under various government and licensing regulations. Since the 1980s, there has been rapid growth in the number of for-profit agencies that provide residential services (homes for the aged, nursing care, and juvenile corrections). Some are licensed to operate within a single state, whereas others do business in many states. Surplus profits are distributed to shareholders—the corporation's owners. Their income is generally based on fees for service, some of which may be covered through third-party payments.

Nonprofit Social Agencies Like for-profits, voluntary (nonprofit) agencies must also incorporate under relevant state laws. However, they do so under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code which permits them to avoid paying taxes on income and expenditures, and to provide receipts to their donors who receive tax exemptions for their financial and noncash gifts, as specified by relevant federal, state, and local tax laws.

In addition to charging fees for some services, nonprofits engage in a wide variety of fundraising activities. They tap a broad array of philanthropic sources, ranging from foundations to corporate and individual donors. They may conduct income-generating sales of goods or services without paying taxes on profits, so long as the income is used for charitable purposes and the activity is somehow related to the nonprofit's main purpose and is not considered unfair to the private sector.

The Blurring of Lines Between Sectors There is a good deal of blurring between the lines that distinguish the three sectors. For example,

- public agencies often purchase the services of for- and nonprofit agencies,
- for-profits are permitted to establish nonprofit subsidiaries, and
- nonprofits may set up for-profit, income-earning (and taxable) subsidiaries of their own.

Agencies in all three sectors are subject to external regulations. For example, public programs may be regulated under provisions of the legislation that brought them into being. Voluntary and proprietary agencies may be subject to state and local licensing procedures, and to accreditation from voluntary organizations, like the Council on Social Work Education (which accredits schools of social work), the Child Welfare League, or the American Hospital Association. Table 2.4 provides additional comparisons between the sectors.

Grouping Agencies by Levels of Intervention and Definitions of Clients

All social agencies define their services as being directed to individuals, families, and/or larger systems. For example, counseling and treatment services may be offered to individuals or families. Consultative services may be offered to organizations.

Client Systems and Change Agents All social agencies are involved, in some way, with planned change. *Planned change* is seen as a deliberate effort to apply valid knowledge to

Table 2.4 Comparisons Between Nonprofit, Public, and For-profit Agencies

	Nonprofit Agencies	*Public Agencies*	*For-profit Agencies*
Ownership and Governance	The board sets policy, hires the director, serves as trustee of community interest, and reviews performance.	Policies and programs are determined by public bodies, which appoint oversight committees to monitor performance.	The board hires the exec, monitors productivity, and distributes profits, when appropriate, to corporate shareholders.
Income and Other Resources	Grants, cash and noncash gifts, POSCs,[32] and fees	Governmental appropriations, supplemented by fees and charitable gifts	Fees for service, third-party payments, and POSCs
Collaborations	Joint efforts with other service organizations are common.	Collaborations tend to be defined by legal requirements.	Joint activities are limited to quality enhancement or cost reduction.

fixing, correcting, or eliminating undesirable behaviors and conditions that are considered troubling (the *target of change*). To be effective, planned change requires a level of collaboration between the *change agent* and *client system,* without which it would be difficult to adapt knowledge to the client's realities, and less likely that the intervention would take hold.

The italicized words, above, were defined and described by Kurt Lewin and his associates.[33] These terms resonated strongly within the social work and other professions and were extensively used by social agencies in the 1960s and 1970s to describe their intervention strategies. They've recently been reapplied to human service and management practice.[34]

Clients in the Change Process All human services are aimed at bettering social conditions or improving the capacity of people to deal with those conditions. That means helping people to change their circumstances or to change themselves. When clients and client systems are the objects of a change, they are treated as raw materials (e.g., like raw clay to be molded into a figurine).[35] However, when clients are engaged in determining the outcome and methods of change, they become both subjects and objects of the process.

Social Agencies and Empowerment Practice The expectation that agency clients must be active participants in the intervention process is not without its contradictions. Agencies often demand some degree of client compliance—such as acceptance of the rules governing a treatment process and other agency requirements. Paradoxically, the intervention is

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[32]POSC = purchase of serivce contract.

[33]Lewin (1999). See also Lippitt, Watson, & Westley (1958), Bennis (1966).

[34]Mehr & Kanwischer (2007), Valverde (2007).

[35]Hasenfeld (2010).

likely to be defined as successful only when the client has achieved a significant level of self-management and empowerment.[36]

Grouping Agencies by Processes and Outcomes

Some agencies define themselves by what they do and how. Others define themselves by outcome or goals sought.

Processes The term *process* is often used to encompass the practice methods and other means used to effect change. Some agencies limit their activities to specialized processes. Several agencies might share the goal of reducing infant mortality, but specialize in different processes aimed at achieving that end. For example, Agency A provides training programs on nutrition to pregnant women at risk of producing underdeveloped embryos and infants with low birth weight, factors associated with high levels of infant mortality. Agency B does not specialize in issues pertaining to pregnancy or infant mortality. It defines itself as a community training resource that specializes in the use of group-training methods to address many kinds of behavioral problems.[37] Both define themselves as training agencies.

Outcomes In contrast, Agency C a prenatal clinic might be more focused on ends, using a wide variety of methods to reduce infant mortality, such as professional counseling, peer coaching, regular medical checkups, and housing assistance when necessary. Agencies that focus on specific outcomes might be very flexible in terms of the methods used.

Grouping Agencies by Location

Location of Services Some agencies are defined largely by the locales they serve. For example, a neighborhood center may restrict its services to residents of the immediate area. In contrast, a corporation might own and manage residential care centers for conceptually challenged older adults in a number of locales.

Location of Resource Suppliers and Program Partners In some cases, agencies generate financial and other program support from within the same locales in which they provide service. However, other agencies may have access to resource suppliers from outside their community of service. Location can be everything. For example, an agency serving a low-income neighborhood may have access to a nearby university and many of its resources. It can use that proximity to recruit interns from the schools of social work, public health, and law, thereby significantly increasing its service capacity and, sometimes, reducing its costs.

Defining Agencies by Size and Configuration

Size Some agencies are both local and small. Some are local but large and complex. Size can be a factor in an agency's structural configuration.[38]

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[36]Hasenfeld (2010), Cox & Parsons (2000).

[37]Example taken from Kettner, Moroney, & Martin (2008).

[38]Mintzberg (2007).

Configuration Agencies can be managed from the top-down, center-out, or from a number of locations. Both traditional and professional bureaucracies tend to have top-down structures with both the authority and communication levels moving both down the line and up. Some use functional divisional structures like service (production), community relations, marketing and fundraising (boundary relations), research, performance evaluation, community needs assessment (adaptation), and management. Some use geographic divisions, like regional and local branch structures. Some are heavily rule governed, while others remain nimble and flexible, responding more to pressure and opportunities than to fixed notions of mission.

Grouping Agency by Minority Relevance

Agencies that offer faith-based services and/or culture-specific programs will differ in some respects from secular and some multicultural agencies along one or more of three dimensions: acculturation, integration, and continuity. These services are often culturally sensitive and take into account generational differences among those served.

Acculturation Acculturation and skill development services have similar aims—the integration of individuals and groups into the larger society by orienting them to the values, and training them in the skills necessary to succeed

Removal of Barriers Some agencies actively promote the removal of barriers to work and full integration of disenfranchised populations in the workforce. They may participate in advocacy efforts to remove barriers, or in educational efforts to empower members of minorities and others to advocate on their own behalf.

Continuity or Assimilation Aware that acculturation and integration can result in some loss to both American society and to those who are/were identified with specific cultures, some agencies engage in what might be called "heritage renewal services." These are relevant both to ethnic and faith-based groups. They include programs designed to promote pride in and continuity of a group's traditions, while also helping group members express them in ways that are acceptable in contemporary American society. In contrast, some agencies promote both acculturation and assimilation. Their services are designed to Americanize newcomers, by helping them adapt to or adopt new customs and cultural patterns, thereby integrating American cultural values with immigrants' traditional practices.[39]

Toward a Comprehensive Classification of Social Agency Types

Table 2.5 integrates the factors discussed into a comprehensive classification.[40] You might find it useful as a kind of checklist of the characteristics that define your social agency.

Which of these categories can be applied to your social agency? Which of them describe your agency's domain (what it does, for what purposes, and in whose interests)?

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[39]Gutiérrez, Lewis, Nagda, Wernick, & Shore (2005). Also Cnaan, Boddie, & Yancey (2005).

[40]This is an expansion of Hasenfeld's typology as reported in Garvin & Tropman (1997).

Table 2.5   A Typology of Social Agencies

Dimension	Description and Examples
1. Sector	Voluntary, public, or proprietary sectors
2. Fields of Service	Problems and services, such as mental health and rehabilitation, or populations served, such as the elderly, children, and groups
3. Levels of Intervention	Services directed to individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, or national and international levels
4. Developmental or Life Cycle	Aimed at early-, mid- or end-life periods. For example, from prenatal to death benefits for individuals, or start-up to termination assistance for organizations
5. Nature of the Product	Defined in terms of outcomes (e.g., increase in funds raised, or donors engaged)
6. Nature of the Process	Designation of the aspect of a problem-solving process performed, for example, assessment, evaluation, promotions, training, and publicity
7. Culture, Ethnicity, and Faith	Correcting systemic injustices and protecting civil rights; contributing to the continuity and expression of group heritage while accepting and celebrating the diversity of American society
8. Geographics	Services may or may not be limited to a specific geographic area. Resources may or may not be generated from the same area.
9. Clients and Client Systems	Client or client systems are viewed as targets, partners, and managers of change, and as participants in agency program design or governance.
10. Size and Configurations	Agencies can be simple or complex in structure; bureaucratic or nonbureaucratic in structure; top-down or horizontal in authority structure; unitary or divisional in their operations.

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Think of the concepts, theories, metaphors, and typologies in this book as resources available for your use. Apply them one at a time, in sequence, or in some more integrated fashion for understanding your social agency or for intervening in its operations. Although each has its own identity, when used together, they can be more powerful than when used alone.

By locating them near each other in specific chapters, I've grouped a number of related concepts. However, concepts addressed in one chapter can also be used in conjunction with concepts in others. For example, the theories and conceptual frameworks found in Chapter 4 that explain *motivation* and *effort* could have implications for jobs and careers (Chapter 5), professionalism and volunteerism (Chapter 6), organizational culture (Chapter 7), or leadership.and management (Chapter 8). You might think of the theories, concepts,

frameworks, and metaphors described as loosely coupled. However, be aware that some concepts may not transfer easily from one setting to another.

You will find that a number of concepts explained in one chapter will also be useful in understanding issues discussed in another chapter. Don't be surprised. That's a good sign. It shows you're making creative use of what you're learning. Don't let those serendipitous[41] moments (epiphanies) slip you by. When they happen, use the opportunity to stop and think for a moment. Jot down any new insights or questions that you want to pursue later.

Be alert to the possibility of error. When management theorists tried to apply the concept of culture[42] (developed by anthropologists to describe society) within the framework of organizational theory, they made a number of assumptions. As we will discover in Chapter 7, some of those assumptions turned out to be totally false.

Your job is to discover those that are useful in understanding and acting on issues of concern to you. You'll find some suggestions in both the chapter texts and footnotes that suggest some of those connections. Chapter 10, which deals with internal agency structures and external relationships, includes numerous suggestions on how you might make those connections. Each chapter includes exercises that permit you to test the utility of many of the concepts and conceptual frameworks presented.

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[41]Serendipity is the aptitude for making discoveries by chance.

[42]See Chapter 7.