INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to imagine our lives without human service organizations. Hospitals and medical clinics, self-help and recovery groups, neighborhood associations and recreational centers, welfare offices and immigration services, job training and child care, hospice programs and grief support associations, family counseling centers and mental health clinics are all examples of human service organizations. Through thousands of organizations, the human service sector provides for our health, education, and well-being literally from cradle to grave. Social workers are perhaps the single largest group of professionals within the human services, providing the knowledge and skills needed to operate, and if necessary change, these organizations.

Since the focus of this book is on change in human service organizations, we begin by clarifying what we mean by this type of organization. The literature contains many definitions of human service organizations. One of the clearest and most useful for our purposes comes from Barker’s The Social Work Dictionary, which describes the human service organization as
“a social agency that delivers social services and is usually staffed by human service personnel (including professional social workers, members of other professions, paraprofessionals, clerical personnel, and sometimes indigenous workers). It provides a specific range of social services for members of a population group that has (been) or is vulnerable to a specific social problem. The agency may be funded by combinations of philanthropic contributions and privately solicited donations, by governments, by fees paid by those served, or by third-party payment” (Barker, 2003, p. 202).

This definition suggests that human service agencies encompass a wide range of organizations in terms of issues addressed and services provided. The small neighborhood-based violence prevention program, the mid-size family counseling center, and a large public welfare institution are all examples of human service agencies.

**Classifying Human Service Organizations**

Given the breadth of human service organizations, there are several ways of classifying agencies in order to better understand their diverse forms and functions. Next, we summarize some of the more commonly used categorizations.

**Agency Auspices**

Human service organizations operate under public (governmental), nonprofit, or for-profit auspices. Public organizations are those social agencies that are directly run by governmental agencies. Examples include federal government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, state-run agencies such as state departments of human services, and locally administered services such as public welfare departments and public homeless shelters.

Nonprofit organizations include agencies that may (or may not) receive substantial public funding but that are privately run and under the direction of a board of directors with day-to-day management by a director. This group includes counseling services, family service agencies, child welfare agencies, agencies serving homeless people, agencies serving victims of domestic violence, and many others. Any profits accruing to these organizations either go back into the agency’s budget or are returned to the funding source.

For-profit human service agencies provide many of the same services as nonprofits, but they are privately owned and operated companies and their goals include generating profits. These agencies are generally managed by a chief executive officer (CEO). The for-profit sector has been steadily growing since the late 1960s, in part because of the availability of public funding (Gibelman & Furman, 2008) and third-party (health insurance) reimbursements. This is true in many areas of practice, but is especially true in the health and mental health fields.
As Gibelman and Furman (2008) note, the distinction among these three types of agencies can be confusing. The public financing of private services and similarities in structure between private nonprofit and private for-profit agencies have led to boundary blurring. Language from the corporate world has crept into some nonprofit settings, where the director is referred to as the CEO and the agency as the company. Nevertheless, in assessing an agency for the purposes of bringing about change, it is useful to identify the agency auspice.

**The Nature of Services**

There are numerous reasons why people make use of the programs and services offered by human service agencies. Some human service organizations, counseling centers and rape crisis hotlines as examples, provide voluntary services, whereas others, including correctional facilities and child protective services, provide mandated (nonvoluntary) services. Some organizations, such as psychiatric hospitals where some patients voluntarily seek services while others are mandated through commitment procedures, provide a combination of the two. How services are provided often influences staff and clients interactions, decision-making processes, staffing requirements, and relations with environmental actors. For example, clients in a nonvoluntary setting may resist assistance because they are mandated to be in the agency’s program. Such settings also are likely to have work processes designed to control client behavior and hire staff with that criterion in mind. In contrast, clients who are voluntary may have more influence on the agency’s offerings and procedures, in part because they choose (or do not choose) to access these services. Such organizations often have formal ways in which clients can participate in agency planning and governance, most often through positions on the board of directors or advisory committees.

Human service organizations also vary as to whether they are primary service sites or units situated in what are known as host agencies, which include hospitals, schools, correctional settings, and other large institutional settings whose primary mission is other than the provision of human services. In host settings, individuals from disciplines other than social work (e.g., medicine, education, and criminal justice) are responsible for organizational leadership and decision making. This is in contrast to settings such as family service agencies and community centers where social work is the primary discipline and more likely to hold significant organizational status and power.

Finally, some human service organizations include explicit social change activities such as lobbying, advocacy, and organizing in their programmatic repertoire. Moreover, the services that they provide typically are guided by clear political ideologies. These organizations may be termed “social movement agencies” because they combine the provision of services, usually in innovative and nontraditional ways, with change strategies (Hyde,
Faith-based or Nonsectarian

In recent years, primarily because of federal-level policy initiatives, there has been increased attention to human service organizations sponsored by religious denominations (Gibelman & Furman, 2008). Faith-based organizations, however, have existed in the United States for more than two hundred years, offering immigration assistance, poverty relief, family support, and substance abuse counseling. While many of these efforts originally were targeted to meet the needs of members of those denominations (e.g., Jewish family and children service agencies that originally served Jewish immigrants and orphans), today most faith-based organizations serve a much wider population.

Faith-based human service organizations adhere to the principles or guidelines of their respective religious affiliations, in addition to the rules and requirements that apply to nonsectarian (nonreligious) human service organizations. For example, Catholic social service agencies follow the church’s position on reproductive issues, including birth control. In contrast, nonsectarian (nonreligious) human service agencies are guided by their specific missions and may hold membership in broader-sector associations that could promote particular regulations or guidelines.

Characteristics of Human Service Organizations

In comparison with other kinds of organizations, such as manufacturing plants or financial institutions, human service agencies possess distinct characteristics (Hasenfeld, 2010). These attributes stem from the broad purpose that human service agencies address the human condition, which is accomplished through the provision of programs and services to individuals, families, groups, or communities (Gibelman & Furman, 2008). Usually, the mission of a human service organization embodies altruistic values and its goals focus on enhancement of the human condition. The characteristics of human service organizations can be clustered in micro, mezzo, and macro levels of analysis.

Beginning at the micro level, Hasenfeld (2010) suggests that the fundamental distinguishing feature of human service organizations is that people are the raw material. In order to function, all organizations require input (raw material) that is then transformed into its product. The auto industry, for example, uses the raw materials of steel, rubber, and glass and alters them through the production process into a car. In human service agencies,
Individuals who seek assistance are changed (hopefully for the better) through the organization’s activities. Thus, humans are the input or raw material in human service organizations.

Yet unlike steel or glass, humans are not inanimate. They react to what is being done with or to them, and those reactions can be positive or negative. They may defy labeling or engage in the process, resist treatment or demand different programs or services, passively participate or mobilize for change. Thus, the raw material of human services is somewhat unpredictable, which creates variability in the work that agency staff does and uncertainty in the measurement of outcomes.

Not surprisingly, client–worker relations are another distinguishing characteristic of human service organizations, and this signifies a mezzo level of analysis. This relationship is a primary means for carrying out human service work. Within this relationship, staff engages in what is termed “moral” work, meaning that they use the values of the agency to guide or assess client eligibility, performance, compliance, and outcomes—in brief, the worthiness of the client to qualify and receive services. Hasenfeld (2010) notes that vulnerable or disenfranchised clients tend to experience “moral devaluation” by workers (p. 13), which in turn perpetuates a cycle of self-blame and disengagement.

This moral dimension underscores the emotional nature of human service work. Emotions are used to frame and guide client–worker communications and other interactions that can range from respectful to manipulative. Clients and workers also emotionally attach or invest, to varying degrees, to one another and to the organization. Thus, a client’s commitment to a program or a worker’s dedication to ameliorating a certain problem can be understood as emotional work.

Thus far, the unique characteristics of human service organizations have focused on internal (micro and mezzo) factors, specifically work processes. External or environmental attributes also shape human service organizations; this represents a macro level of analysis. Primary among these attributes is organizational legitimacy, which is determined by the institutional environment. A human service organization gains legitimacy when it successfully negotiates the demands of the state, regulators, resource providers, relevant professional associations, and public opinion. Yet securing and maintaining legitimacy can be difficult because the institutional environment is constantly changing. New or different licensure requirements, funder criteria, and policy regulations have an impact on organizational priorities and functioning. While human service organizations may go through periods of stability, such periods are relatively short. In order to survive, human service organizations need to be adept in responding to the crises and chaos of the environment. Yet in coping with the environmental demands, organizations may turn away from their core values and mission.
Human service organizations exist within a complex environment. Most critical of these to organizational change are two highly interrelated societal forces—the economy and politics. When times are lean and human service budgets shrink, a conservative political climate is created or reinforced, leading to a retrenchment in spending on human services by governmental and private sources. The former are particularly vulnerable to changes in the economy. Public sector budget cuts, in response to economic crises, directly impact agency revenues. Because many private sources of agency funding derive their funds from the government, private funds also decrease during a lean economy. A strong economy can influence political ideology in more liberal directions, often increasing social services expenditures. Public and private funding streams expand, with political pressures and demands impacting the nature of the expansion. The availability of monies for new programs or other costly changes increases the likelihood of organizational change.

Reduced funding generally results in constrictions and reductions in agency services. However, budget cuts can open the door to creative change efforts that save money without negatively impacting services to clients; in fact, such cuts can even improve services. For example, an agency providing outreach and day program services to elderly clients found itself seriously understaffed, a result of major cuts to its budget, which included both public (state) and private funds. A staff social worker who had previously been unsuccessful in persuading the agency administration to expand its pool of volunteers found the director to be much more receptive to this idea than she had previously been. This social worker was successful in reorganizing and expanding the agency’s volunteer program, increasing and enhancing services to clients.

The impact of the economy and politics depends on the nature of the change. Increased accountability mechanisms are frequently introduced into agency settings during periods of retrenchment; some of these measures benefit agency clients, while others, including those that place efficiency over effectiveness, can be harmful to clients. Organizations are most likely to change when available funds shrink or increase. Change can be most difficult during periods of financial stability. In the absence of budgetary pressures or the availability of increased funding, the organization is most likely to preserve the status quo in agency programming (Brager & Holloway, 1978).

Public opinion, which is a reflection of political ideology, can have a negative impact on the delivery of social services to stigmatized populations. This is particularly evident in services for poor people. As Gitterman and Germain (2008) point out,

the historical ideological distinction between worthy and unworthy poor, as well as the current public reaction to the tax burden, have led to stigmatizing and stereotyping recipients. Financial aid is provided in a punitive, demeaning manner, demonstrated by inadequate allowances, time limits, deteriorated and uncomfortable physical facilities, long waiting
lines, and negative attitudes and behavior of some personnel in many welfare offices. Such conditions attest to the impact of social policy on service delivery, particularly budget stringencies that are supported by societal values and norms. Political and economic pressures place significant constraints on human service organizations, compromising their ability to fulfill social mandates. (pp. 476–477)

Negative public opinion is often exacerbated for political gains; for example, conservatives often blame poor people for various societal problems (i.e., the economic downturn) because of their reliance on public assistance. Some may indiscriminately and detrimentally apply such views to all human service organizations (Bloom & Farragher, 2010).

These macro factors, alone and as they affect the micro and mezzo levels of the organization, suggest a complex and volatile environment for human service work. The adept practitioner needs to successfully negotiate this terrain, as well as organizational policies and procedures, in order to provide needed programs and services. Understanding these factors begins with the kind of relationship that is developed between social worker and client. Yet the relationship does not exist in a vacuum. The client comes from a community, with assets and challenges, and that community is influenced by prevailing political, social, and economic trends. Similarly, the organization is situated in a community, which may be the same as that of the client. And, as detailed above, the organization is subjected to various macro forces. A skilled practitioner takes all of these factors into account, learns to maneuver around them, brokers relationships across them, and facilitates the acquisition of resources for and skills by the client. In essence, social work is a transactional enterprise with the organization serving as the practice context as well as the conduit for micro, mezzo, and macro factors (Meenaghan & Gibbons, 2000; O’Connor & Netting, 2009).

While the change agent may not be able to influence the various forces we have been discussing, it is imperative that she or he assess these, and plan the timing or nature of the change goal accordingly. In sum, human service organizations are unique because of their unpredictability. The moral and emotional work embedded in the primary worker-client relationship generates degrees of instability. The turbulent institutional environment adds to this instability. The result is an organization that may have little control over its internal functioning and external context. This unpredictability also influences the ability to frame and pursue organizational change.

**Organizational Culture**

There are a number of different approaches to understanding organizational dynamics. The framework we will use is organizational culture, which is a holistic and change-oriented paradigm. Culture can be understood as a “pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and
internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2004, p. 17).

There are several key assumptions that inform this definition. First, culture is made by humans, and therefore can be changed by humans. Second, culture develops and solidifies because it is critical to the survival of a group. And third, culture is transmitted over time to new members so that they can be functional members of the group. Culture, then, is not a static but rather a dynamic construct.

Organizational culture is manifested on three levels (Schein, 2004), as illustrated in figure 1.1. The most obvious level is artifacts and creations, including all objects, behaviors, and processes that transmit an organization’s beliefs, values, technologies, and ways of doing things. Examples of artifacts and creations are

- art and symbols, such as a program’s brochure, organization’s logo, or posters on waiting room walls;
- norms and rituals, such as a preferred treatment method, meetings with clients in a private office, or a graduation ceremony celebrating the completion of a job training program; and
- language that is specific to an agency’s program, such as use of medical terminology or diagnostic labels.

FIGURE 1.1. Levels of Organizational Culture

![Levels of Organizational Culture Diagram](image-url)
The next level of culture is slightly more abstract. **Values** indicate a sense or understanding of what ought to be. Values are often codified in an organization’s mission or goals statements, as in, “We believe that hunger can be eliminated” or “All women should be safe from violence.”

Finally, there are **basic assumptions**, which is the most difficult level to ascertain because they are deeply embedded in the cultural system. Examples include convictions concerning

- time and space, such as being oriented to the future, the norm of beginning an event promptly, or level of comfort with physical close-ness;
- human nature, such as whether people are essentially good or evil; or
- our relationship to nature, such as destroying or preserving the envi-ronment.

Inferring an organization’s basic assumptions is accomplished through careful, systematic observation and analysis.

**Example: Organizational Vision, Mission, and Values**

*Project HOME was founded in 1998 in Philadelphia in response to the growing street population in the city. Currently, it offers comprehensive employment, education, health, mental health, and housing programs to homeless individuals and families. With the motto “None of us are home until all of us are home,” the organization’s About Us webpage provides an example of how an agency’s culture is conveyed through its vision, mission, and values.*

**The Vision of Project HOME**

None of us are home until all of us are home.

**The Mission of Project HOME**

The mission of the Project HOME community is to empower adults, children, and families to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty, to alleviate the underlying causes of poverty, and to enable all of us to attain our fullest potential as individuals and as members of the broader society. We strive to create a safe and respectful environment where we support each other in our struggles for self-esteem, recovery, and the confidence to move toward self-actualization.

Project HOME achieves its mission through a continuum of care comprised of street outreach, a range of supportive housing, and comprehensive services. We address the root causes of homelessness
through neighborhood-based affordable housing, economic development, and environmental enhancement programs, as well as through providing access to employment opportunities; adult and youth education; and health care.

Project HOME is committed to social and political advocacy. An integral part of our work is education about the realities of homelessness and poverty and vigorous advocacy on behalf of and with homeless and low-income persons for more just and humane public policies.

Project HOME is committed to nurturing a spirit of community among persons from all walks of life, all of whom have a role to play in making this a more just and compassionate society.

**The Values of Project HOME**

- The work of Project HOME is rooted in our strong spiritual conviction of the dignity of each person.
- We believe that all persons are entitled to decent, affordable housing and access to quality education, employment, and health care.
- We believe in the transformational power of building relationships and community as the ultimate answer to the degradation of homelessness and poverty.
- We believe that working to end homelessness and poverty enhances the quality of life for everyone in our community.
- We believe that the critical resources entrusted to us to achieve our mission must be managed honorably and professionally.

(www.projecthome.org/about/)

An agency’s vision, mission, and values are core elements in an organization’s ideology and goals. Consequently, we want to provide more in-depth discussion of ideology and goals, and how these organizational components affect change.

**Ideology**

Brager and Holloway (1978) define ideology as “a commonly shared coherent and intensely held set of beliefs and commitments [which] is a potent social lever” (p. 57). Ideology influences individual and organizational behavior and can come to define an organization. As a force, ideology can facilitate or inhibit change efforts and can be harnessed in the service of a change goal. Brager and Holloway (1978) describe four broad ideological systems that characterize human service organizations: campaign, client service, process, and venerational:
- **Campaign ideology** characterizes organizations growing out of political or social movements. These organizations reflect commitment to specific social missions and generally have external social change goals. Examples include mental health consumer advocacy groups, organizations for poor people, and organizations for battered women.

- **Client service ideology** revolves around a commitment to providing services to a specific client population, such as children, and adults who are elderly, homeless, and developmentally disabled. There can be some overlap with campaign ideology agencies as some agencies with client service ideologies have grown out of social movement–focused organizations, for example, organizations providing services to women who have been abused. However, organizations with client service ideologies are primarily committed to providing direct services rather than engaging in more politically oriented reform efforts.

- **Process ideology** describes agencies that are committed to a particular process or practice methodology—community organizing, legislative advocacy, solution-oriented brief treatment, or psychodynamic psychotherapy. The emphasis in process ideology–focused organizations is on the particular methodology employed rather than on social causes or client populations.

- **Venerational ideology** characterizes agencies that are highly invested in their own traditions, past history, quality of services, and leadership in the field. Such organizations are likely to perceive themselves as pioneers in the field. Such agencies place great importance on upholding their status and reputation. They emphasize the unique identity of the organization rather than a cause, a specific client population, or practice methodology. Venerational ideologies tend to be found among older, more-established institutions.

Campaign and client service–oriented agencies may be most receptive to change. Campaign-oriented organizations are inherently predisposed to reform and change in the wider environment and therefore potentially are more open to internal change (O’Connor & Netting, 2009). Client service–oriented agencies are seen as being more receptive to change than are process or venerational organizations because of their greater dependence on the environment and their vulnerability to external forces such as changes in the client population. Settings least open to change are likely to be those characterized by venerational ideologies that are well established, stable, and rooted in tradition. However, it must be noted that there are additional factors that influence an organization’s predisposition to change. Organizations vary in the intensity of their ideological commitment. A strong ideological stance can be harnessed in favor of a change effort whereas a weak stance may be of little influence. Also, the ideological beliefs
of organizations can change over time and often are not uniform across all of the organization’s units (Brager & Holloway, 1978).

It is important that the change agent identify the existing ideological orientation(s) and its (their) intensity. One type of agency is not always easier to change than another but its typology can be very useful for assessing the organization and determining how to frame the problem for change. In order to gain the legitimacy necessary to bring about change, the change agent must speak the agency’s language and echo its ideology. A change agent seeking change in a small, campaign-focused, grassroots organization will frame the problem for change very differently from how a change agent in a large, prestigious psychiatric clinic will frame it. The change agent in a campaign agency might express the sentiment, “We are undermining the power of those we seek to help.” In a venerational agency, the appeal might be expressed as, “We aren’t being true to our great reputation.” Once identified, the organization’s ideology can provide a potent force when harnessed in the service of the change goal.

Goals

The formal purposes or goals of an organization generally reflect its ideology and are most often expressed in broad terms in its mission statement (Gibelman & Furman, 2008). Neugeboren (1991) speaks to the importance of social workers being able to visualize organizational goals and appreciate the importance of those goals. Identifying agency goals that support a proposed change can greatly enhance a change effort and suggest how it might be framed. The greater the extent to which the problem for change is framed in terms of agency goals, the more likely it is that the organization will be receptive to the proposed change. Some organizational goals are more likely to predispose an organization to change than others. Thus, an agency whose mission emphasizes client empowerment as a goal may be more open to the proposed inclusion of clients on the board of directors than an agency that simply emphasizes the goal of servicing clients (Cohen, 1994). Moreover, to the extent that the goal of empowerment reflects an agency’s values of inclusion and egalitarianism, it may be more open, in general, to input from low-power actors.

Brager and Holloway (1978) describe goals as functioning as contracts between the organization’s funding source(s) and the agency’s administration. These, in turn, determine what services will be provided, to whom, and (often) for what social benefit. They draw an important distinction between manifest and latent goals or purposes. Manifest purposes are explicitly stated by the organization, whereas latent purposes are implicit and unstated. There can be discrepancies between these—for example, a city homeless shelter with the manifest goal of improving the social welfare of undomiciled individuals may also have a latent function of removing the homeless from the public eye with a minimal expenditure of funds. A member of the shelter staff seeking to have the city provide more-permanent housing for its
homeless population is not likely to succeed, particularly if the latent purpose is being successfully served. It can be difficult to determine an organization’s latent purposes as they are, by definition, unstated. However, it is important to organizational change efforts that the change agent identify them because they can pose serious obstacles to the desired change, particularly if they remain undetected. The reason these purposes have gone unstated should also be identified. Hidden purposes, such as ridding the streets of visible homelessness, may be at odds with stated purposes, such as improving the social welfare of homeless people.

Multiple funding sources can create multiple organizational goals. These goals can be mutually reinforcing, creating a high level of stability and limiting which changes are likely to be successful. For example, a home health agency providing social work, nursing, occupational therapy, and physical therapy may include specific goals for each discipline along with a shared goal of providing high-quality primary patient care. A proposal to offer public health education to the community might be seen by several of its disciplines as redirecting agency resources away from the services they provide. The change agent proposing this educational program would be well advised to frame the proposal as enhancing patient care and involving the input of all of the agency’s units. This possible competition for resources among the agency’s various disciplines can be reframed by the change agent as an incentive to work together. In a larger bureaucratic organization (e.g., a hospital), the units made up of various health-care disciplines may be insulated from each other, leading to reduced competition among disciplines. This scenario can potentially reduce the number of decision makers whose support for the proposed change is needed. Thus, the existence of multiple organizational goals can either increase or decrease organizational receptivity to change, depending on organizational size and structure.

Transmission of Organizational Culture

Every organization has its own unique culture (Ott, 1989) that results from the intersection of several internal and external factors. The internal factors are the assumptions and beliefs of the founder and, if a different individual, the vision of the current leader. The external factors are the norms and values of the general culture (e.g., American, German, or Canadian) and, if appropriate, of specific subculture (e.g., African American), and the sector(s) in which it operates (e.g., nonprofit or child welfare). Figure 1.2 is a general illustration of the factors that shape an organization’s unique culture.

Of particular concern within the organizational culture framework is the transmission of culture to new organizational members, including staff and clients. Organizations develop structures and processes that teach and reinforce cultural values and norms (Ott, 1989). These operations encompass (1) recruitment and selection of members, (2) orientations and initial socialization activities, (3) reinforcement of appropriate behaviors and punishment
for unacceptable behavior, (4) removal of deviant members in ways that emphasize cultural expectations for remaining members, and (5) use of various forms of communications (i.e., newsletters, memos, gossip networks) that further support the organization’s culture.

**Example: The Transmission of Organizational Culture**

*The Sexual Assault Crisis Center (SACC) provides a variety of support services for men, women, and children who have been victimized by sexual violence, including a crisis hotline, group counseling, medical advocacy, and court appearance support. As with many nonprofit organizations, SACC relies on a large pool of volunteers to meet the demands for its services. SACC’s*
comprehensive volunteer training program, which emphasizes the organization’s focus on professionalism, illustrates how a human service agency transmits its culture to new members.

- Recruitment and selection: All prospective volunteers must apply to be considered for a volunteer position in any victim service program. The application includes an essay that asks for comment on SACC’s mission, criminal background checks, and three references. A board and staff committee reviews these applications; successful applicants are invited in for a screening interview. The interviews cover reasons for wanting to volunteer, attitudes regarding sexual violence, and other issues germane to the organization. Those individuals who make it through this process are accepted as volunteers.

- Orientations and initial socialization: All volunteers must complete a forty-hour training program that addresses the mission and vision of SACC and the antiviolence movement, crisis counseling techniques, court and hospital protocols when accompanying victims, self-care, and practice role plays. Volunteers are evaluated throughout the training period, and some individuals may be dismissed.

- Reinforcement of behaviors: Once a volunteer has successfully completed the training program, he or she is paired with a seasoned volunteer for a three-month period. The seasoned volunteer is there to guide, provide feedback to, and evaluate the new volunteer, and needs to report any concerns to the volunteer coordinator. At the end of this three-month period, the successful volunteer is scheduled into a hotline shift and other victim service activities. Volunteers are expected to give eight to ten hours each month.

- Removal of deviant members: Determination of whether an individual is appropriate for a victim services volunteer starts from the moment of application and continues through the three-month post-training period. Once that period has ended and the volunteer is working solo, there are regularly scheduled evaluations and refresher trainings. The organization expects that volunteers will remain committed to professional performance. If at any time it is determined that a volunteer is not meeting that expectation, the volunteer coordinator can ask him or her to leave. When that happens, other volunteers are informed (in a general way) of what happened and why, in memos or meetings.

- Use of communications: SACC relies on a constant flow of information to keep volunteers abreast of any organizational developments, opportunities, and events. There is a dedicated website
for volunteers, as well as a LISTSERV® (both of which are managed by the volunteer coordinator). Periodic meetings are held to discuss issues that pertain to volunteering. There is an annual appreciation banquet that acknowledges the work of the volunteers.

Using organizational culture as a framework to understand human service agencies allows us to take into account essential properties and processes within the organization, as well as key environmental factors. Organizational culture helps focus attention on underlying dynamics, for example the commitment to the founder’s vision or impact of sector politics, which often shape agency function and effectiveness. Organizational members must understand all these factors for a change effort to be successful.

A change agent needs to decipher, and use strategically, the rituals and routines that have informed prior organizational change. The change agent also needs to understand the relationship between the organization’s cultural assumptions and the proposed change. Not only does the change agent need to work with those cultural artifacts and values that support change, but she or he also needs to identify and understand culturally situated barriers to change. Some questions to consider include the following:

- How do organizational members view change? Is it considered to be a learning opportunity, a threat, an annoyance, or another pipe-dream? What is the overall receptivity of the organization’s culture to change?
- Does change need to be initiated, sponsored, or facilitated by the organizational leader(s) in order to be successful, or can it come from anyone within the organization?
- Does the proposed change support or threaten basic organizational values? Even if the change agent believes that the change is supportive, is it possible that others might perceive it as a threat?

**Conclusion**

Within the organizational culture paradigm, the change agent usually is the leader. This makes sense, since the leader has a significant impact on the organization’s culture. Yet our focus is on the low-power actor as change agent; consequently, the understanding of culture becomes even more important. This is because organizational culture includes those rituals, protocols, and practices that inform rewards or sanctions for innovation and risk taking that are necessary for change. Therefore, a critical aspect of organizational culture is formal and informal structures that shape power and authority within an agency. We turn to these dynamics of organizational life in the next chapter.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some reasons that people seek services from human service agencies?
2. Give an example of a public human service organization, a nonprofit agency, and a for-profit organization. How do they differ? How are they similar?
3. In an organizational setting familiar to you, ask the members what they think the key values of the organization are. Do these values resonate with the organization’s activities?
4. What are the organization’s goals and mission? Are the values you identified in question 3 reflected in the mission and goals? Are there any conflicting goals?
5. Think about the setting you are in. What are some of its norms and rituals? What functions do these norms and rituals have for the organization?
6. How are elements of the organizational culture in your setting transmitted to new members?

REFERENCES