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INTRODUCTION

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How do we understand human service organizations as they respond to the challenges of the 21st century? What organizational theories and research paradigms are most suitable to study them? In this edited volume, we try to provide some partial answers to these questions.

There is no doubt that the environments in which human service organizations operate have become vastly more complex. The communities that these organizations serve, especially urban and suburban, continue to undergo major sociodemographic changes through waves of immigration and migration, creating a demographic profile that is highly dynamic and diverse. Organizations have to adjust their services and develop new ones to meet the needs of people from varied ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds; different age groups; alternative family structures; and multiple lifestyles. For example, the major metropolitan areas in the United States have experienced a significant shift from a majority of white population to a majority or near majority of nonwhite population consisting of African American, Latino, and Asian. Immigration is a key factor in driving these changes (Logan & Mallenkopf, 2003). The demographic shifts have also been accompanied by an increase in ethnic segregation.

Coupled with the sociodemographic changes, communities have also undergone major economic transformations, mostly due to a shift from a manufacturing to a service economy, that have been accelerated by the globalization of the economy. The economic transformations have increased income inequality and have raised the risk of poverty for persons with limited occupational skills (Danziger & Gottschalk, 2004). This is particularly reflected in the expansion of the low-wage labor market, in which many of the workers are women and immigrants earning poverty wages (Handler & Hasenfeld, 2007).

Human service organizations also have had to adapt to major technological changes that affect their own service technologies. For example, advances in medical technologies have increased the demand for personal care by persons with various disabilities; psychotropic drugs and new therapeutic modalities are altering the ways persons with mental disabilities or drug dependencies are being treated; family-oriented approaches to child welfare challenge existing service patterns; and social assistance programs are being transformed into labor activation or welfare-to-work. There is also an increasing expectation that human service organizations should adopt practices based on evidence-based research (Gambrill, 2006).

Most important, the political and institutional environments of human service organizations have seen significant changes from a welfare regime that emphasizes social protection to a regime that insists on individual responsibility (Somers & Block, 2005). Massey (2009) notes that in the United States,

> as political leaders rewrote the rules of the American market to reduce the bargaining power of labour, lower the minimum wage, curtail social safety nets, limit transfer payments, constrict public employment . . . they also rewrote the rules of the economic game to make life easier for the affluent by reducing their financial obligations in support of the public good. (p. 18)

In such a political and institutional environment, human service organizations have experienced a shift from an institutional logic of care and equal access to it to an institutional logic of the market and personal responsibility.

The logic of the market is expressed in the New Public Management (NPM). In its idealized form, NPM embraces several themes (Hood, 1995): (a) reorganizing public organizations into product and cost centers, (b) shifting toward competition within and between public organizations and the private sector, (c) adopting corporate management strategies, (d) seeking alternative and less costly modes of service delivery, (e) adopting "hands-on-management," (f) using explicit and measurable standards of performance, and (g) using explicit output measures. The new management logic exerts pressures on human service organizations to develop organizational forms that emphasize efficiency, enhance their competitive position, and mobilize resources through new mechanisms such as contracting and business ventures.

The changing role of government has had a profound impact on the organizations (see Chapter 5). First, with the shrinking of safety net programs, human service organizations experience increasing demand while coping with declining resources. Second, the devolution to the local level exposes the organizations to local institutional, political, and economic forces that are far more volatile and can no longer be buffered by the policies and resources of the central government. Third, the contracting culture arising from devolution and privatization increases the competitive pressures on the organizations and forces them to consider corporate strategies in order to secure resources that may be in conflict with their service mission (Alexander, 2000; see also Chapter 8).

Relatedly, the organizational field in which the organizations are embedded, such as mental health or child welfare, is also undergoing changes. New actors enter the field, such as for-profit service providers, contract monitoring agencies, fiscal reimbursement intermediaries, consumer advocacy groups, and coalitions and alliances, all attempting to influence the allocation of resources in the field. As a result, old patterns of legitimacy are no longer adequate. Organizations have to adopt new normative rules, respond to different regulations, and develop new vocabularies to define and rationalize the work they are doing (Scott, 2000).

In response, human service organizations are developing new organizational forms as well as adapting existing ones. Responding to changing funding patterns, organizations have joined networks of service organizations dominated by a key contracting agency (see Chapter 9), developed hybrid structures to accommodate multiple funding streams (D'Aunno, Sutton, & Price, 1991), and initiated business ventures to obtain new resources (Cooney, 2006). Internally, organizations have adopted corporate management practices such as strategic planning and marketing, deprofessionalized staff to reduce costs, and subcontracted various functions to outside vendors (Baines, 2004).

Organizations have also experimented with different work patterns, such as replacing conventional hierarchical structures with decentralized networks, work teams, and reliance on contract workers.

It is clear that the adaptive capabilities of human service organizations depend not only on their resources but also on their leadership and cultures (see Chapters 10 and 12). In particular, the capacity of the organizations to change and implement new innovations will depend, in part, on an organizational culture that supports risk taking and experimentation, a visionary leadership, and an internal structure marked by specialization, professionalization, and diversity (see Chapters 21 and 22). Diversity is critical for the survival of human service organizations, not only because it must reflect the diversity in its environment but also because it strengthens the adaptive and innovative capabilities of the organization (see Chapter 17). Yet diversity also poses internal challenges to the organization by introducing potential sources of conflict among workers and between them and their clients (see Chapter 16).

Dominant institutional logics do not remain unchallenged. Human service organizations often advocate alternative logics by combining advocacy or a social action mission with their services (see Chapters 23 and 24). Human service social movement organizations reframe social problems and their solutions by invoking competing institutional logics. For example, homeless advocacy organizations have pushed for an alternative frame of homelessness as a consequence of failing housing policies rather than as a consequence of personal failings (Cress & Snow, 2000). Rape crisis centers have reframed the problem not as a policing or legal issue but rather as an assault on the well-being and welfare of the victim, coupled with an affirmation that it is not the victim's fault (see Chapter 11). These alternative logics are combined with actual practices and services that reaffirm them (Hasenfeld & Gidron, 2005). When successful, these organizations are able to reshape dominant logics and alter patterns of service that affect the entire organizational field.

Indeed, because human service organizations engage in moral work, they are sensitive to the cyclic changes in institutional logics that grant them legitimacy. In each particular historical context, with its own configuration of cultural, economic, and political forces, different logics become dominant. As we have noted, in the latter part of the 20th century, there was a shift from a logic of care to a logic of personal responsibility. But this logic is currently under considerable challenge. As the nation and other countries face an unparalleled economic crisis of a magnitude not experienced since the depression of the 1930s, the logic of the market is under attack and is likely to be modified through various political forces and governmental interventions. As a result, human service organizations will face different logics that will require them to develop new or different organizational forms once again. Equally important, they will also encounter a different resource environment that will affect their survival.

To understand how human service organizations respond to environmental and internal challenges, new theoretical approaches are needed. To better understand how human service organizations emerge, adapt, and survive under changing environmental conditions, theories that look to both the ecological and the institutional characteristics of the environment show particular promise. Chapter 6 employs an ecological perspective to understand the emergence and survival of hybrid organizational forms. As discussed in Chapter 3, neoinstitutional theories focus on the ways in which powerful institutional logics influence the moral work done by human service organizations and on how, through institutional entrepreneurship,

organizations can act to alter these logics. Moreover, neoinstitutional theory can provide an important framework to understand how discretion, a ubiquitous characteristic of human service work, is exercised in the organizations (see Chapter 18).

Most important, there is a need to recognize that human service organizations play a critical role in the policy environment and indeed enact policies through their own discretionary actions (see Chapter 4). Similarly, these organizations are conveyers and enactors of moral systems (see Chapter 7). The discursive processes between organizational practices and the institutional rules (i.e., policies) they are expected to uphold point to ways in which members of the organization are both influenced by and influence the rules. Structuration theory provides a framework to study and understand these processes (see Chapter 14). In particular, there is a need to better understand the often observed discrepancies between intended and actual practices and the organizational conditions that account for them (see Chapter 13). Relatedly, new research methodologies are being developed to measure the effectiveness of organizational intervention practices that take into account both individual- and organizational-level variables (see Chapter 20).

Ultimately, realizing that organizational effectiveness depends on the quality of the relations between workers and clients, we need to understand the environmental and organizational factors that shape them (see Chapter 18). Relatedly, because emotional work is a key element in these relations, we need a theoretical model to analyze it (see Chapter 15).

The field of human service organization has been enriched by recent theoretical, empirical, and methodological advances. The pivotal role these organizations play in shaping our welfare and well-being amplifies the responsibility of students and scholars of the field to forge ahead through theory and research in order to explore ways to make human service organizations more responsive and more effective in meeting human needs. It is my hope that this volume makes a modest contribution in this direction.

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