March 2001

Defining Human Services

Chaim Zins
University of Haifa

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw

Part of the Social Work Commons

Defining Human Services

CHAIM ZINS

University of Haifa
Department of Human Services
Faculty of Social Welfare & Health Studies

This study aims at formulating adequate criteria for designing the field of human services. Based on a conceptual analysis of "human services" the study establishes the theoretical ground of a four-category model for classifying human service organizations, and three alternative definitions of the field. The classificatory principle underlying the model and the definitions reflects the contribution of human services to overall societal wellbeing. I conclude the study by discussing the implications for social welfare policy planning, service design and evaluation, and shaping the nature of the helping professions.

The field of human services is constantly changing and is expected to grow as we enter the new millennium. New populations are joining the circle of recipients and new services are offered within the framework of "human services". The frequent changes and the overwhelming confusion regarding the meaning of this key concept create difficulties for social welfare policy makers. They also determine the design and the evaluation of human service organizations, and shape the nature of the helping professions.

This study aims at formulating adequate criteria for redesigning the field of human services in the societal realm, as well as in the academic. Evidently, in the light of constantly changing social conditions and social norms, we need an adequate definition based on solid theoretical foundations. Formulating such a definition requires a critical analysis of the concept of "human services". As we shall see, the conceptual analysis establishes the theoretical ground for defining a four-category model for

classifying human service organizations and three alternative definitions of the field.

Definitions of Human Services

The literature offers numerous definitions of the concept "human services", but none of them is generally accepted (Schmolling and Youkeles, 1997). The various definitions suggested by scholars and practitioners are used for diverse purposes, such as classifying bibliographic materials, characterizing organizations, and defining the professional uniqueness of human service personnel. Furthermore, the definitions stress different aspects of the concept, among them the provider, the recipient, the needs that the services are designed to meet, and the organizational framework. Yet despite the different contexts, purposes, and perspectives, all the following definitions refer to the same generic term— "human services".

The Provider.—The human factor of service provision seems to inhere in the semantic perspective. "Human services" stresses the human factor, just as "health services" and "information services" indicate that health and information are the factors of those service provisions. Eriksen (1997) presents this perspective: "in its broadest sense, a human service is going on whenever one person is employed to be of service to another (p. 8)".

A definition in the Thesaurus of ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) Database Descriptors stresses the qualitative contribution of the provider's activity. According to the editors of ERIC human services are "fields of public service in which human interaction is part of the provision of the services (Houston, 1990, P. 120)". Undoubtedly, this complimentary approach pays tribute to the people on the job. But despite the importance of human interaction, it is not the essential factor: this is to satisfy a need. For hungry children, for instance, human sympathy is meaningful, but it cannot substitute food.

The Recipient.—Hasenfeld and English (1983) shift attention from the provider and his or her activities to the service recipient. They identify the human characteristic in the recipient, and define human service organizations as those organizations "whose principal function is to protect, maintain, or enhance the personal well-being of individuals by defining, shaping, or altering their

personal attributes (P. 1)". Accordingly, human service organiza-
tions have two key characteristics. First, they work directly with
and on people. In fact, they are "distinguished by the fundamental
fact that people are their 'raw material' (Hasenfeld, 1992, p. 4)".
Second, "they are mandated—and, thus, justify their existence—
to protect and to promote the welfare of the people they serve
(Hasenfeld and English, 1983, p. 1)". This brings us to the next
group of definitions, which add another essential element to the
conception.

    The Needs.—Numerous definitions emphasize the centrality
of the needs as the key attribute of human services. The definition
used by the Library of Congress (1998) to index bibliographic
materials exemplifies this approach. According to the Library of
Congress's definition the term "human services" refers to "the
various policies, programs, services, and facilities to meet basic
human needs relating to the quality of life, such as education,
health, welfare (p. 2558)" . Still, it is too vague. What are "basic
human needs"? Do they include only food, health, and shelter?
Or should they include entertainment, leisure, and recreation as
well? But the LC definition does stress the goal of meeting basic
needs—whatever they are—as an essential attribute of human
services. Schmolling et al. (1997) omit the word "basic", stating
that all human services share a common feature: they are all
designed to meet human needs (p. 2).

    The definition presented in a document entitled *The Human
Services Worker* narrows the range of the needs by focusing on
needs related to social problems. The field of human services,
according to the document, is focused on prevention and reme-
diation, of social problems. *The Human Services Worker* (1998) is a
joint publication of the National Organization for Human Service
Education (NOHSE) and the Council for Standards in Human
Service Education (CSHSE). These two major organizations are
engaged in the academic education of human service profession-
als in the United States. Focusing on social problems reflects a
major trend in contemporary human service education in Amer-
ican colleges and universities. This approach is also reflected in
the occupational profile of the human service personnel in the
American milieu, as it is portrayed in the *Occupational Outlook
Handbook* (1996–97, p. 128).

Mehr (1986) defines human services as "a field that helps individuals cope with problems of a social welfare, psychological, behavioral, or legal nature (p. 20)". Schmolling et al. (1997, p. 354) specify other fields: health, mental health, criminal justice, recreation, and education. Eriksen (1977) broadens the range to include "the society's many social welfare subsystems—health, education, mental health, welfare, family services, corrections, child care, vocational rehabilitation, housing, community services and the law (p. 8)". Scheurell (1987) adopts this broader approach. He characterizes human services as social services that are primarily aimed at promoting socialization, or solving individual and group problems. Among the fields covered by human services he lists education, employment and manpower, health, housing, income maintenance, information and referral, law, leisure, recreation, and religion.

The Organizational Framework.—Finally, a large group of scholars stress the key role of the organizational framework of the service provision (Hasenfeld and English, 1983, Hasenfeld, 1983, 1992, O'Looney, 1996, Schmolling et al, 1997). Schmolling et al. exclude the help given by family, friends, or other primary supports, and apply the concept of "human services" only to formal organizations (p. 9). O'Looney stresses the systematic nature of the service provision (p. 13).

Ad Hoc Generic Definition

The diversity of meanings is without doubt overwhelming and confusing. Scholars in the field emphasize different characteristics of human services. Furthermore, definitions can be misleading too. From the literature one inevitably reaches the conclusion that different definitions often present the same conception of the key characteristics; and similar definitions present different conceptions of the same characteristics. There is an evident need for a clarified definition, based on a conceptual analysis that comprehensively characterizes the basics of human services.

Despite the above divergences, we are in a position to offer an ad hoc generic definition that provides solid ground for the conceptual analysis and is compatible with the foregoing definitions. "Human services" is defined here as social services designed to

meet human needs that are required for maintaining or promoting the overall quality of life of the prospective service populations. A social service is a systematically organized communal response, namely "human services" refers to institutionalized systematic services rather than sporadic help given by family members, friends, or occasional "good Samaritans".

Six Basics of Human Services

By defining "human services" as social services designed to provide human needs, one can identify six key elements common to all human services. These are the provider, the recipient, the environment, the organization, the need, and the method. Every service is an interaction between the provider and the recipient effectuated through four media: the environment, the organizational framework, the needs, and the method. A comprehensive conception of human services should refer to these six basics and to the alternative ways to implement each (Zins, 1999). These relations are shown in Fig. 1.

The six basics constitute criteria for characterizing and classifying human services. For example, based on the organizational framework of the service provision, human services can be classified into two types: services sponsored by non-profit and by for-profit organizations. The non-profit type is subdivided into the governmental sector and the third sector (Zins). Although all the six elements are significant in relevant contexts, two of them emerge as keystones for the conception of human services. These are the needs, addressed by the services, and the prospective recipients. The centrality of these two basics is rooted in the rationale of human services, namely meeting the needs of the service recipients.

Figure 1
Six Basics of Human Services
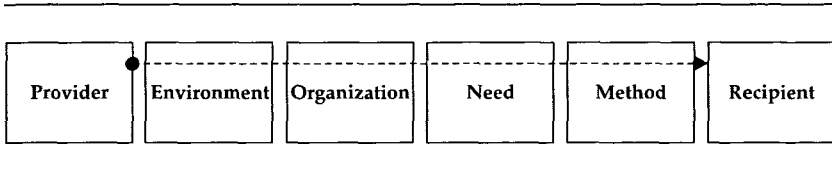
Human Needs

The concept of "human needs" has been the subject of philosophical, psychological, and sociological studies for centuries. Gaziet (1988) traced philosophical references to related issues back to Greek philosophy, in the writings of the pre-Socratic philosophers, Plato, and Aristotle. Three concepts are relevant to the conception of human services in this context: "needs", "human needs", and "basic human needs". Unquestionably, these three concepts deserve a thorough study, which exceeds beyond the framework of this study. In order to distinguish among different approaches to the field of human services we need distinct definitions of these concepts. Therefore, we have to rely on the following ad hoc definitions and clarifications.

Needs

The Narrow Meaning. The concept of "needs" inherently implies a necessity. In the narrow sense "needs" are uncontrolled necessities or compulsions; these are conditions, objects, activities, or services. People need air to breath, water to drink, balanced food to eat, and time to sleep. However, the need for balanced food doesn't imply that the food should be tasty. People don't *need* tasty food for their bare existence; they *want* to eat tasty food. People *need* to sleep somewhere from time to time. Yet, they *do not need* to sleep on a bed under a roof in a closed room; they *want* it. Still, for many people, eating tasty food and sleeping on a bed under a roof in a closed room are considered as real needs. This leads us to a broader meaning of "needs".

The Broader Meaning. In its broader meaning the concept of "needs" is related to free will. Most needs are, in fact, derived from values and desires. Moral values are the absolute principles that guide the individual's behavior. These are supreme selected ends, such as sanctity of life, liberty, equality, and fraternity. Moral values are justified by their own intrinsic absolute worthiness. Each value constitutes a hierarchical network of goals and sub-goals, required for accomplishing it. For instance, a reliable health care system is a means to improve public health; this, in turn, is a sub-goal of sanctity of life. This idea was implemented in the UASIS II, which is a system for identifying, defining, and classifying social

services based on their contribution to the fulfillment of social goals (Gibson, 1986).

Desires, like values, are manifestations of volition. They can be rational and based on moral values, but they can also be based on irrational, arbitrary, and sudden passions. Usually, people are either act according to their moral values, or act to satisfy their controlled or uncontrolled desires.

In the broader sense, "needs" are means, namely conditions, objects, activities, or services, required for achieving desirable goals. For religious Jews, who strictly observe Jewish dietary laws, eating kosher food is a need, just like a camera for a photographer or canvas for a painter. However, eating kosher food is a need only for those who choose to observe the Jewish dietary laws. Similarly, possession of a camera is a need only for people who want to take pictures. Molére sarcastically divided us into two "distinct" groups: those who eat in order to live and those who live in order to eat. In keeping with the playwright's adage we may say that for those who eat in order to live, balanced food is a need in the narrow sense. For the rest of us, tasty food is undoubtedly a need in the broader sense.

Implications. The linkage between needs and desired goals has two relevant implications. First, it prepares the ground to characterize some social conditions and activities, for example, education, housing, and protection, as needs. Consequently, it expands the range of human services beyond the framework of ensuring physical survival or handling compulsive situations. While it is apparent that many human service organizations in the Third World literally provide life-saving relief, most human service agencies in developed countries address needs that are derived from social values and desires.

Second, it binds the needs to an inevitable, ongoing process of evaluation. "Needs" are more than necessary conditions. "Necessary conditions" are independent of the individual's awareness. Antibiotics were necessary to cure infectious diseases even before they were discovered. But once they were discovered, they became an identified need for people with bacteriological diseases. "Needs" implies awareness, at least in the eyes of the beholder, which might be the general public, experts in the field, or the recipients.

Brandshaw (1972) developed a tool to identify and assess social needs. He classified them into 11 categories based on logical conjunctions of four criteria: normative needs, felt needs, expressed needs, and comparative needs. Normative needs are needs which experts, professionals, administrators, or social scientists define as needs in any given situation. Felt needs are equated with wants. Expressed needs or demands are felt needs turned into actions. Comparative needs are alleged needs that services to populations with similar characteristics are supposed to meet. Comparative needs, as opposed to the other criteria, do not necessarily have an element of awareness and do not constitute real needs by themselves.

Needs gain their essential quality of "neediness" only in light of their prospective contribution to the achievement of the relevant goals. Goals are determined by values, norms, and desires, which are highly dependent on social conditions. Since social conditions are constantly changing, needs—hence human services—are subject to a continuing process of evaluation rooted in the relevant social milieu.

Human Needs

Defining "human services" as responses to human needs rather than responses to needs indicates that the "human" attribute of "human needs" is significant; Otherwise, the "human" addendum would be unnecessary. It is likely that the common meaning of "human needs" is needs of humans. Yet if one analyzes the concept of "human needs", as opposed to the concept of "non-human needs", a profounder sense emerges. "Non-human needs" or "animal needs" is similar in meaning to "needs" in the narrow sense, namely uncontrolled necessities and compulsions; whereas "human needs" is similar in meaning to "needs" in the broader sense. In other words, the needs of humans are unique in including necessities arising from individuals' free will as well as uncontrolled physiological necessities and compulsions.

Basic Human Needs

Another key concept often mentioned in conjunction with human services is "basic human needs". Human services—as in the LC definition (1988)—are designed to meet basic human needs.

These are the necessary conditions required to allow "decent" human existence. The concept of "basic human needs" inherently implies the existence of basic needs, beside non-basic needs, and a valid way to specify them.

One of the most systematic attempts to specify the basic human needs was made by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1970). He identified a five-level hierarchy of basic human needs: physiological needs, needs for safety, needs for love and belongingness, needs for esteem, and needs for self-actualization. The hierarchical relationship of these five groups means that needs at a lower level require satisfaction before needs at a higher level. Maslow's theory is still most influential for the conception of human services (Meenaghann and Kilty, 1994). This is so despite its deficiencies, incompleteness, scholarly criticism, and empirical findings that question the hierarchical nature of the model and the inclusion of some groups of needs (Gaziet, 1988, Schmolling et al., 1997).

The Basic vs. the Optimal Approaches

According to Brandshaw (1972), the history of the social services is that of the recognition of needs and the organization of society to meet them. Consequently, Maslow's classification of human needs—despite its deficiencies and incompleteness—establishes a model for classifying human services. Without discussing the validity of Maslow's classification and the plausibility of formulating valid criteria to specify the basic needs, one can identify two generic approaches to human services: "basic" vs. "optimal". The rival approaches represent two opposite principal positions on the social role of human services. The "basic" approach is minimalistic. The "optimal" approach is maximalistic.

The basic approach is focused on meeting basic human needs. The optimal approach broadens the range of needs to cover basic and non-basic needs, required for promoting the overall quality of life to its fullest extent. The works of Scheurell (1987) and Georgia Sales (1994) exemplify the optimal approach. Both studies treat "non-basic" needs, such as leisure and recreation, environmental protection, and the like. Furthermore, Sales's comprehensive *Taxonomy of Human Services* comprises the provision of (almost) all social services available to citizens in western developed countries.

Service Recipients

As noted, human services can be classified by the needs they meet, but a classification based on the supposed target recipients emerges as a significant alternative. Since human services are primarily aimed at promoting the recipient's wellbeing, characterization of the service recipient is a keystone for shaping human services. In 1994 Sales identified hundreds of target groups (pp. 279–325). Currently the number is apparently higher.

The Differentiated Population vs. the General Public

Hasenfeld and English (1974, 1983) classify the recipients into two major categories: "normal functioning" and "malfunctioning". Accordingly, they classify human service organizations as those that serve "normal" recipients (e.g., community centers, public schools, Social Security) and those that serve "malfunctioning" or deviant populations (e.g. hospitals, juvenile courts, nursing homes).

The terminology "normal" and "malfunctioning" carries undesirable connotations. Furthermore, differentiating between populations on the basis of their evaluated functioning can be misleading. Recipients can best be differentiated on the basis of their needs. Therefore, I replace "normal" with "general" and "malfunctioning" with "differentiated". Accordingly, human services are classified as differentiated services, designed for differentiated groups (e.g., disabled, inmates, the poor), and general services, designed for the general public (e.g., consumers, students, voters).

General services meet needs of the general public in those fields where it sets the norms. Differentiated services meet needs of the differentiated groups in those fields where they are defined as unique and differentiated (e.g., poverty, sickness, sexual preference, etc).

The concepts "general public" and "differentiated groups" are relative and context-dependent. They acquire their practical meaning in specific environments, in light of alleged norms and societal consensus. The milieu determines the "politically correct" terminology, as well as the eligibility of social groups for specific services designed to meet their unique needs. By this reasoning, an individual might be considered poor in one milieu and wealthy

in another (Doron, 1997). Homosexual groups are considered differentiated populations in one milieu and the general public in another. Eligibility for specific services is subject to contextual interpretations even within a single milieu. For instance, a child can attend a "regular" public school and concurrently participate in a special school program for dyslectic students.

The Differentiated Approach vs. the Universal Approach

Despite conceptual as well as practical difficulties to identify and define differentiated groups, one can identify two generic approaches to human services: the differentiated and the universal. These two rival approaches represent opposite positions on the social role of human services. The differentiated approach is minimalistic, the universal is maximalistic.

The differentiated approach is focused on meeting the needs of differentiated populations. The universal approach broadens the scope of populations to cover the general public as well. Mehr's definition of human services exemplifies the differentiated approach. Mehr (1986, p. 103) defines human services as "all those services designed or available to help people who are having difficulty with life and its stress". While the studies of Hasenfeld and English (1974, 1983), Scheurell (1987), and Sales (1994) exemplify the universal approach.

Four Basic Approaches

The conjunction of the two approaches for specifying human needs (i.e., Basic vs. Optimal) and the two approaches for specifying service recipients (i.e., Differentiated vs. Universal) establishes four alternative approaches to defining the field of human services (see figure 2.). These approaches are entitled Differentiated Basic Welfare (DB), Universal Basic Welfare (UB), Differentiated Optimal Welfare, and Universal Optimal Welfare (UO) approaches.

The Differentiated Basic Welfare approach ascribes a narrow meaning to the concept of "human services". These services are designed to meet basic human needs of differentiated vulnerable social groups. The approach is exemplified in *The Human Service Worker* (1998), and the works of Mehr (1986), Schmolling

Figure 2
Four Alternative Approaches to Defining the Field of Human Services

| | | Recipients | |
		Differentiated	Universal
Needs	**Basic**	Differentiated Basic Welfare Approach	Universal Basic Welfare Approach
	Optimal	Differentiated Optimal Welfare Approach ("the missing approach")	Universal Optimal Welfare Approach

et al. (1997), Schram and Mandell (1997), and Woodside and McClam (1998).

The Universal Basic Welfare approach broadens the scope of target recipients. Accordingly, human services are designed to address the basic human needs of the entire society. Hasenfeld and English (1974, 1983) exemplify the approach. The difference between these two "basic" approaches mirrors debates on social policies. In particular, it reflects the debate between the residual and the universal rival policies regarding the welfare state: should the state meet basic needs in financial distress situations only, or should this be standard policy regarding all its citizens?

The third approach, Differentiated Optimal Welfare, is somewhat theoretical. Although many service providers in practice apply the differentiated optimal approach with differentiated social groups, namely their clients, no scholarly definition of the concept of "human services" is based on this approach. Moreover, no one designates the generic concept of "human services" as optimal services aimed exclusively at differentiated groups, while excluding the general public as a prospective target recipient. Therefore, I call it the "missing" approach.

Human services according the Universal Optimal Welfare approach are designed at improving the overall wellbeing of society as a whole to the fullest possible extent. This approach

is exemplified in the studies of Scheurell (1987) and Sales (1994). This conception explains the inclusion of animal services in *A Taxonomy of Human Services* (Sales, 1994). Environmental quality is a part of the quality of life of humans. This same reasoning may explain why the editors of the *Encyclopedia of Associations* (Maurer, & Sheets, 1998) classify animal welfare organizations in the category of "social welfare organizations" (pp. 1171–1383).

The concept of human services is used here as interrelated with the concept of social welfare. According to Chatterjee (1996) the concept of social welfare is popularly understood as cash or in-kind payments to persons who need support because of physical or mental illness, poverty, age, disability and the like (the DB approach). Midgley (1995) pointed out that while the term practically implemented in the United States as assistance to differentiated vulnerable social groups (the DB approach), the original meaning of "social welfare" referred broadly to a state of social well-being, contentment and prosperity (the UO approach).

Classification of Human Service Organizations

The four approaches establish the basis for a classification of human service organizations into four distinct categories: Differentiated Basic (DB), Universal Basic (UB), Differentiated Optimal (DO), and Universal Optimal (UO) welfare organizations.

Differentiated Basic-welfare human service organizations are designed to meet basic needs of differentiated groups. These are special education schools, hospitals, and shelters for homeless people. "Doctors Without Borders" exemplifies the Differentiated Basic category. The organization "provides assistance to victims of war, natural and manmade disasters, and epidemics and to others who lack access to health care (Maurer & Sheet, 1998, p. 1319)".

Universal Basic welfare organizations are designed to meet the basic needs of the entire society (e.g., public schools. Note that "UB-type organizations might also include services for differentiated groups in addition to the services for the general public. "National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse" exemplifies this category. This organization "seeks to stimulate greater public awareness of the incidence, nature, and effects of child abuse.

Serves as a national advocate against the neglect and physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children. Facilitates communication about program activities, public policy and research related to the prevention of child abuse (Maurer & Sheet, 1998, p. 1202)". The fact that it deals with prevention of the phenomenon of child abuse makes it a UB-type organization. By contrast, an organization that is exclusively focused on providing treatment for abusive parents is a DB-type organization.

Differentiated Optimal welfare human service organizations addresses basic and non-basic needs of differentiated social groups. They provide services such as social clubs for the disabled, minority cultural support groups, and help for aged pet owners. "Make a Wish Foundation of America" exemplifies the DO category of human service organizations. The organization "grants wishes to children with terminal or life-threatening illness, thereby providing these children and their families with special memories and welcome respite from the daily stress of their situation (Maurer & Sheet, 1998, p. 1208)".

Universal Optimal welfare human service organizations are designed to meet non-basic as well as basic needs of the entire community, for example, community centers and environmental protection agencies. "Boys Scouts of America" and "Girls Scouts of the U.S.A." organizations (Maurer & Sheet, 1998, p. 1333) exemplify the UO category.

The logical relations among the four categories can best be described as follows. The DB category is the most fundamental. It contains all the services that are included in the other categories. The DB and the DO categories share the Differentiated (D) type organizations as a common denominator, while the DB and the UB categories share the Basic (B) type organizations as a common denominator. The UO category is the most inclusive, being composed of the other categories, namely it includes all the human service organizations.

The four-category classification establishes a model for classifying human service organizations. The suggested model is unique in stressing the service's overall contribution to promote societal wellbeing, based on the conjunction of the two dimensions, needs and recipients. By contrast, most models are based on one dimension only. Relying on two dimensions improves

the evaluation of the service's contribution to the societal overall quality of life. One can rightly argue that Hasenfeld and English's (1974, 1983) model for classifying human services is also based on the conjunction of two dimensions: types of clients (i.e., normal vs. deviant) and transformation technologies (i.e., people processing, people sustaining and people changing). Nevertheless, these two dimensions shift the focus from societal welfare to the service characteristics.

Three Definitions of Human Services

The DB, the UB, and the UO approaches establish the grounds for three alternative definitions of the concept "human services". This is accomplished by adjusting these approaches to the ad hoc generic definition of "human services" given above. As stated in that definition, human services are systematically organized social services designed to meet human needs that are required for maintaining or promoting the overall quality of life of the prospective service populations.

Based on the Differentiated Basic welfare approach, human services are defined as systematically organized social services designed to meet basic human needs that are required for maintaining or promoting the overall quality of life of differentiated social groups.

On the other hand, based on the Universal Basic welfare approach, human services are defined as systematically organized social services designed to meet basic human needs that are required for maintaining or promoting the overall quality of life of the entire society.

By contrast, following the Universal Optimal welfare approach one can define human services as systematically organized social services designed to meet basic and non-basic human needs that are required for maintaining or promoting the overall quality of life of society as a whole to its full possible extent.

Implications

The three alternative definitions of human services and the four-category model for classifying human service organizations have significant implications for social welfare policy planning,

service design and evaluation, the shaping the profiles of the helping professions.

Social Welfare Policy. The three definitions of human services set the theoretical framework for three types of social welfare policies, highlighting the differences among three modes of social accountability. Social welfare policies apparently differ by the intensity of social accountability, as this is determined by the number of recipients they aim to serve and the types of needs they meet. In light of the three alternative preferences, social welfare policy planning turns into a two-phase decision-making process. First, selecting the approach, DB, UB, or UO, then, specifying the needs and the recipients.

The debate whether the state should support the purchasing of air conditioners and for whom, which dramatically came to the fore in the United States in the fatal heat of the summer of 1999, is primarily ideological. It primarily depends on the type of social welfare policy. A Differentiated Basic welfare policy will result in supporting the poor, while a Universal Basic welfare policy will result in price reduction through subsidy of the product. Evidently, the decision to sponsor air-conditioning depends on the recognition that air-conditioning is a basic need. By contrast, the supporters of a Universal Optimal welfare policy will advo-cate the universal state support, regardless of recognition of the "basicness" of air-conditioning.

Service Design and Evaluation. Evidently, the four-category model for classifying human service organizations has two major implications for service design and evaluation. First, it establishes criteria for defining organizational objectives and policies, thus affecting the improvement of existing services and the develop-ment of new initiatives in the human services industry. Second, it constitutes valid criteria for evaluating services' welfare policies and accomplishments.

Helping Professions. The concept of "human services" refers in this paper to a field, rather than a distinct profession. However, in the American milieu the term "human services" refers also to a distinct profession, within the broad category of the helping professions (see, for example, Scheurell, 1987). Human services workers are usually presented as generalists, namely they are trained to perform a variety of tasks within the field of human

services, but are not considered specialists in any specific helping profession (see Mehr, 1986, Schmolling et al. 1997, Schram & Mandell 1997, Woodside & McClam, 1998, *The Human Service Worker*, 1998).

The conception of "human services" plays an important role in shaping the professional profile of the generalist human services worker. It determines the scope of services and populations that the worker serves. Consequently, the three alternative conceptions of "human services" establish three alternative professional profiles of the human service generalist worker.

These alternative conceptions play an important role in shaping the professional profiles of the specialized helping professions too. Mainly they affect the recipient-centered professions, such as gerontology, and the need-centered professions, such as social work. Social work is basically a need-centered profession. Social workers primarily work with people who have problems. In recent decades social work has changed by expanding the range of specialization, fields, and problems to include "non-traditional" and non-basic needs. Nowadays social work tends to adopt the Universal Optimal welfare approach, namely social workers attend to as wide a range of new areas as they can, and care for the maximum number of social groups.

Conclusion

Defining the concept of "human services" contributes to the design of the field in the societal realm. Yet some major issues must be tackled. These issues are culminated in two key issues: specifying the needs and characterizing the service recipients. Settling these seminal issues necessitates a choice between two opposing principal positions: minimalism and maximalism. In the process of specifying the human needs the opposite positions are implemented in the basic vs. the optimal approaches, while in the process of characterizing the service recipients they are implemented in the differentiated vs. the universal approaches.

The conjunction of these approaches provides the theoretical basis for a four-category model for classifying human service organizations. This unique model highlights the services' overall contribution to societal wellbeing, based on the conjunction of

two dimensions, needs and recipients. Yet, only three of the four approaches, the Differentiated Basic, Universal Basic, and Universal Optimal approaches form the basis for an overall definition of "human services".

In a postmodern era characterized by ever-changing ethical norms and professional standards, the supporters of the two Basic welfare approaches are required to explain the rationale for focusing on "basic human needs". Adherence to the mission of meeting "basic needs", in light of constantly changing interpretations of "basic needs", while the meanings of "quality of life", "human rights" and "social welfare" are so flexible, has to be justified on the ground of social theory.

On the other hand, the supporters of the Universal Optimal approach are required to formulate coherent and clarified criteria to frame the concept. Otherwise, they open the way to broadening the meaning of the concept to include all the services offered in the modern state. Such an extension will exceed the definition of human services as social services aimed at meeting human needs, and will result in a new postmodernist definition.

We can conclude that the three definitions provide a solid conceptual ground for redesigning the field of human services based on the contribution to the overall societal welfare, but facing these seminal issues underlies the implementation in the societal realm.

References

Brandshaw, J. (1972). A Taxonomy of Social Needs. In G. McLachlan (Ed) *Problems and Progress in Medical Care*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 71–82.

Chatterjee, P. (1996). Approaches to the Welfare State, Washington: NASW Press.

Doron, A. (1997). *Defense of Universality: A Challenge to Israel Social Policies*, (Jerusalem, Israel: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University (Hebrew).

Eriksen, K. (1977). Human Services Today, Virginia: Reston Publishing.

Gaziet, Z. (1988). Human Needs, Tel Aviv, Israel: Sifriat Poalim Publishing House (Hebrew).

Gibson, T. L. (1986). Classification of Human Services, *Administration in Social Work*, 10 (2), 39–51.

Hasenfeld, Y. (1983). Human Service Organizations, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Hasenfeld, Y. (ed.), (1992). Human Services as Complex Organizations, New-bury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Hasenfeld, Y., & English R. A. (1974). Human Service Organizations: A Conceptual Overview. In Y. Hasenfeld & R.A. English (Eds.) *Human Service Organizations: A Book of Reading*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Hasenfeld, Y., & English, R. A. (eds.) (1983). Human Service Organizations, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Houston, J. E. (ed.). (1990), Thesaurus of Eric Descriptors (12th ed.), Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.

Library of Congress, Cataloging Distribution Service. *Subject Headings (LCSH)* (20th ed.) (1998). Vol. 2, Washington, D.C.

Maslow, A. H. (1970). Motivation and Personality, 2nd ed. Harper & Row.

Maurer, C. & Sheet, T. E. (Eds.) (1998). *Encyclopedia of Associations*, Detroit, MI: Gale.

Meenaghann, T. M. & Kilty, K. M. (1994). Policy Analysis and Research Technology: Political and Ethical Considerations, Chicago: Lyceum Books.

Mehr, J. (1986). Human Services: Concepts and Intervention Strategies (3rd ed.), Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Midgley, J. (1995) Social Development, London: SAGE Publications, 1995

O'Looney, J. (1996). Redesigning the Work of Human Services, Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Sales, G. (1994). Taxonomy of Human Services: A Conceptual Framework with standardized Terminology and Definition for the Field. 3rd ed., El Monte, Ca: Information and Referral Federation of Los Angeles County.

Scheurell, R. P., (1987). Introduction to Human Service Networks: History, Organization and Professions Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Schmolling, P.Jr., Youkeles, M., & Burger, W. R. (1997). *Human services in contemporary America* (4th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Schram, B. & Mandell, B. R. (1997). *An Introduction to Human Services: Policy and Practice*, 3rd ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

The Human Services Worker: A Generic Job Description, A joint publication of Nohse & Cshse, [WWW document], URL: http://www.nohse.com/hsworker. html (accessed August 10th 1998).

The United States Department Of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (1996–97). (Lincolnwood, Ill.: VGM Career Horizons.

Woodside, M. & Mcclam, T. (1998). *An Introduction to Human Services* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishin Company.

Zins, C. (1999). Issues and Considerations for Designing Human Services Studies in Israel, *Social Security: Journal of Welfare and Social Security Studies*, 55, 83–101 (Hebrew)