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MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCIES, DIFFERENTIAL POWER,  
AND THE QUESTION OF EFFECTIVENESS IN  
HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

A multiple constituencies model of human service organizations identifies twelve interest groups which must be considered when effectiveness questions are raised. The differential power of the interest groups suggests that some groups' preferences are likely to be emphasized over others. The relationship between power inside the organization and that on the outside is analyzed. Recent trends in the growth and militancy of professional associations and employee groups suggest that internal control by senior administrators is increasingly challenged and variable. Future studies of effectiveness in the human services are encouraged to remain sensitive to the effects of constituency interests and power on the establishment and implementation of priorities and goals.

The mandate to human service organizations (HSO's) that they "provide service to clients" (Hasenfeld and English, 1974) is more problematic than appears on the surface. To "provide service," an organization must first survive yet policies and procedures which facilitate survival may contradict a "service" orientation (Glisson and Martin, 1980). Furthermore, service organizations both contain and operate in the midst of multiple constituencies or interest groups which hold conflicting and incompatible expectations regarding their proper role and outputs (Schmidt and Kochan, 1976; Whetten, 1977, 1978). Clients, for example, tend to hold different expectations for a service agency than do agency administrators or the public-at-large (Scott, 1977). With different constituencies expecting, and often demanding, different types of outputs, a question can be raised as to how an organization's success at fulfilling its mandate or goals is to be evaluated or assessed (Blackwell and Bolman, 1977; Keeley, 1978; Kouzes and Mico, 1979).

The aim of the present paper is to present and develop a multiple constituencies model of human service organizations and to analyze its implications for understanding the concept of effectiveness in a social services context. Attention is given to the correlates and consequences of power differentials among the constituent groups with particular emphasis on the implications of such differences for influencing the types of goals which members of the organization are likely to pursue.

### The question of effectiveness

There is much debate over an appropriate definition of "effectiveness" as applied to human service organizations (Glisson and Martin, 1980). Nevertheless, two competing models of effectiveness are predominant in the organizational literature (Goodman and Pennings, 1977) and are summarized here for background purposes. These are: (1) the resource model of effectiveness and (2) the goal model of effectiveness. The resource model, best represented in the work of Yuchtman and Seashore (1967), contends that the effective organization is one which is successful at exploiting its environment of scarce resources. The more resources the organization gains, the more "effective" it is judged. In general, the resource model assesses organizational effectiveness on the basis of inputs rather than outputs (cf. Campbell, 1977; Evan, 1976). Although the organization which acquires greater resources can be assumed to have done something in the past to facilitate or justify this acquisition, Yuchtman and Seashore's model fails to deal with "what" this may have been. Additionally, this orientation tends to focus attention on organizational survival rather than on effects or outcomes or, in the case of HSO's, quality of service rendered.

The goal model of effectiveness, in contrast, deals with the extent to which an organization meets or fulfills its intended goals. The emphasis here is on performance or outputs (cf. Campbell, 1977). Concern with achievement of intended goals renders this model compatible with recent emphases on accountability in the public arena (Glisson, 1975). As noted by Scott (1977), a problem arises, however when the question is asked: whose goals? Because a service organization consists of and responds to multiple constituencies, utilization of the goal model of effectiveness must somehow take into account the possibility of conflicting interests and priorities among the various groups (e.g., legislators, administrators, staff, clients, the general public, and so forth; cf. Scott, 1977). Evaluations by one interest group may be the opposite of evaluations by other groups (Friedlander and Pickle, 1968; Mohr, 1973). In regards to manpower agencies, Whetten (1978) reports, for example, that staff members' assessments of their program's effectiveness are completely opposite from those of the programs' central administrators. If the professional staff, that is, perceive their organization as effective, the administrators perceive it as ineffective and vice versa.

Even if there were only a single constituency, furthermore, identification of appropriate goals would remain problematic. Within the administrative cadre of a service organization, there is question whether the proper goals for assessing effectiveness are the ideal (or "stated") goals pronounced by directors at press conferences or before legislative committees (and printed in brochures and annual reports) or whether they are the operative (or "actual") goals which in fact orient the daily routine behavior of administrators and staff alike (cf. Perrow, 1961). Etzioni (1960; 1961) cautions against evaluating organizational effectiveness on the basis of ideal goals alone. Ideal, or stated goals, serve important purposes for the organization in that they influence public opinion, assist in the establishment of a domain, and provide the bases for pursuing funds, qualified staff, and so forth. Realities of the situation, however, may render "ideal" goals as precisely that,

i.e., ideals, whereas the everyday work of the agency remains at a much more limited or mundane level. If there is a schism between stated and operative goals, the question must be posed as to whether the former, the latter, both or neither should be utilized in assessing organizational effectiveness.

Questions such as these indicate the complex nature of the organizational effectiveness concept (cf. Kouzes and Mico, 1979). They suggest the necessity, furthermore, for keeping uppermost in mind the extensive "openness" of human service organizations. The central and significant role played by constituencies outside the "boundaries" of the organization per se cautions against a restricted, intra-organizational focus when studying HSO's (Benson, 1975; Evan, 1976).

#### Getting and giving: across the organization's boundary

As noted by Walmsley and Zald (1973a), public organizations--a category into which the majority of HSO's fall--are particularly vulnerable to the political and economic environments in which they are located. Their public status renders them dependent for resources (particularly for operating funds) on bodies and/or groups lodged outside the organization per se. In comparison to private, profit-making organizations, public organizations have less control over their destiny (Walmsley and Zald, 1973b). Board members of private corporations share directly in the success or failure of the organization they oversee, whereas the fate of legislators is much less dependent on the "success" (or failure) of the agencies which they charter and fund. This is true, in part, because of a lack of consensus as to what effectiveness consists of. In addition, the faddishness of public issues and trends may cause a previously favored organization to be viewed as ineffective as a result of changes in the criteria for assessing effectiveness, e.g., concern may shift from emphasis on growth to emphasis on efficiency.

Extensive vulnerability to extra-organizational factors suggests, therefore, that the HSO which survives is the HSO which pays attention to constituencies, trends and fads beyond its immediate "boundaries" (Benson, 1975). As the subsequent model of organizational structure and linkages indicates, employees of service organizations expend substantial amounts of energy and resources to influence and respond to significant environments. Competition not only for funds but for qualified staff and valued clients characterizes the interorganizational arena in which the typical service organization exists (Evan, 1976). As the ensuing analysis suggests, administrators of HSO's can take little for granted. In a high inflation economy, their future is likely to be characterized by increasing competition for resources, personnel, and clients and by challenges to organizational legitimacy as well (Glisson and Martin, 1980; Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

#### A multiple constituencies model of human service organizations

The model shown in Figure 1 depicts the major constituencies of human service organizations as consisting of twelve distinctive groupings (intended as illustrative

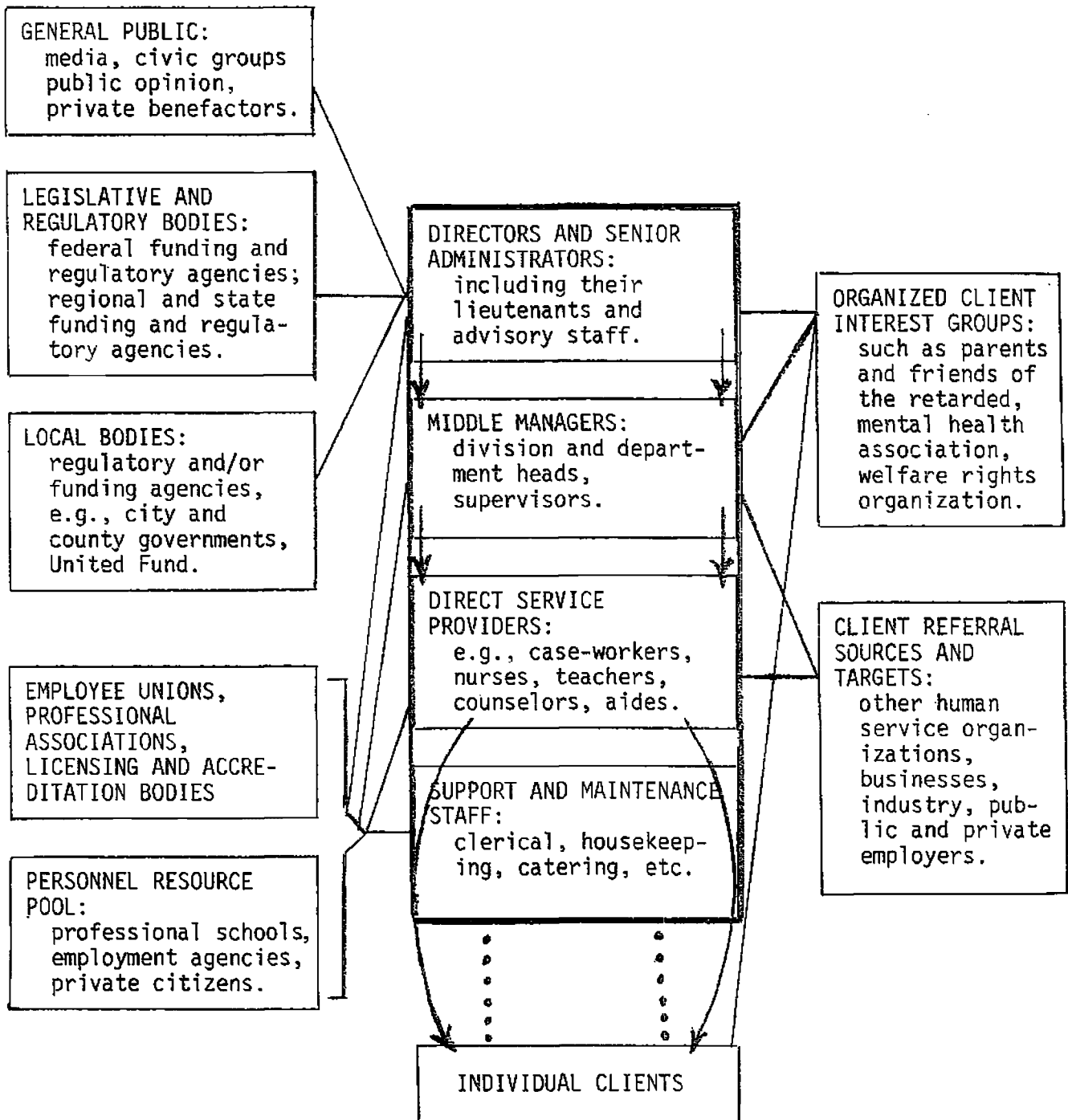


Fig. 1--A multiple constituencies model of human service organizations

rather than definitive). Studies of internal organizational structure (e.g., Holland, 1973; Martin and Segal, 1977; Glisson, 1978) typically restrict attention to the four (or five, if clients are included) groups inside the heavy lines implying that the organization consists of these groups only and that linkages between these and other groups can be safely ignored. Although the organization as an accounting unit (Evan, 1976) may consist of only four or five groups, a case can be made that such a view of public organizations is deficient and that the organization's boundary is much less fixed or determinate than such a perspective suggests (cf. Walmsley and Zald, 1973b; Benson, 1977; Salaman, 1978).

To illustrate, clients are depicted in Figure 1 as potentially an internal as well as external group. The controversy over whether clients served by an organization are legitimately considered as members of the organization is summarized by Bidwell (1970) and hinges on whether the boundary of the organization is properly conceptualized as including clients within it or outside it. Although a welfare agency, general hospital, or public school can not fulfill its mission without clients, it is also true that clients in comparison to employees typically spend less time inside the organization (or in interaction with it) and are less committed to it. (A potential exception to the generalization involving time is recognized in regards to clients of long-term residential organizations such as prisons and mental hospitals.) Whereas the majority opinion among scholars of HSO's is that the inclusion or exclusion of clients as organizational members depends on the nature of the question under investigation (Hall, 1972), Bidwell (1970) argues forcefully that clients are better conceptualized as an extraorganizational constituent group who are served by the organization per se. Such an orientation, he claims, highlights the problematic nature of on-going client-organization relations and mitigates the tendency to assume that they are static or can be taken for granted.

Boundary questions aside, the model in Figure 1 depicts a number of interest groups whose preferences regarding organizational goals and objectives can be expected to differ. In descending order, the four groups within the heavy lines include: (1) Directors and chief administrators, including their assistants and advisory staff; (2) Middle-managers, including department heads, supervisors, etc.; (3) Direct service providers (e.g., caseworkers, counselors, nurses); and (4) Support (e.g., clerical) and maintenance (e.g., catering and cleaning) staff. Beneath this block of groups, and connected to it by a dashed line, are the clients, the group for whose service-provision the HSO is "officially" established.

Other constituent groups (and/or organizations) shown in Figure 1 as relevant to an understanding of service organizations are of seven types. These are: (1) the general public (including the media, civic groups, private contributors, churches, ordinary citizens, public opinion, etc.); (2) legislative and regulatory bodies (including federal, regional, and state funding and oversight agencies); (3) local funding and regulatory bodies (such as city or county government policies, laws; United Fund standards and funds, etc.); (4) employee unions, professional associations, licensing and accreditation bodies; (5) client referral sources and targets (e.g., other human service organizations; private and public employers, businesses, industries, etc.); (6) the personnel resource pool (including educational and

professional schools, employment agencies, and private citizens available for employment); and (7) organized client-interest groups. Clients are depicted in Figure 1 not merely as individuals to be recruited, served, discharged, and so forth, but also as collectivities (such as welfare rights groups or parents and friends of the retarded) which are organized for purposes of advancing and publicizing various concerns or for lobbying and pressuring HSO's to be more responsive to particular interests or demands (cf. Priven and Cloward, 1977).

Connecting lines are shown in Figure 1 to indicate primary linkages between the groups inside the organization and those on the outside, i.e., across the boundary of the organization (when the latter is conceived of as an accounting unit). Control inside bureaucratically structured organizations--which most HSO's are--is exercised from the top down; that is, power is concentrated in the hands of a few persons at or near the top of the administrative structure (Goldman and Van Houten, 1977). Typically, senior administrators and their lieutenants are "in charge" of the major divisions and departments of the HSO and, from their positions, establish and enforce policies, rules, and procedures for the middle managers, workers, and clients who fall under their purview. Since power among the organization's internal constituent groups is unequally distributed, this has important implications for considerations of effectiveness. The goals and objectives of some groups are likely, that is, to carry more weight than those of others, a consideration which is more fully developed in subsequent analyses.

Middle-managers and supervisors are persons whose place in the (formal) authority/control structure falls somewhere between senior administrators and the workers who provide services directly to clients (i.e., the caseworker, juvenile court counselor, licensed practical nurse). Direct service workers generally have authority over support staff (e.g., clerical workers) and clients only. Individual clients, as the model suggests, have authority over no one except themselves. Involuntarily admitted clients, such as those in prisons or mental hospitals, lack even this minimal authority. Whereas support and maintenance personnel lack, in theory, control over any group other than their own labor, their ability to facilitate or disrupt the activities of other workers plus informal opportunities to influence the experience of staff and clients (e.g., by giving out information, behaving cooperatively or uncooperatively, pleasantly or rudely, etc.) caution against the assumption that their labor and contributions can be taken for granted (Braverman, 1974). In regards to effectiveness questions, therefore, the interests of all internal groups must be considered.

Across the organization's boundary, interactions or exchanges with the general public and with legislative, governmental, and funding/regulatory bodies are shown in Figure 1 as being primarily the purview of organizational directors and chief administrators (Katz and Kahn, 1966). Not only do high level administrators exercise the most power inside the organization, they also represent the organization in dealings with influential groups on the outside as well. The closeness of ties between senior administrators and powerful external constituents is accounted for in part by the nature of the recruitment and hiring process. Selection of chief administrators is typically influenced, and may be determined, by significant resource

controllers outside the organization (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1977). Persons chosen for such posts are likely therefore to have qualifications, backgrounds, values, and orientations similar to those of the resource controllers themselves (Offe, 1976; Kanter, 1977; Martin, 1980). The consequences of this for the types of priorities and goals endorsed by senior administration versus lower level organizational members are considered in subsequent analyses.

As suggested in Figure 1, the external groups with which middle managers interact primarily are other HSO's and the individuals and organizations comprising the personnel resource pool, e.g., potential employees, professional schools, and employment agencies. Middle-managers, including supervisors, are often charged with establishing ties with other HSO's for securing appropriate staff and clients, finding placements for clients upon discharge, and establishing referral networks for clients whose needs cannot be met by the organization. Direct service workers, however, perform boundary-spanning activities as well (Hasenfeld, 1971). In people-processing organizations (Hasenfeld, 1972), in particular, contacts with and referrals to other agencies may constitute the primary technology of the client-service sub-system. Supervisors, in comparison with direct service workers, are somewhat more likely to interact with professional schools and licensing bodies outside the HSO. Professionally trained workers tend to advance to the supervisory level and people with such training are sought after by professional and licensing programs to supervise their interns or trainees.

Although the task of dealing with individual clients falls primarily to the direct service worker, once client interest groups become organized and vocal, these are likely to be dealt with by middle or senior-level management. To the extent that such groups pose a threat to the organization's legitimacy, e.g., favor in the public media or smooth relations with significant resource controllers, increased attention from the chief administrators of the organization can be expected (Martin, 1980).

The two external constituency groups most fully linked with all four groups of organizational employees are: (1) the personnel resources pool, and (2) employee unions, professional associations, licensing and accreditation bodies (see Figure 1). Employee unions, in particular, are becoming an increasingly significant factor in the operation and functioning of human service organizations (Fendrich, 1977; Johnston, 1978). Growth in union membership in the United States over the past decade can be accounted for almost totally by expansion of unionization in the public service sector (Ayres, 1976). The heightened militancy of both unions and professional associations (cf. Heydebrand, 1977), furthermore, suggests that an accurate understanding of public sector events must take such trends into account.

The omission of lines connecting the external groups in Figure 1 should not be interpreted as suggesting that linkages among them are either absent or irrelevant. Such ties may, in fact, constitute major features of the social and political context within which human service organizations exist (Walmsley and Zald, 1973a; Benson, 1977). Emphasis is given here to ties between internal and external groups, however, in order to highlight the diversity of influences and interest groups which



daily impinge on the HSO and to underscore the organization's extensive ties with its external suprasystem and/or environment (Evan, 1976). Once these facts of organizational reality are acknowledged, the task of dealing with issues of effectiveness is clarified (if not simplified). Such a perspective highlights, furthermore, the issues of control and influence and their respective roles in affecting the development and pursuit of organizational goals (cf. Rueschemeyer, 1977).

### Differential power of the constituent groups

Whereas documentation of the causes and/or sources of differential power is not the central task of the present analysis (e.g., see Hickson, et al., 1971), consideration of the multiple constituencies model focuses attention on the power and domination implications inherent in it. As noted by Gummer (1978), power and conflict are dimensions of social service organizations too frequently ignored, resulting in a naive and misleading conception of the manner in which organizational priorities, goals, and tasks are established and pursued. The present analysis attempts therefore to redress this imbalance by highlighting the potential for conflict (and the resultant exercise of power and control) which is inherent in a situation characterized by contradictory and competing views of the organization's proper purpose and goals.

Two premises, recently developed and documented in a number of organizational analyses, inform the succeeding analysis.

(1) The form of the internal structure of organizations reflects, in general, the dominant values and priorities of the external society (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1977; McNeil, 1978; Salaman, 1978). In modern western society, the predominant form of organizational structure is a bureaucratic one, a model which entails a generally extensive division of labor, emphasis on technical qualifications of employees, official rules and procedures, and a hierarchical and unequal distribution of power and authority (Hall, 1963). Organizational structures and procedures are "rationalized" for purposes of efficient achievement of organizational goals or ends (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1979). The majority of human service organizations, therefore, reflect a bureaucratic format because, in western society, such a model is viewed as the appropriate arrangement for the provision of social, educational, and welfare services. An unequal distribution of power where power is concentrated at the apex of the organizational hierarchy (cf. Goldman and Van Houten, 1977) is therefore not only characteristic of HSO's but is viewed as both legitimate and efficient as well.

(2) The distribution of resources, privilege, and power inside the organization reflects the distribution of resources, privilege, and power in the broader external society (Wolff, 1977; Benson, 1977; Salaman, 1978). Clients served by HSO's are low in power inside the organization in part because they are low in power outside as well (Parsons, 1970). This is particularly the case for the poor, criminally convicted, disabled, uneducated, mentally retarded or ill, and elderly but also for the young (e.g., children in schools) and sick (e.g., ill in hospitals) as well. Some clients, of course, have more resources than others and so receive more

attention and better treatment and service than those with less (cf. Blau, 1964; Martin and Osmond, 1973).

At the advantaged end of the authority ladder, senior administrators in HSO's typically have greater power than middle managers, direct service workers, and other organizational employees not only because of inequalities inherent in the bureaucratic structure (and their advantaged position within it) but also because of their close alliance and ties with powerful figures and groups outside the organization (Salaman, 1979). As noted earlier, resource controllers and elites outside the HSO participate in the process whereby senior administrators are hired. Persons selected, therefore, are likely to have the blessing and support of their selectors and to reflect their biases and preferences as well (cf. Kanter, 1977; Offe, 1976; Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1977). In addition, to the extent that job security or retention depends on placating powerful external individuals or groups, senior administrators are likely to be particularly solicitous of their interests, priorities, and goals.

A number of conclusions are suggested by the foregoing analysis. First is that, other things being equal, the interests and priorities of senior administrators are likely to receive more attention and emphasis inside the organization than are those of middle managers, direct service workers, and other employees, and clients (cf. Goldman and Van Houten, 1977). Second, to the extent that powerful extra-organizational interest groups value quality of client service--e.g., timeliness of response, appropriateness and effectiveness of services--then one can expect such matters to receive emphasis inside the organization as well. Senior administrators are obliged to please external resource controllers and elites, thus the latter's valuation of high quality service is likely to be promoted internally (by administration) as an important goal. Third, to the extent that the external power elite values quantity of clients served or number of services provided, then quantitative goals are likely to be emphasized by the organization's internal administration (cf. Whetten, 1978).

Definitions of the concepts of productivity (e.g., per-worker number of services provided) and efficiency (per-unit cost of services provided) are fairly straightforward and widely agreed upon, whereas much less consensus exists regarding a definition of quality of client service (Glisson and Martin, 1980). For this and other reasons, Scott (1977) suggests that quantity indicators of "effectiveness" are likely to be stressed over quality indicators in social service organizations. Meyer and Rowan (1977) and McNeil (1978) note that quantity-related values (e.g., productivity, efficiency, growth, size) tend to dominate western thought in general and views of organizational success in particular, suggesting that unless other values are strongly invoked, those which impinge on the human service organization from the broader society are likely to entail emphasis on numbers-related criteria.

A fourth conclusion is therefore suggested. Given the nature of the dominant value system of U.S. society and given the location/interests of powerful external constituency groups vis-a-vis the society's stratification systems, external power elites are likely to emphasize quantitative aspects of organizational performance

over qualitative ones (McNeil, 1978). To the extent that internal administrators are susceptible to pressures from such external groups, the prediction is advanced that the former are likely to place emphasis on quantity of output over quality of output. Support for this position is reported by Whetten (1977; 1978) who observes that central administrators of manpower training programs tend to equate "effectiveness" of the manpower program with the number of job placements made (also see Schmidt and Kochan, 1976).

The foregoing analysis contends that the interests and priorities of senior administrators and, through them, those of powerful external constituency groups (e.g., legislative and regulatory bodies, the mass media, organized client groups), are likely to receive more emphasis, attention, and impetus inside the HSO than are those of lower-level organizational participants. At this point, however, it is important to recall that the administrators of human service organizations are subject to pressures and demands from groups internal to the organization as well as those external to it (Benson, 1977; Whetten, 1978). Additionally, the response of subordinate groups (i.e., in the authority structure) to orders and directives issued by higher administration may or may not consist of compliance (Goldman and Van Houten, 1977; Salaman, 1978). Professionally trained staff, in particular, often show primary allegiance to their profession over the employing organization and are likely to resist pressures to pursue aims or ends considered as improper or inappropriate (Benson, 1973). The recent growth of employee unions in the public sector indicates that manual and clerical employees in addition to the professionals are seeking and gaining a greater voice in determining both the aims and conditions of work (Jenkins, 1973; Tepperman, 1976) in social service organizations.

The balance of power among the various internal constituencies is likely therefore to vary from one human service organization to the next. Some HSO's are likely to have a powerful management and weak subordinate staff groups, whereas others may have powerful subordinate groups and, by definition, a weak management. The goals or ends which are actually pursued (i.e., Perrow's operative goals) must therefore be viewed as emergent rather than fixed, resulting from compromises in the face of constantly evolving and ongoing pressures and conflicts (Elger, 1975; Benson, 1977). Whether or not an organization's operative goals are in fact consistent with its mandate or charter is problematic and cannot be taken for granted. It may be the case, in fact, that the interests of none of the constituent groups are completely served by a given social service organization. The actual structure and processes of work may consist of an undesirable yet unavoidable compromise resulting from the failure of any of the parties involved to have sufficient power to impose its priorities on the remainder of the organization (Salaman, 1978). Such an organization may continue to exist although everyone voices dissatisfaction with it and with the way things are organized or done.

The nature of the goals actually pursued by a human service organization at any one time depends therefore on the number and types of constituency groups involved, the interests and aims of each, and the balance of power between and among these groups (Salaman, 1979). Although senior management may have explicit aims or goals in mind for the organization, the limiting factor in their realization is, in the

long run, the willingness of relevant constituent groups to comply, implement, and/or go along.

### Conclusions

The multiple constituencies model is an improvement on earlier models of HSO's in that it highlights the extensive openness of service organizations and lays bare their vulnerability to competing interests and influences. As such, it cautions against a simplistic view of organizational effectiveness. Viewed from the multiple constituencies perspective, questions of effectiveness are explicitly revealed as, at least in part, political in nature. Once the questioner asks: effective for whom? in whose interests? and why? the issues of multiple interests, potential conflicts of interest, and the dynamics of power relations are exposed. Additionally, the multiple constituencies model and accompanying analysis caution against an over-rationalized view of the internal structure of HSO's. Models of social service organizations which imply that someone is clearly in charge, that clear, precise, and agreed upon goals are being pursued, and that evaluations of effectiveness are a simple matter of devising measurement instruments for detecting degrees of goal-attainment are invalid and misleading (cf. Blackwell and Bolman, 1977).

Commitment of a service organization to the goal of providing a high quality of services to clients is represented here as both problematic and complex. Dominant values in modern western society are viewed as urging the service organization--and its administration--toward a concern with quantity over quality of services provided. The conclusion is suggested therefore that pursuit of the goal of a high quality of services will require an explicit and conscious commitment by higher administration to this end. The successful implementation of such a program will require senior administrators to marshal support not only from powerful interest groups external to the organization, but also from internal interest groups as well (Hickson, et al., 1971; Hinings, et al., 1974). A consequence of the present analysis, it is hoped, will be a heightened awareness on the part of human service administrators of the centrality of their role in the processes of goal-setting and implementation which, in the long run, are inextricably bound up with effectiveness questions and concerns. Future researchers into effectiveness issues are urged, furthermore, to remain sensitive to multiple constituency interests as these affect the establishment and implementation of priorities and goals.

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