

Managing for

**SERVICE  
EFFECTIVENESS**

in

**SOCIAL WELFARE  
ORGANIZATIONS**

Rino J. Patti ♦ John Poertner ♦ Charles A. Rapp  
Editors

# **Managing for Service Effectiveness in Social Welfare Organizations**

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# **Managing for Service Effectiveness in Social Welfare Organizations**

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## SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

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### Introduction to the Special Issue: Managing for Service Effectiveness in Social Welfare Organizations

The future is not a place we are going.  
The future is a place we are creating.

—*St. Joan D'Arc*

The field of social work administration is at a conceptual and practice crossroad. Some perceive social welfare organizations going down a road of continued budget cuts and program elimination, loss of purpose, and management for survival. Others envision a renewal of social welfare organizations through revitalizing social work's fundamental purpose (producing outcomes for clients) in managerial practice. This second road, that of managing SWOs with service effectiveness at its core, is the central theme of this volume. Collectively, these papers contribute to articulating a model of SWO administration founded on concepts and strategies for connecting managerial action with service effectiveness.

Why this concern with managing for service effectiveness? At a time when budgets are being cut, programs eliminated, and agencies reorganized to deal with threats to their existence, it might seem more appropriate to concern ourselves with managing for survival. Indeed, a good deal of the literature in social welfare administration in recent

years has been devoted to this issue (Perlmutter, 1984). By focusing on the matter of service effectiveness we do not mean to divert attention from the very real crisis that confronts the social welfare enterprise, nor to suggest that by simply demonstrating efficacy can SWOs ward off the forces that seek to reduce their scope and significance. On the other hand, a basic source of legitimacy for SWOs is the ability to deliver benefits to consumers and other constituencies. The capacity to demonstrate these effects places the SWO in a stronger position to deal with external threats to its domain and to exploit opportunities and resources in its environment. Seen in this way, managing for service effectiveness becomes a strategy for survival rather than a competing preoccupation.

There are at least two major reasons for focusing on service effectiveness as a principal criterion for social welfare administration. First, service effectiveness is a key objective of social work, and it seems appropriate, therefore, that social work administrators concern themselves with how to maximize this objective. Improving the efficacy of social work practice has been a major professional issue in recent years, but for the most part these efforts have not addressed the organizational conditions and management practices conducive to achieving this end. Orienting the practice of administration to service effectiveness may help to effect a convergence of interest and energy between clinical and management practitioners around a common and fundamental professional purpose.

Second, in recent years there has been an erosion of social work leadership in social welfare. The succession of administrators from other fields and disciplines has been most pronounced in public social services, but it has occurred in other sectors too. In part, the loss of influence in social welfare is attributable to a perception among high-level officials that social workers have no marginal knowledge/skill advantage over their competitors. Social workers, on the other hand, claim greater expertise in the programmatic and interpersonal aspects of management and have sought to make the case that clients are better served when social work managers are at the helm. Unfortunately, the link between these skills and qualities and better services has yet to be documented systematically. The ability of social workers to demonstrate a distinctive expertise that makes a difference in how clients are served should strengthen their claim to leadership. More important, to the extent this can be done, it may help them to mobilize the resources of social agencies around the purpose of client benefit, rather than other indicators of performance such as output and efficiency which,

though important, are not the *raison d'être* of social welfare management.

This volume is the outgrowth of two conferences jointly planned and coordinated by the editors. For several years, Patti at the University of Washington, and Poertner and Rapp at the University of Kansas, had been independently engaged in research and curriculum building efforts aimed at linking administrative theory and practice to the delivery of effective social services. In 1984, the APM of the Council on Social Work Education, the editors became aware of their mutual interest and began the collaboration, one in Lawrence, Kansas, the other in Ossining, New York. In consultation with Dr. Simon Slavin, Editor of *Administration in Social Work*, it was agreed that the subject was sufficiently important to command a special issue of the journal.

The articles in this volume were commissioned by the special issue editors from persons whose previous work indicated an interest and expertise in managing for service effectiveness. The papers were shaped by instructions from the editors prior to each conference and by extended discussion and critique at the conferences. Because of this, the collection, though reflecting diverse views, manages to achieve a degree of coherence not found in most anthologies.

Following the three introductory papers in Section One, the issue is divided into six sections corresponding to the core functions and tasks in an effectiveness driven approach to management. These include measuring performance, program and organizational design, managing people, managing information, managing environmental relations, and the ethics of managing for effectiveness.

The lead papers, by Patti and Rapp and Poertner, set forth the rationale for this approach to management, define terms, and discuss some of the problems and issues that need to be addressed as managing for service effectiveness develops in the coming years.

Patti, offering a definition of service effectiveness and a rationale for why social welfare administration should be primarily directed at promoting this organizational outcome, discusses several issues that are critical to the development of this approach to management. The issues are: particularizing management models to the service outcomes sought in different subsectors of social welfare; managing tradeoffs between effectiveness and other performance outcomes such as output and efficiency; the structural and managerial requisites to promoting effectiveness; and mobilizing external publics around service effectiveness criteria.

Rapp and Poertner argue that social administration is distinct from

other disciplines and is consistent with social work when client outcomes are the central focus of attention. Four common myths preventing managers from moving clients center stage are explored and refuted. A typology for classifying and measuring client outcomes is presented. Scholars and practitioners are encouraged to explore, expand, and refine the typology.

We then begin consideration of the substantive dimensions of effectiveness oriented management with several papers on the definition and measurement of service outcomes. The articles by Reid and Hudson, two leaders in the movement to develop an empirically based practice in social work, provide a state-of-the-art review of conceptual and technical developments in assessing the effects of services. Together, these papers reflect the significant progress that has been made in this area and the capabilities that currently exist for detecting whether services have made a difference for clients. Carter, writing from the perspective of a public agency administrator, provides an overview of what is currently being done in agencies to assess the impact of services. Drawing on his own experience and that of other social service managers, Carter suggests administrative strategies for developing outcome oriented social programs. In the last paper in this section, Grasso and Epstein argue that agency efforts to improve service effectiveness through monitoring and evaluation are flawed because the information is used for management control purposes. Pointing to the different functions and interests of frontline and management levels, the authors describe an agency project which illustrates the thesis that the way to improve worker performance is to integrate the assessment of services with staff training and skill improvement.

Program design, the focus of the next section, has to do with the structural and technical arrangements that provide the context for service delivery. The lead paper by Thomas, drawing upon his extensive work in the design and development of practice interventions (D&D, sometimes referred to as R&D) sets forth a model that agencies might use to design organizational conditions and administrative practices for improving the quality and effectiveness of services. Taber's contribution is a specific model of program design. Taber's five program design elements provide managers with a framework for specifying the components of a program, identifying client benefits, and keeping the program operating as intended. In the final paper in this section, Savage reports the findings of a study of women's drug treatment programs which was concerned with determining whether certain organizational and program characteristics were related to client outcome.

The results indicate that a broad and uniformly applied repertoire of services is associated with positive client outcomes, especially when clients' problems are not well understood and technologies are indeterminate.

The morale, job satisfaction, and involvement of direct services workers is generally thought to be a necessary, if not a sufficient condition for service effectiveness. In the section on managing people, Weiner presents a formulation that integrates much of the recent work concerned with integrating personal and organizational goals and applies it to social welfare. Gowdy distills the findings of the quality of work life literature which identifies those elements of organizational process and climate that appear consequential for worker motivation and performance. Taken together, these papers provide an excellent review and synthesis of what managers should do to elicit the best efforts of frontline personnel.

Information about performance is crucial to the implementation of an effectiveness oriented model of management. Although much has been learned about the measurement of service outcomes, the strategic use of this information to support and enhance the delivery of services continues to be more the exception than the rule. The article by Poertner and Rapp sets forth a management information system design which focuses on the achievement of service objectives and shows how this system was implemented in child welfare to improve the quality of the services provided. Taylor draws upon recent research by herself and others to examine how managers can use feedback to motivate subordinate performance. Evidence is presented which confirms the view that when performance standards are understood, the consistent and purposeful use of feedback can have powerful effects on subordinates' work behavior. While the first two articles deal with information generated by workers, Weissman addresses the problems and potentials associated with soliciting feedback from clients. Weissman's analysis suggests that agencies give too little thought to how best to obtain useful information from clients and to how such feedback can be productively employed for agency decision making. He suggests several ways in which agencies can benefit from clients' assessments of their experience in the agency.

If managing for service effectiveness was solely an internal agency matter, the developmental task outlined in this volume would be much simpler. But alas, social agencies are generally not in a position to decide unilaterally their service goals. As a result, SWO managers invariably find it necessary to build external support and acquire resources for the service goals they consider desirable. The problem, as



Martin points out in the first paper in this section, is that powerful external constituents are often less concerned with service effectiveness than with whether the agency is pursuing service goals that are congruent with their ideological and political preferences. The strategy suggested by Martin includes a broad array of administrative tactics aimed at simultaneously securing legitimacy and maximizing autonomy for social agencies in the context of these constraints. The second paper, by Simons, discusses persuasion skills and strategies that can be employed by managers to mobilize support for their programs. In light of the analyses offered by both Martin and Gummer, these skills become central to the repertoire of the effectiveness oriented manager. Simons' perceptive discussion of persuasive tactics suggests that SWO managers can shape the perceptions and priorities of influentials.

The final section in the volume is somewhat of a counterpoint to the preceding ones in that it deals with constraints and obstacles to the development of a service effectiveness driven model of social welfare administration. Neither Gummer nor Lewis argues against the desirability of client benefit as a measure of agency performance, but each is skeptical that agency administrators will be able to focus primarily on this performance outcome. Gummer points to the institutional forces in our society that push social agencies toward efficiency and control. Lewis questions whether the multiple ethical responsibilities of managers allow them to pursue client outcomes to the exclusion of other important values. Together, these articles raise a number of questions that will need to be contended with as we seek to develop and refine a service oriented model of social welfare administration.

The editors wish to acknowledge the generous support provided in this project by Dean Harold Lewis, Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York, and Dean Patricia Ewalt, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas. The lead editor would also like to express gratitude to the Edwin and Lucy Moses Fund for the support provided to him and for underwriting the costs of the New York conference. We also appreciate the excellent staff support provided by Liz Gowdy and Nadine Patti, whose efforts were instrumental in making the conferences in Kansas and New York successful.

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# Managing for Service Effectiveness in Social Welfare: Toward a Performance Model

Rino J. Patti, DSW

This volume explores the relationship between what managers in social agencies do, or cause to happen, and the outcomes of services to clients. There are, of course, a number of variables that mediate the effects of management behavior and a number, outside the control of managers, that independently influence service outcomes. Still, it appears that managerial practices are consequential for how services are provided and with what effects. Our purpose in this issue is to identify what is known about how administrators facilitate and support service effectiveness and to formulate an agenda for the development of practice knowledge in this field.

This approach to management practice is to be distinguished from traditional ways of thinking about managerial effectiveness in the human services. For the most part, both practice and scholarship have been concerned with the traits, philosophical orientations, and skills managers should have in order to manage well. Doing well, in this case, usually means being able to handle diverse analytic, interpersonal, fiscal, and political tasks in ways that important constituencies consider desirable. The criterion against which the manager is assessed is likely to be a normative concept of process, i.e., how these tasks should be carried out. The relationship between managerial behavior (especially at middle and upper management levels) and agency service outcomes, when it is considered at all, tends to be seen as indirect and attenuated. While the manager is nominally accountable for the effectiveness of programs, the manner in which an agency is managed is likely to be considered more important than the results it

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achieves. This can and frequently does lead to the anomalous situation in which the agency is "well" managed, but has little demonstrable impact on the clientele it serves.

The approach to management with which we shall be concerned in this volume seeks to build practice around the central criterion of service effectiveness. But what is service effectiveness and how does it differ from other kinds of organizational outcomes with which administrators are concerned? Some of the papers to follow will address this question at length, but as a point of departure, we will suggest that service effectiveness is reflected in three kinds of outcomes which may be, but are not necessarily related (Poertner & Rapp, 1983). The first is the extent to which the agency is successful in bringing about desired changes in or for the client systems it serves. In the case of individual clients this may be changes in behaviors, cognitions, skill levels, attitudes, alterations in social status, or modifications in undesirable environmental conditions.

The second aspect of effectiveness is service quality, or the extent to which the organization is competently implementing methods and techniques that are thought necessary to achieving service objectives. Service quality can be measured against standards prescribed by the agency based on prior experience, models used in other organizations or advanced in the professional literature, or those promulgated by regulatory bodies. Accessibility, timeliness, consistency, humanness, and technical proficiency of services, are examples of service quality.

Client satisfaction, a third dimension of effectiveness, is concerned with how consumers assess the quality and/or impact of the services received. In addition to direct feedback from clients, client satisfaction can sometimes be inferred from attendance rates, premature terminations, reapplications for services, and related types of data.

This definition raises a number of issues such as the extent to which it reflects the construct "effectiveness," e.g., whether the costs associated with outcomes should be an integral element of this definition; whether service quality should be included with service effectiveness outcomes, since it is an indicator of how well services are delivered and not the results achieved; whether client satisfaction can reasonably be used as a measure of effectiveness if it is not supported by other, more "objective" measures of change. In addition, since we know that social agencies will never live by effectiveness alone, a management model built around this criterion must address the interaction between this and other dimensions of performance such as output, efficiency, resource acquisition, and worker satisfaction. These and a

host of related issues concerning the definition of effectiveness will be grist for scholars and practitioners. Some of them are addressed in the papers in the next section of this issue.

In what follows, I will propose a rationale for this emerging practice paradigm and then attempt to outline some of the issues which face us if we are to move toward a service effectiveness driven approach to management.

### **A RATIONALE FOR SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS**

The main (and perhaps too obvious to mention) reason why service effectiveness should be the principal concern of management is simply that this is the primary business of the social welfare organization. Changing people and/or the social conditions in which they live is the *raison d'être* of the human service agency, not the acquisition of resources, the efficient utilization of resources, or the satisfaction and development of staff. All these may be important in their own right, and even instrumental to providing effective services, but they are, or at least should be, subservient to this objective. It is the failure of administrative theory and practice to maintain this primary focus which, in part, explains why management has never been fully understood or accepted in social work and the other human service professions. I have argued elsewhere that "service effectiveness can serve as a philosophical linchpin in a time when external conditions act as a strong centrifugal force pulling administration and direct practice into quite different orbits" (Patti, 1985). To the extent that there is a greater convergence of interest and energy around this central issue, there would seem to be a much better chance of making progress.

For example, it is interesting to note that among the major obstacles to practitioner level evaluation in social agencies is the perceived lack of administrative interest, supportive arrangements, and inducements (Blythe, 1983; Welch, 1983; Mutschler, 1984). Strategies for practice knowledge development, now widely emphasized in the education of direct service workers, would seem likely to thrive only if agency managers are able to utilize such efforts in service of their practice goals. Currently, it appears that case level evaluation efforts are not widely supported or utilized by managers because they are thought to have little relevance to the issues with which they are primarily concerned. When managers come to see their principal task as promoting service effectiveness, albeit from a different vantage point, a convergence of interests can begin to occur.

A somewhat more parochial, self-interested reason for attending to

service effectiveness has to do with securing a distinctive competency domain for social workers in management. By and large, social workers in public social welfare, and to a lesser extent in the voluntary field, have sought to gain or retain leadership positions by acquiring the skills and tools of general management—in effect, becoming more like those with whom they are competing. Competing with the products of schools of business or public affairs, who increasingly look upon social welfare as a field of opportunity, makes little sense for social workers in the long term. Schools of social work have neither the curriculum space nor the faculty capability to provide in-depth training in all those skill areas that are now thought to constitute the core of management, e.g., marketing, finance, accounting, etc. (Morris, 1982).

Rather, a more productive strategy would be to concentrate on competencies directed at the design, delivery, and evaluation of social services, with particular attention to how the internal and external environments of agencies can be managed to optimize service effectiveness. This is a formidable agenda, but it is this kind of capability, which generally cannot be acquired in schools of business or public administration, that promises a competitive edge for social workers in management.

### ***DEVELOPING A SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS DRIVEN APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT***

There are a number of intellectual and practical problems that confront us in this undertaking, many of which are addressed at length elsewhere in this volume. I will focus on four that seem critical to developing a management model concerned with service effectiveness: the variable definition of service effectiveness in different sectors of social welfare; the matter of trade-offs between effectiveness and efficiency; the identification of organizational and managerial variables that account for variations in service effectiveness; and, the problem of mobilizing external support for effectiveness oriented performance criteria.

#### ***Varying Definitions of Effectiveness***

The search for service effectiveness in social welfare is complicated by the fact that the field consists of a very heterogeneous cluster of organizations which vary dramatically by purpose, auspice, technol-

ogy, clientele, and so forth. Unlike the for-profit field where certain measures of organizational performance (e.g., profitability, market share, debt-equity ratio, etc.) are widely accepted as indicators of corporate effectiveness, and can be used to compare diverse enterprises, the picture in social welfare is more complex. This is not only because different groups involved with social agencies tend to use divergent criteria to judge organizational performance (Whetten, 1978), but also because the intrinsic nature of service effectiveness varies from sector to sector. Service effectiveness looks very different in different types of social agencies. If this is the case and we wish to tie management practice to service effectiveness, we may ultimately be looking for several models of management particularized to the several sectors of social welfare.

For the sake of discussion let us propose a taxonomy of social welfare organizations based on the concept of social purpose or function. This formulation draws upon, but is different from, those proposed by Vinter (1974), Austin (1983), and Kahn (1973). The scheme proposes five types of organizations. (1) Social control agencies, whose primary purpose is to protect society against deviant and disorderly persons. This category includes, for example, prisons, probation and parole programs, and services for the sexual offender. (2) Social care and maintenance agencies, whose purpose is to care for persons unable to care for themselves by virtue of mental and/or physical incapacity or life circumstances, e.g., nursing homes, institutions for the profoundly retarded, income assistance programs, etc. (3) Socialization and prevention agencies, which are concerned mainly with promoting the normal emotional and social development of their clients and transmitting desirable social skills and values. This class includes substitute care arrangements for children, leisure time and recreational programs for the elderly, character building, and youth serving agencies. (4) Rehabilitative and restorative agencies, whose principal purpose is to effect changes in the cognitive, emotional, or interpersonal deficits which clients themselves or others consider undesirable. Community mental health centers, vocational rehabilitation programs, and residential treatment institutions are examples. (5) Advocacy and social change organizations, which seek to promote or protect the political or economic interests of people who have been neglected, stigmatized, or otherwise denied opportunity in our society. Clients' rights organizations, and service agencies set up to deal with the needs of certain minorities (e.g., homosexuals, the homeless, etc.), are included in this category.

An examination of the criteria used to judge service effectiveness in these types of social welfare organizations suggests differences both in the emphasis placed on the three dimensions of effectiveness mentioned earlier (i.e., change, quality, and client satisfaction) and in the nature of the criteria themselves. For example, in socialization and social change organizations, client/member satisfaction with services is more likely to be considered an appropriate indicator of effectiveness than in social control or social care programs. Conversely, outcomes that reflect reduced incidence of problematic behaviors, or changes in behavioral patterns tend to be more salient criteria of effectiveness in social control and rehabilitative agencies than in social care, socialization, or advocacy programs. Finally, it appears that quality of care is more likely to be taken as a proxy of effectiveness in socialization programs where the outcomes of service are often not visible until long after the service has been delivered (e.g., adoption and foster care).

Moreover, for any particular dimension of effectiveness, substantive criteria will tend to vary across types of organizations. On the dimension of changing clients or social conditions for example, there appear to be a number of differences. These are illustrated in Figure 1. In social control agencies, changes in behavior or the reduction of offending behavior, are likely to be the test of effectiveness, even though agencies tend not to fare well against this standard. In social care organizations, effectiveness is often determined by how well client statuses are maintained or improved (e.g., clients kept out of more restrictive settings). In socialization and prevention settings, the acquisition of skills and attitudes, or evidence that clients are mastering normal developmental tasks, tend to be considered desirable outcomes. In rehabilitation programs, the return to normal or near normal modes of functioning is taken as a desirable indicator of change. Finally, in advocacy and social change services, improvements in the social circumstances (e.g., improved access to resources, increased power, and recognition) are often the litmus test of effectiveness.

This speculative exercise is intended to illustrate that effectiveness has many faces in social welfare. To the extent that there are differences in service effectiveness criteria employed in the diverse sectors in social welfare, we may start thinking about the various design and management configurations that are necessary for promoting service effectiveness. At this point it appears that we may be looking at not one but several models.

Figure 1

Selected Criteria of Effectiveness Employed In  
Types of Social Welfare Organizations

<u>Type of Organization</u>	<u>Client/Status Condition</u>	<u>Quality of Service</u>	<u>Client Satisfaction</u>
Social Control	Reductions in offending behaviors	Due process for perpetrators, humane treatment, provision for rehabilitation	As expressed in non-compliance, resistance to regulations
Social Care & Maintenance	Maintaining clients in most favorable status	Individ. care, humane treatment, provision for rehabilitation	As expressed in cooperation with staff and regulations
Socialization & Prevention	Acquisition of new skills, normal development	Attitudes, skills of caretakers	As expressed in demand, attendance, perceptions of service
Restoration & Rehabilitation	Return to role functioning	Credentials of staff, intensity of treatment	As expressed in participation, discontinuance rates & perceptions of service
Advocacy & Social Change	Improved access to resources, power, status	Responsiveness to client needs, client/member involvement in decision making	As expressed in member support, e.g. contributions of time and money

### ***Managing Tradeoffs Between Performance Areas***

An approach to management that seeks to maximize service effectiveness must deal with how this performance criterion interacts with other kinds of organizational outcomes such as output and efficiency. There is some agreement among organizational scholars that it is not possible to simultaneously optimize performance in all areas (Steers,



1975; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981). Indeed, it would seem to follow that as the manager diverts resources to improve service effectiveness, at some point this will begin to negatively effect output and/or efficiency. One can imagine service technologies that are not only more effective, but more efficient as well, but the limited available evidence suggests that these variables are negatively related.

For example, several studies have found an inverse relationship between worker/client ratios, which can be treated as a measure of efficiency and various indices of service effectiveness (Holland, 1973; Linn, 1970; Moos, 1974; Martin & Segal, 1977). Moos found that clients in community residential facilities assessed the treatment environments more positively in those settings with more favorable worker-client ratios. A similar finding is reported by Martin and Segal in their study of halfway houses for alcoholics. Using staff expectations for client behavior (i.e., independent and self-responsible versus dependent, subservient, and conformist) as a measure of service effectiveness, these investigators determined that staff members in facilities with better staff-client ratios were more likely to expect independent behaviors from clients than those in halfway houses with higher case-loads.

Most of the work on the relationship between efficiency as reflected in staff-client ratios and service outcomes appears to have been done in inpatient facilities. However, there is some evidence to suggest that similar trade-offs may occur in outpatient settings. For example, there is research which indicates a positive relationship between caseload size and error in the determination of eligibility for public assistance, though this was true only when worker experience and type of caseload were taken into account (Baker & Vosburgh, 1977). In another study of several state welfare departments, Newman and Ryder (1978) found that agencies with lower error rates in AFDC had higher administrative costs, though these higher cost were offset by lower error costs. They also concluded that some aspects of service quality, such as providing assistance to clients in the completion of applications, were negatively associated with output. Further evidence is provided by Whetten (1978) who found staff members' perceptions of the effectiveness of the service provided in manpower training agencies were inversely associated with agency output.

None of this is to suggest that agencies must necessarily be inefficient in order to be effective. It is to suggest that service effectiveness should be seen in the context of other performance goals. Administrators must be in a position to determine how much service effective-

ness can be achieved without posing unacceptable risks to other performance goals.

### ***Management Practices and Organizational Arrangements***

The core of a service effectiveness driven model of management is the relationship between managerial practices and organizational arrangements on the one hand, and service effectiveness on the other. Several of the papers to follow (Grasso, Epstein & Savage) will address this subject; but I would like to touch on three aspects of this question which deserve particular attention as we move to flesh out a model of effectiveness oriented management.

The first has to do with a better understanding of how structural arrangements interact with interpersonal and group processes to create the working environment of the worker. This would seem important because many of the structural arrangements that one sees used as independent variables in studies are not very tractable in the short term. Size, dispersion, age, professional complexity, division of labor, and even centralization and formalization are often difficult to change. Each is important to understanding performance levels but such knowledge tends to be unused because it is seen as nonactionable. Concentrating on behavioral and interpersonal variables in the context of structure would yield findings that are more readily translated for practice (Friesen, 1983; Hunt, Osborn & Schuler, 1978).

A second issue is achieving a better understanding of the particular contributions to service effectiveness made by managers at several levels in social agencies what—each does, or causes to happen, that impacts workers' performance. In agencies of any size there are likely to be three levels of management: supervisory, or first line management; program, or middle management; executive, or institutional level administration. As organizations grow larger, it appears that these levels become more functionally differentiated. We have a fairly good idea about the activity configurations at each of these levels (Patti, 1983), but more attention should be directed at sorting out those managerial actions at each level that are most consequential for service effectiveness and the identifying relative contributions each makes to desired client outcomes. Figure 2 is an initial attempt at specifying the behaviors that appear consequential in this regard.

A third, and related issue, has to do with how management behavior at higher levels influences the actions of managers at lower levels. It might be speculated that when the performance priorities at several hierarchical levels are congruent and the behaviors of managers are

complementary with respect to these priorities, there is a greater likelihood of obtaining performance targets, other things being equal. Thus, we would expect that when managers and their superiors engage in complementary behavior around service effectiveness, worker performance will improve. An interesting study by Hunt, Osborn, and Larson (1975) provides some support for this contention. In this research, the treatment orientations of upper level managers in a mental

Figure 2

Illustrative Managerial Activities  
Associated With Service Effectiveness At  
Several Administrative Levels

<u>Administrative Level</u>	<u>Selected Activities/Behaviors</u>
Executive level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Articulate (within &amp; without) client benefit as a prime criterion of agency performance</li> <li>- Mobilize support of external constituents that favor service effectiveness as a criterion measure</li> <li>- Build organizational structure which allows for decentralized program decisions</li> <li>- Allocate resources for research and development</li> <li>- Require service effectiveness data as justification for plan and budget submissions</li> </ul>
Program level	<p>All of above within program domain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selecting technologies (with subordinate advice) that work or appear to, based on documented evidence in comparable settings</li> <li>- Provide opportunity for staff participation in design &amp; implementation of service intervention</li> <li>- Develop performance standards related to service effectiveness</li> <li>- Define indicators of performance &amp; a system for capturing information about them</li> <li>- Provide feedback to subunits about performance or standards</li> <li>- Identify staff competencies necessary to deliver the service technology &amp; recruit personnel</li> <li>- Develop personnel system to attract &amp; reward competent staff</li> </ul>

Figure 2 continued

<u>Administrative Level</u>	<u>Selected Activities/Behaviors</u>
Supervisory level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set performance targets with workers, determine resources, time, etc., needed to achieve targets</li> <li>- Clarify roles &amp; expectations for each staff person</li> <li>- Provide specific advice about goal related methods &amp; procedures</li> <li>- Give feedback regarding worker performance</li> <li>- Identify skills needed to achieve performance targets &amp; provide resources to acquire training, etc.</li> <li>- Mediate, divert or insulate staff from demands or conditions which may undermine service effectiveness efforts</li> <li>- Provide opportunities for staff autonomy &amp; discretion within agreed upon parameters</li> </ul>

hospital (i.e., their orientation to either custody or rehabilitation) were found to interact with supervisory behavior to influence the performance and satisfaction of workers at the front line. Also relevant here is some work by Graen and his colleagues (1977) who found that certain dimensions of manager/superior relationships were positively related to manager/subordinate behavior in the same areas. Friesen (1983) reported a similar finding in her study of supervisors in community mental health agencies. Supervisors who assessed their superiors as supportive were much more likely to be perceived as supportive by their subordinates. More work needs to be done. It appears that in order to understand what contributes to worker performance we need to understand not only the behavior of individual administrators, but how managerial behavior at several levels intersects to form an organizational environment supportive of service effectiveness at the front line.

### ***Building External Support for Service Effectiveness***

Since social agencies are largely dependent on external decision makers for resources, it would seem to follow that the pursuit of service effectiveness as a prime performance criterion must be supported, or at least tolerated, by these resource providers. Put differently, how likely is it that an agency will invest heavily in effecting changes in

clients or their social conditions if achieving these outcomes is not valued by powerful constituents?

This is problematic, because it appears that some kinds of external resource providers in some sectors of social welfare are more interested in other kinds of performance criteria. There are several perspectives on what inspires the priorities of these groups. The first of these, exemplified in the work of Lipsky (1980) and Weatherly (1984), speaks to the discrepancy between the latent and manifest intent of policy makers. The argument, perhaps too simply put, is that many social service systems are really not intended to solve client problems. Their purpose, rather, is to offer the semblance of a service response, but not the substantive resources. The reluctance to commit the resources grows out of ideological ambivalence toward troubled and disadvantaged people, the lack of political power among consumers, and related causes. Several separate studies have shown how front line workers in human service agencies often resort to tactics like rationing and diluting services, creaming clients, and buck passing, in order to manage the chronic mismatch between demand and resources. The objective, under these circumstances, is to maintain a modicum of order in a system that would otherwise become inoperative if operated strictly in accordance with official intent. In this view, the failure of agencies to define performance in service effectiveness terms is quite understandable, because to do so would be to invite utter failure.

Although this line of analysis raises some important questions, it assumes, I think, more rationality and consistency among policy makers and resource controllers than observation would lead one to acknowledge. In addition, it leaves the practitioner with little alternative but to make do in a system which will inevitably undermine efforts to provide effective services.

Another perspective contends that policy makers and funders, for a variety of reasons, employ different criteria when judging agency performance than do agency personnel. Kouzes and Mico (1979) for example, argue that in the policy domain, judgments of effectiveness are likely to revolve around criteria such as equity, distributive justice, responsiveness to community problems, and the like. In a somewhat different vein, Martin (1980) and Whetten (1978) have suggested that resource controllers tend to embrace a normative view which places a high value on such organizational outcomes as expansion and growth, productivity, and the rational management of resources. Finally, Carter (1983) argues that the legislative process mitigator against specifying and holding agencies accountable for service outcomes be-

cause of the desire to avoid alienating constituents whose interests are served by maintaining the programs in question.

One is struck with the possibility that all of these views may be right at times, for some resource providers, with respect to some kinds of programs. In other words, it seems plausible to assume that the performance priorities favored by resource controllers will be a product of the social and economic characteristics of the decision makers, the political context within which they operate, and the social purpose of the program, i.e., the sector of social welfare in which the agency operates.

One must also contend with the possibility that the reluctance of resource providers to stress client outcomes as a measure of agency performance is due to a perception that human service agencies do not possess the technology necessary to deliver on change objectives. It is at least conceivable that law makers, high level executives, and others have come to settle for other performance criteria which they take as surrogates of service effectiveness because so little seems to have worked in the past. In any case, it would seem that efforts to mobilize powerful external groups around service effectiveness must rest on a more sophisticated understanding of their preferences and values than is now available.

At the same time, the cause of service effectiveness oriented management would benefit by increased attention to the tactics and strategies of external influence. A field that is so utterly dependent on external decision making has a very impoverished knowledge base regarding means for impacting the perceptions and decision priorities of those who determine our fate. A similar lack of knowledge regarding marketing and advertising in order to shape and stimulate consumer demand would render for-profit organizations vulnerable to a chaotic and unpredictable environment. We would do well to study those instances in which social agencies have been able to shape the performance priorities of resource providers to understand how this has been done. Carter (1983) provides some examples of instances in which this has been done. There is evidence to suggest that agencies are not only influenced, but also influence, and that they are not only dependent, but are also depended upon (Pfeiffer & Salancik, 1978; Austin, 1983; Jansson & Simmons, 1984). We need to know more about how powerful constituents can be mobilized to support service effectiveness and how such support can be reconciled with the other agendas to which they must also be responsive. The articles by Martin and Simons in this volume present some interesting ideas about strategies for achieving this end.

## CONCLUSION

Even this partial listing of the issues that need attention in developing a service effectiveness driven approach to management represents a formidable challenge for the practice and scholarly communities. The limited resources available to pursue this task compels closer relationships between agency and university, and between those concerned with direct services and administration. The promotion of service effectiveness serves the interests of all these groups and the more their resources are collaboratively brought to bear on this common ground, the more we in social welfare and those we serve will benefit.

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