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AN ANALYSIS OF THE AUTHORITY SYSTEM OF A PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCY HOMEMAKER PROGRAM FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED RESIDENTS

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science in Social Work

Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the authority system of a public housing agency homemaker program for elderly and disabled residents and to explore the impact of this system upon the program's service output. The Homemaker Program of the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA) in Nashville, Tennessee was selected for analysis on the basis of research previously conducted by this author which indicated inadequate service output during the period from January 1 to March 31, 1976. Service output was assessed in terms of service approved by the supervisor but not provided, services provided without prior approval, and degree of homemaker conformity to existing schedules. It was assumed that these characteristics of the service output were affected by the authority system in existence at that time.

The present study was based upon a review of theories and concepts in the area of authority and authority systems in formal organizations and an analysis of the service network of the MDHA Homemaker Program. The Homemaker Program authority system was assessed by utilizing authority system models and criteria for effectiveness derived from review of the literature.

It was determined that the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system incorporated aspects of several models rather than corresponding with a particular model. Major incongruities were found between the MDHA Homemaker Program and the criteria

for an effective authority system. These included inadequate delegation of authority to positions of responsibility, lack of direct supervision, subjectivity of the evaluation process, and ambiguous procedures and communication processes.

It was concluded that the ineffective performance of the control function resulting from these structural deficiencies allowed homemakers inappropriate discretion and, thus, contributed to faulty judgements regarding service provision.

From the analysis of the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system, a number of propositions regarding authority in homemaker programs were generated. These were as follows:

1. The authority system of a homemaker program directly affects the service output of that program.

2. A relationship exists between the inadequate service output of a homemaker program and deficiencies in the structure and operation of its authority system.

3. The authority and responsibility for supervision and evaluation of homemakers should be vested in a position having direct contact with the homemaker at the point of service provision.

4. Authority and responsibility vested in a position must be equivalent to assure successful task accomplishment.

5. Specific goals, procedures, and regulations must be established and communicated for maximum staff performance.

6. The evaluation procedure must measure homemaker

performance accurately and consistently and must directly influence the distribution of rewards and negative sanctions.

The propositions developed as a result of this study can be utilized as a basis for further research in the area of authority in formal organizations. Due to the impact of the authority system on organizational productivity, additional research is needed to determine cause/effect relationships between characteristics of authority systems and service output. This is particularly essential in homemaker programs operated by public housing agencies, since caseloads are large and staff and supportive resources are minimal.

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INTRODUCTION

The following study was designed to analyze the authority system of the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency Homemaker Program for elderly and disabled residents of public housing in Nashville, Tennessee, hereinafter referred to as the MDHA Homemaker Program, and to explore the impact of this system upon its service output. The subject for this study was developed from the findings of a descriptive study of the MDHA Homemaker Program, which was conducted by this author for the period January 1 to March 31, 1976. The findings indicated problems in service delivery in the areas of services approved by the supervisor but not provided, services provided without prior approval by the supervisor, and homemaker conformity to pre-established schedules.[1] In the present study, an assumption was made that the service output of the MDHA Homemaker Program was affected by the authority system in existence from January 1 to March 31, 1976.

To provide a basis for examining the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system, a review of theories and concepts in the area of authority and authority systems in formal organizations was conducted. A formal organization was defined as a network of relationships in which member behavior is regulated and

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[1]Kay Eileen Callahan, "An Analysis of the Homemaker Program of the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency" (Nashville, Tn.: Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, 1976), pp. 6-7. (Mimeographed.)

directed toward specific goals according to shared expectations based upon position rather than personal identity.[2] It was assumed that the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, hereinafter referred to as MDHA, was a formal organization and, thus, theories and concepts from review of the literature were applicable to the MDHA Homemaker Program.

The review of the literature encompassed three related aspects of authority within formal organizations. First, the concept of authority was explored in terms of definitions, types, and sources of authority. The second area, that of authority systems, was examined in terms of definition, characteristics, and structural models. A third area, effective functioning of authority systems, was studied to determine criteria for effectiveness and conditions which adversely affect authority systems.

Theoretical models of authority systems and the criteria for effectiveness derived from the literature review were utilized in the analysis of the authority system of the MDHA Homemaker Program. The authority system was examined in terms of responsibility for assuring adequate service provision, authority delegated to positions of responsibility, and channels and procedures dictating how that authority was to be utilized. From this analysis, inadequacies and discrepancies were indicated

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[2]Sanford M. Dornbush and Richard W. Scott, Evaluation and the Exercise of Authority (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975). pp. 29-30.

and assumptions were made regarding the relationship between these conditions and the inadequate service output.

The issue addressed in this study is particularly relevant to social service organizations, where there is a recognized need for maximizing service output. This need is augmented in homemaker programs for elderly and disabled persons operated by public housing agencies due to the large number of such persons residing in public housing who lack private resources for purchasing in-home care or alternative living arrangements. Since the priority of such agencies is placed upon provision of housing rather than social services, homemaker programs tend to employ small staffs and have access to minimal supportive resources. Consequently, any additional knowledge regarding the impact of authority systems on service output would aid efforts to improve program operation and greatly needed services.

The nature of this research is descriptive, since it is based upon a review of literature and an analysis of the existing services of the MDHA Homemaker Program. The intention was to generate propositions regarding authority systems and their relationship to key issues in the delivery of homemaker services. The applicability of the conclusions is limited to the MDHA Homemaker Program and similar homemaker programs operated by public housing agencies of comparable structure and client population. However, in addition to its value to homemaker program staff, the study provides a knowledge base

for further research into authority systems, service delivery systems, and related dimensions of organizational activity. Propositions derived from this study could be developed into hypotheses and tested in other social service settings and programs.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Concept of Authority

A variety of definitions of the term "authority" can be found in the literature. In his theory of bureaucracy, Weber defines authority as the probability that certain specific commands from a given source will be obeyed by a given group of persons.[3] Authority is considered official permission to use organizational resources and to invoke sanctions in order to obtain member compliance.[4] Similarly, Dubin defines authority as the legitimate right to get tasks accomplished. He adds that power, often confused with authority, is actually a means employed in the exercise of authority. Conversely, Bierstadt defines authority as being institutionalized power, because the right to command is inherent in organizational positions.[5]

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[3]A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, trans., and Talcott Parsons, ed., The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, by Max Weber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 324, cited by Peter M. Blau and Richard W. Scott, Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 28-29.

[4]Rocco Carzo Jr. and John N. Yanouzas, Formal Organization, A Systems Approach (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1967), p. 49.

[5]Robert Dubin, ed., Human Relations in Administration (3d ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 255-256.

The issue of authority in relation to power is prevalent in the literature. Simon defines authority as an objective, behavioral concept, which involves the power to make decisions affecting the actions of others. It is distinct from other forms of influence such as persuasion or suggestion in that behavior choices of subordinates are based on external commands.[6] Thompson views authority as a type of power associated with a position and legitimated by official norms, with power being the ability to determine the behavior of others regardless of the basis for that power.[7]

Although terminology differs, most definitions allude to authority as legitimate power in that it arises from norms which govern action.[8] Authority is always a power phenomenon due to the right to use force which is associated with positions of authority, but it is sanctioned, institutionalized power.[9] In other words, authority is the prescribed expectation that one position should exert control over others.

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[6]Herbert A. Simon, "Authority," Human Relations in Administration, ed. Robert Dubin (3d ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 279-281.

[7]James D. Thompson, "Power in Identical Organizations," Human Relations in Administration, ed. Robert Dubin (3d ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 263-271.

[8]Sanford M. Dornbusch and Richard W. Scott, pp. 37-39.

[9]Ibid., p. 60.

Thus, authority is a structural variable external to the persons occupying given positions.[10]

Although to this point the concept of authority has been discussed in terms of organizational positions, other types are recognized. Peabody proposes two categories, "formal authority" and "functional authority." Formal authority is that which involves sanctions, legitimacy, and position. Functional authority is based upon technical and professional competence, experience, and human relations skill. The latter usually supports formal authority and assures its acceptance. Formal authority is undermined by lack of functional authority.[11]

Peabody's dichotomy of formal and functional authority is also known as line and staff authority, respectively. Line authority implies direct command of one person over another by virtue of position, whereas staff authority is the ability to advise or counsel but not command.[12] The latter concept is termed "professional authority" by Dalton, who suggests that the two opposing authority types may overlap or compete.[13] This possibility prompted identification of a hybrid type

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[10]Gene W. Dalton, Louis B. Barnes, and Abraham Zaleznik, The Distribution of Authority in Formal Organizations (Boston: Harvard University, 1968), p. 38.

[11]Robert L. Peabody, "Perceptions of Organizational Authority: A Comparative Analysis," Administrative Science Quarterly, VI (1961), 463-466.

[12]Carzo and Yanouzas, p. 50.

[13]Dalton, Barnes, and Zaleznik, pp. 46-47.

known as functional authority, which consists of line authority delegated to a staff position for specific task accomplishment.[14]

Peabody describes two sources of formal authority. The first is authority of legitimacy, which denotes the right of a superior to demand obedience on the grounds of "ethical sanctification," or by virtue of prescribed organizational values. This source of authority contributes to the second source, authority of position, or the ability to obtain compliance by virtue of position on the organizational chart.[15] According to Simon, authority of position relies on the power to hire, fire, promote, demote, and distribute incentive rewards.[16] However, as Blau indicates, the continued utilization of such sanctions will undermine authority over time.[17] Therefore, two sources of functional authority may be utilized to enhance the effectiveness of formal authority. The first is authority of competence, or the possession of essential skills and experience.[18] The second is authority of person, which Bennis and

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[14]Carzo and Yanouzas, p. 55.

[15]Peabody, pp. 466-469.

[16]Herbert A. Simon, "Authority," Research in Industrial Human Relations, eds. Conrad M. Arensberg and others (New York: [Harper], 1957), p. 104, cited by Peabody, pp. 469-470.

[17]Peter M. Blau, Bureaucracy in Modern Society (New York: [Random House], 1956), pp. 76-77, cited by Peabody, pp. 469-470.

[18]Peabody, p. 470.

Presthus suggest is the ability to understand the human aspects of administration, to mediate individual needs, and to enhance the acceptance of formal authority by subordinates.[19] This source is referred to as "charismatic" authority by Weber, "personal authority" by Fayol, and "authority of leadership" by Barnard.[20]

In summary, it is apparent that the term "authority" encompasses many meanings and is applicable to situations other than the formal organization. However, in reference to the formal organization, authority is considered the institutionalized power or right to apply rewards and negative sanctions to the behavior of others. This includes both formal and functional authority, despite the greater power generally accorded positions having formal authority.

The Concept of Authority Systems

Having explored the concept of authority, it is possible to study the means by which the possession of authority actually affects organizational behavior. The existence of

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[19]Warren G. Bennis, "Leadership Theory and Administrative Behavior: The Problem of Authority," Administrative Science Quarterly, IV (159), 283-287; Robert V. Presthus, "Authority in Organizations," Public Administration Review, XX (1960), 91, cited by Peabody, pp. 471-472.

[20]Henderson, p. 328; Constance Storrs, trans., General and Industrial Management, by Henri Fayol (London: [n.n.], 1949), pp. 19-21; Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (30th Anniversary ed.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 173, cited by Peabody, pp. 471-472.

authority depends upon both a set of norms governing the exercise of and response to power and a set of persons or positions linked by the power relationship.[21] The interaction of these two variables is the concern of the present section.

Authority systems are viewed from various perspectives. Dornbusch and Scott define an authority system as a set of relationships in which all power expected to be exercised is authorized. This is a "person-centric" viewpoint in that it deals with the authority system as it affects the participant.[22] A "positional" viewpoint defines an authority system as a "relatively fixed, regular, and continuous power relationship between offices as they are formally prescribed."[23] Neither perspective can be disregarded since the behavior affected by the exercise of authority is ultimately that of the person, not the position. For this reason, Dornbusch and Scott propose that an authority system must be both formalized and structural. By formalization, the authors mean that there must be comparability of authority exercised by identical positions, regardless of persons involved. The concept of structure involves uniform, consistent exercise of authority by a supervisor over those persons supervised.[24] Regardless of the perspective taken, it appears that an authority system is a structured set

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[21]Dornbusch and Scott, p. 37.

[22]Ibid., pp. 204-205.

[23]Thompson, p. 263.

[24]Dornbusch and Scott, pp. 206-207.

of power relationships that is known to and accepted by organizational members.

Further explanation of authority systems is offered by Simon in terms of the superior/subordinate relationship. Within this relationship, the superior makes decisions and communicates them to the subordinate, with the expectation that the subordinate will accept them. In turn, the subordinate expects to receive and comply with these decisions. An authority system exists when these behaviors are exhibited, regardless of the relationships prescribed by the organizational chart. Simon proposes that direct exercise of authority or the "right to the last word" is not necessary for an authority system to exist. Although subordinates' behavior may appear to be based upon their own assessment of alternatives, this is not actually the case. Compliance generally results from imperceptible commands such as established precedent and procedure or subordinate review of previous actions of superiors. The latter phenomenon, referred to by Friedrich as "rule of anticipated reactions," makes identification of relationships within authority systems difficult.[25] In summary, Simon proposes that an authority system consists of both formally and informally prescribed power relationships, known to and

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[25]Simon, Human Relations in Administration, pp. 279-282.

accepted by members, which are directly or indirectly reflected in subordinates' behavior choices.

Two schools of thought, Weber's Theory of Hierarchical Authority and Barnard's Communication Theory, propose models for the structure of organizational power relationships. Weber's theory, also known as the theory of bureaucracy, is traditionally associated with the formal organization. Weber views authority systems as operating in a unilateral, quasi-judicial manner based upon power, hierarchy, and legitimacy. Barnard views them as communication processes operating laterally out of members' rational self-interest rather than group commitment. Emphasis is on communication as it influences decision-making.[26]

The authority system models of Weber and Barnard are structurally similar, but differ in the process of authority flow. Weber outlines three ranked strata consisting of rule establishers, rule administrators, and subordinates who comply with the rules.[27] Authority is "exercised over" subordinates on a one-to-one basis by the administrative staff.[28] The ratio of subordinates to each superior is known as the span of control or span of supervision.[29] Barnard's unit of organization

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[26]Terence K. Hopkins, "Bureaucratic Authority: The Convergence of Weber and Barnard," Complex Organizations, ed. Amitai Etzioni (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), pp. 82-83.

[27]Henderson, n. 39, cited by Terence K. Hopkins, p. 90.

[28]Hopkins, p. 92.

[29]Carzo and Yanouzas, p. 48.

consists of a superior and several subordinates, also arranged in a hierarchy. However, all positions regardless of rank are interrelated, so that authority flows through an interlocking communication system.[30] Where Weber stresses compliance with the dictates of the hierarchy, Barnard emphasizes flexibility of communication flow according to situational demands.

As Hopkins points out, both theories focus upon the internal structure and operation of units and assume that traits of an effective authority system apply to all organizations. In addition, both utilize the criterion of compliance to assess system effectiveness.[31] However, the concept of compliance denotes obedience to an order in Weber's theory and acceptance of a communication as being authoritative in Barnard's. This fundamental difference in viewpoint is also reflected in the factors deemed by each theorist to be responsible for continuous, consistent member compliance. Weber proposes that the only reliable stabilizer is a "belief in legitimacy." Such a belief arises from a rational-legal value system shared by organizational members, which teaches obedience to persons of higher rank.[32] Barnard suggests that there is a "zone of indifference" which determines the communication each person will accept without question. To be acceptable, communication must

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[30]Barnard, pp. 109-112, cited by Hopkins, pp. 91-92.

[31]Hopkins, pp. 84-85.

[32]Henderson, pp. 325-330; Barnard, p. 169, cited by Hopkins, pp. 84-85.

be understandable, consistent with organizational purpose and member self-interest, and capable of being acted upon. In addition to these criteria, the zone of indifference for each person is affected by that person's commitment to the organization. However, group norms contribute to a reluctance to question authority that is within or near the group-defined zone of indifference. Thus, the organization itself serves to stabilize each member's compliance with authoritative communication.[33]

Although contributions of both theories are recognized, some theorists question the applicability of either in its pure form to the complex formal organization. Blau and Scott propose that, although assumed essential for coordination, Weber's hierarchy is inefficient because it interferes with communication. Therefore, the pure form is rarely practiced. Instead, coordination is usually achieved directly across horizontal lines, as in Barnard's model.[34] Likert also recognizes the drawbacks of these models and integrates principles of both to form a model consisting of overlapping work-groups within the hierarchical structure. These teams are close-knit, effectively-functioning groups, whose members possess interaction skills and firm goal-orientation. Persons holding membership simultaneously in two or more work-groups perform a "linking-pin" function

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[33]Barnard, pp. 168-169. [34]Blau and Scott, pp.183-184.

which assures effective communication and coordination.[35]

Dornbusch and Scott propose a synthesizing model which focuses upon organizational structure as it relates to the evaluation component of the control function. Their system is based upon the efforts of a set of participants to control the task performance of another set of participants through the use of evaluations which affect the distribution of rewards and negative sanctions. The process establishes a pattern in which those controlling others are subject to control from a higher level. Positions responsible for control tasks are both hierarchically and laterally interrelated, forming a control system. Maintenance of the control system is dependent upon normative support throughout the organization for each person's control efforts. Transmission of this support is furthered by structural communication links between positions involved in the over-all evaluation process.

The control system model utilizes the Weberian hierarchy, with an additional level. The four levels are designated Levels A, B, C, and D. Level A authorizes Level B and supports and regulates Level B's attempts to control Level C. Thus, Level A serves to evaluate the evaluators. Level B exists to evaluate Level C, the lower management level. Level C

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[35]Rensis Likert, "A Motivational Approach to a Modified Theory of Organization and Management," Modern Organization Theory, ed. Mason Haire (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1959), pp. 192-193.

has various program-operating responsibilities including evaluation of Level D. Level D consists of subordinates who carry out directives from Level C.[36]

In summary, four distinct models of authority systems have been presented. The Weberian or traditional model emphasizes hierarchical structure, with commands flowing from a central authority figure to subordinates through all intervening levels. Barnard's model involves two-way communication flow within the hierarchy and also laterally, which aids decision-making at all levels. Likert's model, also based upon open communication flow, goes a step further by modifying the hierarchy with overlapping work-groups. The control system model of Dornbusch and Scott utilizes Weber's hierarchy, but laterally integrates the positions involved in evaluation through structural communication links.

Each of these models suggests a structure for organizational power relationships. However, the impact of that structure on member behavior is determined as much by the flow of authority as by the structure. The term "unity of command" refers to the path of authority flow from top to bottom within a hierarchy. According to traditional theory, unity of command facilitates order by establishing a recognized chain of command and concomitant responsibilities. The chain of command

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[36]Dornbusch and Scott, pp. 193-202.

dictates to which superior a subordinate is answerable for the accomplishment of assigned tasks.[37]

The prescribed behavior of superiors and subordinates within the chain of command is determined by on-going delegation of authority, or the conferring of specific authority upon a position by a higher level position. Authority is delegated in order to assure goal attainment, therefore the equivalent delegation of responsibility for task performance is inherent in the process.[38] The delegator of authority and responsibility has an obligation to assure performance of assigned tasks and possesses power of enforcement. Therefore, delegation is always incomplete for each responsibility delegated, because the delegator must retain sufficient authority to demand task accomplishment.[39]

Effective Functioning of Authority Systems

The attention given by theorists to authority and authority systems indicates the importance of this aspect of organizational structure. Etzioni contends that the authority system is a pertinent factor in goal attainment.[40] Hopkins suggests that the institutionalization

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[37]Carzo and Yanouzas, pp. 43-44. [38]Ibid., pp. 55-57.

[39]Alvin Brown, Organization: A Formulation of Principle (New York: Hibbert Printing Company, 1945), pp. 46-48.

[40]Amitai Etzioni, "Authority Structure and Organizational Effectiveness," Administrative Science Quarterly, IV (1959), 43.

associated with an authority system contributes to member compliance, but that some authority systems elicit greater compliance than others.[41] Factors contributing to more effectively functioning authority systems and conditions which hinder goal attainment are presented in this section.

The essential activities of an authority system are those which maintain control and assure performance, coordination, and a focus on objectives. Related activities are direction, motivation, evaluation, and communication as they serve to meet the control function. Ineffectiveness in the performance of control activities is indicated when work behavior produces disadvantageous, irrelevant, or negative results. Failure of subordinates to take appropriate action, noncompliance with regulations, mistakes in judgement, and premature action are common results of ineffective authority systems.[42]

Among Selznick's "derived imperatives" necessary for organizational maintenance is the stability of lines of authority. Selznick proposes that, being a structural expression of rational action, the formal organization must have a pattern of coordination and a systematic ordering of positions and duties.[43] In Weber's theory, the requirement for coordination

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[41]Hopkins, p. 40.

[42]Wight E. Bakke, "Concept of the Social Organization," Modern Organization Theory, ed. Mason Haire (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1959), pp. 55-58.

[43]Phillip Selznick, "Foundations of the Theory of Organization," Complex Organizations, ed. Amitai Etzioni (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), pp. 19-26.

is met by formal rules and regulations governing decisions and behavior. The ordering of positions and duties is achieved through establishment of a hierarchy or chain of command. Weber contends that these two conditions contribute to maximum administrative efficiency.[44] Hopkins contends that Weber's emphasis on the structure of the administrative staff is justified, since subordinates comply more readily with the dictates of rules and hierarchy if the administrative staff also complies with the rules and procedures.[45]

Having defined authority systems as communication processes, Barnard discusses effectiveness in terms of acceptable communication. As previously mentioned, he specifies that communication must be understandable, consistent with organizational purpose and member self-interest, and capable of execution to be accepted as authoritative. Furthermore, adequate lines of communication must connect all members as directly as possible and not exclude essential positions or be broken by temporary or permanent absence.[46] Johns supports Barnard's emphasis on communication, stressing that communication channels should minimize distance between positions. He contends that the formal channels of authority and responsibility

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[44]H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, trans. and eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 196-204; Weber, pp. 329-336, cited by Blau and Scott, pp. 32-33.

[45]Hopkins, p. 91.

[46]Barnard, pp. 165-181, cited by Hopkins, pp. 92-94.

are potential hindrances to effective communication. Exchange should be unrestricted and designed to prevent delays in decision-making and necessary action.[47] The importance of an effective communication process is also accentuated by Likert, who concludes that ability to exert influence upward through the communication system is essential to successful work-group functioning.[48]

Simon proposes that effective administration requires limiting the scope of responsibility within the hierarchy. This is accomplished, in part, by defining responsibilities for each position, supplying related goals for decision-making, and providing mechanisms for narrowing alternatives. The mechanisms identified for narrowing members' behavior alternatives are information channels, training programs, and written rules and procedures.[49] In addition, limiting staff responsibility involves the issues of span of control and supervisory position. A narrow span of control, ideally six subordinates to each supervisor, is essential for limiting responsibility. Although requiring more administrative positions and contributing to communication problems and increased

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[47]Ray Earl Johns, Executive Responsibility (New York: Association Press, 1954), pp. 168-169.

[48]Likert, p. 202.

[49]Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior (2d ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 37, XXIV, cited by Blau and Scott, pp. 36-38.

subordinate dependency, this is the generally accepted ratio. The narrow span of control is particularly applicable if physical separation within the work setting limits supervisory contact, a situation which encourages inappropriate autonomy and exercise of discretion on the part of subordinates.[50] A similar viewpoint is expressed by Merton, who suggests that an effective, stable authority system requires that superiors directly observe subordinate performance in order to rationally evaluate and to enforce rules.[51] Therefore, in addition to defining responsibilities, goals, and mechanisms for narrowing alternatives, the organization must institute a narrow span of control to maintain an effective authority system.

In addition to the structural mechanisms for limiting responsibility, there are certain accepted principles regarding the delegation of responsibility and authority throughout the system. No one member should retain more authority and responsibility than can be adequately utilized by that position.[52] That which is delegated should be the portion not requiring the ability of the delegator and must be distinct from that which is retained in order to prevent duplication of effort. Two positions should not delegate to the same

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[50]Blau and Scott, pp. 167-171.

[51]Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (2d ed.; Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), pp. 339-350, cited by Blau and Scott, pp. 142-143.

[52]Brown, p. 102.

subordinate or share the power to require performance from a subordinate.[53] In addition, responsibility and authority should be equivalent, with no limits placed upon a member's ability to perform assigned tasks. The organization has the right to alter or revoke a member's authority and responsibility without negating the member's obligation to continue to perform in the assigned position.[54] However, the organization is required to keep its members informed of the currently functioning authority system and their relationship to it.[55] This principle substantiates Barnard's accentuation of the need for appropriate, adequate communication channels.

A member's exercise of authority is limited to that which is formally delegated to the position occupied. Furthermore, a subordinate must be subject to only the authority of his official superior. These requirements necessitate rules governing relationships between members who are independent by virtue of the delegation process but whose performance is interrelated. The determination and application of such rules contribute to a process of self-coordination. For effective self-coordination, the system must provide each position with knowledge of the responsibility and authority delegated to other positions and prompt, detailed information regarding related activities. Although self-coordination may require joint

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[53]Ibid., pp. 49-53. [54]Ibid., pp. 15-19.

[55]Ibid., p. 70.

contribution or cooperation, no member should assume another's delegated responsibility or authority.[56] Brown concludes that the most frequent system defect, one which hinders efforts at self-coordination, is the failure of administrators to define all relationships between positions.[57]

In addition to reliance upon effective communication processes and limitation of responsibility and authority, the organization should give attention to the evaluation system. Dornbusch and Scott suggest that organizational members attempt to maintain levels of performance which they consider acceptable for themselves. Therefore, evaluations which fall below these self-expectations provide a stimulus for improved performance. However, certain problems existing within the authority system may prevent a member from attaining acceptable evaluations, thus creating a condition of incompatibility within the system. There are four types of incompatibility reflected in the evaluation process. These are known as contradictory, uncontrollable, unpredictable, and unattainable evaluations. In the case of contradictory evaluations, a high evaluation from one perspective automatically results in low evaluation from another. This occurs when conflicting criteria are utilized to assess the same task, such as when record-keeping is expected to be both concise and comprehensive; when contradictions exist between performance allowed and outcome expected; and when performance of one task is jeopardized by the assignment of

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[56]Ibid., pp. 137-149. [57]Ibid., p. 242.

conflicting tasks. The second type, uncontrollable evaluations, occurs when a member receives unacceptable evaluations for performances or outcomes not under that member's control. Lack of coordination in the control system may cause an evaluation to be incorrectly assigned to a person not responsible for the task being evaluated. Interdependence of performers may result in unacceptable evaluations based upon the total product rather than each individual's contribution. Similarly, a high incidence of active tasks, those relatively low in clarity and predictability, makes it difficult for members to control the evaluations resulting from their performance. The third type, unpredictable evaluations, arises when unacceptable evaluations are received because the member is unable to accurately predict the relationship between actual performance and ratings assigned. This occurs when tasks allocated or criteria of assessment have not been adequately communicated, or the samples used for evaluation are not representative of performance. The fourth type, unattainable evaluations, occurs when standards used to evaluate a performer are set so high that acceptable evaluations cannot be attained. This is common when persons are newly employed, job requirements are changed, active tasks predominate, or resources and authority are lacking.[58]

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[58]Dornbusch and Scott, pp. 246-259.

According to Dornbusch and Scott, all types of incompatibility increase with increasing complexity of the authority system, greater interdependence of positions, and infrequency of evaluations. Incompatibility is a sufficient condition for system instability and results in detrimental adaptive mechanisms on the part of subordinates. Members who remain in an authority system having an incompatible evaluation process either lower self-expectations or attempt system change by noncompliance with authority.[59] Selznick points out that such resistance toward authority may produce institutionalized deviations, resulting in informal modification of the authority system.[60]

In summary, there are several major elements of an authority system which contribute to its effectiveness. Adequate performance of control activities is the primary responsibility of the authority system. This is assured through stable lines of authority and coordination of activities, as well as adequate, appropriate communication. Delegation of authority and responsibility must be appropriately limited and well-defined. The evaluation process is an integral part of the authority system and must assure potential for evaluations which are compatible with members' self-expectations. These and other aspects of effective authority systems can be applied to existing organizations and to homemaker programs in particular.

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[59]Ibid., pp. 265-271. [60]Selznick, pp. 21-22.

Trager is one author who has studied the effectiveness of homemaker program structures in terms of authority systems. Findings include the need for organized effort, with established goals, functional responsibilities, and methods. Authority must be vested in a program administrator with no other responsibilities so that close, daily contact with subordinates can be maintained. The span of control may vary depending upon clientele, outside resources, and homemakers' competence, but eight to thirteen homemakers per professional is generally accepted. The authority system should be strictly defined, especially when several professionals are involved in the service plan. The designated supervisor should be delegated total authority over subordinates and not be limited in decision-making power.

Trager also emphasizes communication, saying that maintaining open communication should be the supervisor's first priority. Written policy must be the basis for staff orientation and daily practice. This should include purposes and goals, definition of clientele, identification of services to be provided, and procedures for all situations. Administrative attention should be given to performance as it is documented in staff records. In addition, the supervisor should attend to client response to service and expressed grievances. Verbal and written communication supporting policy implementation is the responsibility of all staff involved in service delivery.

Coordination at all levels is essential when several persons are involved in provision of services. Direction must not consist of a series of parallel and sometimes contradictory requests. Such responsibilities as making assignment changes, scheduling, determining services needed, and developing procedures must be based upon joint decisions. This also applies to the evaluation process, the results of which should be conveyed to the homemaker as the assessment of all persons responsible for service provision.[61]

Trager has utilized general theory and concepts from the study of authority systems of formal organizations to develop principles applicable to homemaker programs. In the same manner, the theories and concepts hereinbefore presented and Trager's conclusions can be applied to the MDHA Homemaker Program for elderly and disabled residents. The following chapter presents an analysis of the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system based upon the models and criteria for effectiveness which have been discussed.

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[61]Brahna Trager, Homemaker/Home Health Aide Services in the United States (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 93-103.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF THE MDHA HOMEMAKER PROGRAM

Description of the Service Network

The MDHA Homemaker Program, established in October of 1975, was designed in accordance with Title XX of the Social Security Act. The purpose of the Program was prevention or delay of institutionalization of elderly and disabled residents through provision of assistance with household tasks. One supervisor and ten homemakers were employed with 85% Title XX funding and 15% MDHA monies. The availability of Comprehensive Employment and Training Act funds, in addition to the original 100% budgeted monies, enabled MDHA to employ two additional homemakers for the period from January 1 to March 15, 1976.

MDHA managed seventeen low-rent housing projects throughout an urban area. A total of 176 clients in 153 households were served in sixteen of these projects during the period of the study, January 1 to March 31, 1976. More than 50% of the clients were age 75 or above. Consistent with the advanced age of most clients, 60% were referred due to chronic ill health and 22% as a result of medical emergencies.[62]

The MDHA Homemaker Program was located within the MDHA Resident Services Division, as indicated in Appendix A. The

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[62]Callahan, pp. 1-3.

Resident Services Division was a component of the Community Services Department, which was directly responsible to the Executive Department, as shown in Appendix B. The director of community services was responsible for the operation of the MDHA Homemaker Program. His responsibilities included establishing policies and procedures for program operation, providing direction and assistance to the assistant director for resident services, who supervised the program, evaluating the performance of the assistant director, and reviewing homemaker performance evaluations. The assistant director for resident services was responsible for planning and consulting with the homemaker supervisor, approving program-related activities of the homemaker supervisor, and evaluating the homemaker supervisor's performance. In addition, she hired program staff, reviewed homemaker performance evaluations, and made recommendations for discharge when necessary.

The major responsibility for administration of the MDHA Homemaker Program was delegated to the homemaker supervisor, who was placed in the MDHA central office. Assuring service provision and supervision of homemaker performance were the major task areas of the homemaker supervisor. Specific responsibilities included homemaker performance evaluation, recommendations for hiring and firing, planning and conducting in-service training, and administrative record-keeping.[63] The

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[63]Statement by Nell McKerley and Pat Damico, Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, personal interview, Nashville, Tennessee, 5 February 1977.

homemaker supervisor approved referrals and services requested, assigned and scheduled homemakers, and notified project social workers of the disposition of referrals. When homemakers were ill, the homemaker supervisor was responsible for notifying the client or the project social worker. If there were disagreements between a homemaker and the project social worker over service provision, the homemaker supervisor was responsible for making a final decision based upon discussions with the homemaker and the family area supervisor, who supervised the project social workers.

The project social worker was designated the case manager with regard to all services provided to clients and, in that respect, was involved in the MDHA Homemaker Program. The project social worker assessed service needs, referred requests for service to the homemaker supervisor, and arranged an introductory visit between the homemaker and the client. Additional activities in relation to the MDHA Homemaker Program included notification of residents when the homemaker was absent, and negotiation of changes in or termination of service with the homemaker assigned to the case. The project social worker discussed disagreements over service provision with the family area supervisor, who, as previously noted, negotiated with the homemaker supervisor.[64] However, the project social

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[64]Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, "Procedure for Implementation, Maintenance, and Termination of Homemaker Services" (Nashville, Tn.: Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, 1976). (Mimeographed.)

worker was authorized to directly mediate and resolve all grievances between the client and the assigned homemaker.

The homemaker was responsible for service provision and maintenance of monthly homemaker reports documenting services provided. Service provision responsibilities included general cleaning, meal preparation, shopping, laundering, and household errands. The homemaker was not allowed to perform heavy housework, lend or borrow money or personal belongings, administer medication, or help clients into the bathtub.[65] In addition to service provision responsibilities, the homemaker was expected to inform the project social worker of changes in need for service. In case of temporary schedule changes, however, the homemaker was to notify the client, project social worker, homemaker supervisor, or program secretary.[66]

Control over the distribution of rewards and negative sanctions within the MDHA Homemaker Program varied according to the position held. The authority to fire program staff was retained by the executive director of MDHA. However, this was a control measure of last resort, invoked primarily in instances of illegal activity or other irreparable circumstances.

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[65]Thomas F. Mumphery, "Responsibilities and Duties of the Homemaker" (Nashville, Tn.: Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, 1975). (Mimeographed.)

[66]Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, "Procedure for Implementation, Maintenance, and Termination of Homemaker Services."

The rewards and negative sanctions available to the homemaker supervisor included changes in case assignments and work location, withholding of wages for time missed, and performance evaluations. Although not directly under the control of the homemaker supervisor, pay increases were based upon satisfactory performance evaluations. Totally unsatisfactory evaluations could result in termination. The project social worker possessed no formally delegated control over rewards and negative sanctions, but was delegated the authority to initiate changes in or termination of service and the informal authority to make performance evaluation recommendations to the homemaker supervisor.

Employee performance reviews were conducted by MDHA every six months. The homemaker supervisor employed the established MDHA performance review procedure and reported the evaluation results on a standard summary form.[67] The homemakers were evaluated on the basis of quality and quantity of work, work habits, work interest, and personal relations. Quality of work was assessed in terms of accuracy, neatness, completeness, and thoroughness. Quantity of work was assessed in terms of amount and promptness of completion. The category of work habits included punctuality, attendance record, safety consciousness, care of property and materials, and compliance with work instructions. Work interest was determined by

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[67]Statement by McKerley and Damico.

attitude, resourcefulness, willingness to carry out new assignments, adaptability, and initiative. The category of personal relations included tact, courtesy, self-control, patience, and loyalty and discretion in dealing with members of the public and other employees. Each of these items within the major categories was assigned a factor rating of either not applicable, not observed, unsatisfactory, below standard, standard, above standard, or outstanding. The over-all rating was determined by compiling the individual factor ratings. The standard summary form also included discussion of major strong and weak points and ways that performance could be improved with respect to these.[68] The standard summary form was completed based upon monthly reports independently completed by homemakers, informal observations by project social workers, the homemaker supervisor's impressions from supervisory conferences, and additional information provided by the homemaker during the evaluation conference.[69]

The emphasis of employee performance review was placed upon employee growth and development rather than disciplinary aspects. The homemaker supervisor was responsible for explaining the relationship between the homemaker's work record and the ratings assigned and for outlining a training program to assist the homemaker in improving performance. When an over-all

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[68]Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, "Employee Performance Review Summary" (Nashville, Tn.: [n.n.], [n.d.]).

[69]Statement by McKerley and Damico.

evaluation of unsatisfactory was assigned, the homemaker was to be informed of performance requirements, specific examples including time, place, and frequency showing how her performance failed to meet requirements, previous warnings and training given, and records used to document performance. After the evaluation conference, a final rating was assigned and the summary was routed to the assistant director for resident services.[70]

Communication flow within the MDHA Homemaker Program service delivery network involved both the Homemaker Program and the Social Work Services staff. Information was processed vertically within the two divisions and horizontally and laterally across hierarchical lines. Communication paths are indicated on Appendix A. The three key positions within the communication system were the homemaker supervisor, project social worker, and homemaker. The homemaker supervisor communicated directly with the project social worker on referrals, case assignment, homemaker introductory visits, final decision on service changes, and homemaker absences when necessary. She also routed monthly homemaker reports to the project social worker for follow-up. The project social worker submitted referrals and case closings directly to the homemaker supervisor. The homemaker and project social worker communicated

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[70]Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, "Performance Review Procedure" (Nashville, Tn.: [n.n.], [n.d.]).

directly on matters regarding schedules, changes in service, grievances between homemaker and client, and homemaker absences when necessary. The homemaker and homemaker supervisor communicated directly on matters regarding assignment and scheduling, monthly homemaker reports, homemaker absences, and changes in service. The family area supervisor became involved in the communication system only in cases of disagreement between the homemaker and project social worker.[71] The homemaker supervisor was responsible for communicating all supervisory and administrative problems and activities to the assistant director for resident services, who communicated appropriate information to the director of community services.[72]

Analysis of the Service Network Output

The output of the MDHA Homemaker Program was assessed in a descriptive study of the program conducted in 1976, as explained in the introduction of the present study. The study population included all cases having received homemaker service since the MDHA Homemaker Program began in 1974. A sample was drawn consisting of 153 cases having received service between January 1 and March 31, 1976. Case records were reviewed to

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[71]Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, "Procedure for Implementation, Maintenance, and Termination of Homemaker Services."

[72]Statement by McKerley and Damico.

determine services approved by the homemaker supervisor but not provided, services provided without prior approval, and homemaker conformity in schedules.[73]

Data from this study provided significant evidence of inadequate service output. It was determined that 37.7% of the services requested by clients and approved by the homemaker supervisor were not provided.[74] Of the total services which were provided, 56% had not been formally approved prior to provision.[75] The degree of homemaker conformity to schedules was low due to absences, service provided on the wrong day, or days provided in addition to those scheduled. This lack of conformity resulted in a 28% discrepancy between scheduled and actual service provision.[76]

These statistics indicate deficient service output as a result of homemaker performance. Such findings justify efforts to determine system imperfections which might contribute to this situation. An analysis of the authority system of the MDHA Homemaker Program is presented in the following chapter to provide a basis for propositions regarding the cause of documented deficiences.

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[73]Callahan, pp. 1-2.

[74]Ibid., Table F.

[75]Ibid., Table E.

[76]Ibid., p. 7.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE MDHA HOMEMAKER PROGRAM AUTHORITY SYSTEM

According to Bakke, inappropriate action, noncompliance with regulations, and disadvantageous or negative performance are indicators of an ineffective authority system.[77] Analysis of the output of the MDHA Homemaker Program suggests that these and other detrimental conditions were present at the time of the study conducted by this author. Presented in this chapter is material to substantiate the proposal that an ineffective authority system may have existed. The MDHA Homemaker Program authority system was assessed in relation to the previously presented models of authority systems and criteria for judging system effectiveness.

Comparison of the Authority System with Models

The formal authority system of the MDHA Homemaker Program, as defined by the administrative chart, corresponds with Weber's hierarchical model in that distinct ranked strata existed and authority was "exercised over" subordinates on a one-to-one basis. The executive director and the director of community services comprised the strata of "rule establishers," as defined by Weber. The assistant director for resident services and the homemaker supervisor were "rule administrators,"

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[77]Bakke, pp. 55-58.

and the homemakers were subordinates. Application of the hierarchical model to the MDHA Homemaker Program excludes the project social worker from the authority system, since the project social worker was not located within the ranked strata of the Program.

The control system model of Dornsbusch and Scott is applicable to the MDHA Homemaker Program, since it organizes positions into a hierarchy and emphasizes task evaluation, the primary control mechanism available to both the assistant director for resident services and the homemaker supervisor. These positions corresponded with Levels B and C of the control system model, respectively. The homemakers comprised Level D, and the director of community services corresponded with Level A, since the director of community services evaluated the assistant director for resident services, Level B. As does Weber's theory, the control system model excludes the project social worker, who was not involved in formal evaluation of homemakers.

The MDHA Homemaker Program can be compared with Barnard's communication model in some respects. The Social Service Delivery System and the Homemaker Program formed an interlocking communication system through the involvement of the project social worker in provision of homemaker services. Therefore, Barnard's emphasis on open communication and interrelatedness of positions regardless of rank is applicable. However, the MDHA administrative chart does not reflect the

presence of extended relationships beyond the program hierarchy, as are proposed by Barnard. Instead, these relationships were indicated by the description of the service network.

The relationship between homemaker, homemaker supervisor, and project social worker resembles Likert's model of overlapping work-groups. Due to overlapping of some responsibilities and the interdependence of these three positions, an informal work-group existed which coordinated service provision and linked the MDHA Homemaker Program to other MDHA programs. Both the project social worker and the homemaker supervisor served as "linking pins" within the work-group. As in the case of Barnard's model, the existence of overlapping work-groups was not apparent from the MDHA administrative chart but was indicated by the description of the service network.

Comparison of the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system with the four models previously presented points out a lack of conformity to a particular model if the entire service network is under consideration. The characteristics of the system which existed at the time of the descriptive study lend support to Blau and Scott's contention that an organization rarely exemplifies a pure type of authority system. The formally prescribed system concurs with both Weber's hierarchical model and Dornbusch and Scott's control system model. However, defining authority systems as consisting of both formal and functional authority relationships permits the inclusion of positions which were not part of the formal MDHA

Homemaker Program hierarchy but did influence homemaker behavior. Based upon the assumption that the related tasks assigned to the project social worker were supported by some type of authority to accomplish them, the assessment of authority system effectiveness included the project social worker as he or she interacted with the MDHA Homemaker Program staff.

Assessment of Authority System Effectiveness

According to Selznick, lines of authority must be stable for on-going maintenance of the organization. To achieve stability, a pattern of coordination and a systematic ordering of positions and duties is imperative.[78] Within the MDHA Homemaker Program, coordination was attained through written rules and regulations specifying appropriate behavior for each position. The hierarchy or chain of command instituted order among positions and duties, with the exclusion of the project social worker, who held a subordinate position in the Social Work Services hierarchy. Such exclusion of a position having essential program-related responsibilities from a comparable administrative position within the program hierarchy contributes to instability of the authority system and, consequently, decreases the potential for adequate task accomplishment.

Although excluded from the hierarchy, the project social worker was an integral part of the communication system, as

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[78]Selznick, pp. 19-26.

indicated by Appendix A. It has been stated that communication channels should minimize distance between positions.[79] This is accomplished, in part, by directness and completeness of the communication system, as emphasized by Barnard.[80] The MDHA Homemaker Program communication system did serve to minimize distance, since there was direct communication between all three key positions at numerous appropriate points. However, there were instances of circumvention or unnecessary inclusion of positions. For example, by routing monthly homemaker reports from the homemaker to the homemaker supervisor and then returning them to the project social worker, provision of follow-up by the project social worker was delayed. In addition, the project social worker's timely monitoring of service provision was prevented. An instance of unnecessary inclusion of a position is found in the procedure which placed the family area supervisor in a mediating position in cases of disagreement between the project social worker and the homemaker. This procedure increased the distance between key positions in the delivery of homemaker services and was a contradictory practice in view of the direct contact between the project social worker and the homemaker supervisor on other matters. Such a practice contributes to lack of clarity regarding proper channels, complicates the coordination process, and encourages avoidance of

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[79]Johns, pp. 168-169.

[80]Barnard, pp. 165-181, cited by Hopkins, pp. 92-94.

direct negotiation by the two positions most involved with assuring adequate service provision. A third problem area is that which involved client notification of appointment changes. The homemaker could communicate this information directly to the client or to any of three different positions, each of which could contact the client or route the information to another position. No clear responsibility for assuring that the client was notified was delegated to an administrative position. This system allowed the homemaker to arbitrarily make temporary schedule changes without reporting directly to the homemaker supervisor beforehand. Such a practice reduces supervisory control, may invite abuse of discretion, and complicates the process of client notification. All three situations point out existing incongruencies between assigned responsibilities and the operation of the communication system, which should be designed to further task accomplishment.

Incongruencies such as those which existed within the communication system indicate a need for assessing the appropriateness of the delegation of authority and responsibility throughout the MDHA Homemaker Program. As previously discussed, there are several aspects of delegation which have an impact upon system effectiveness. Simon suggests that limitation of the amount of authority and responsibility delegated to each position is essential for effective administration.[81] Some

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[81]Simon, Administrative Behavior, pp. 37, XXIV, cited by Blau and Scott, pp. 36-38.

limitation was accomplished within the MDHA Homemaker Program by the definition of responsibilities for each position and the establishment of mechanisms for narrowing alternative behavior choices. The requirements of the communication system, in-service training, and formal rules and procedures were mechanisms utilized in the MDHA Homemaker Program to limit alternative behaviors. However, as noted with regard to the communication system, instances of ambiguity and overlapping delegation of tasks existed. In addition, written goals for the program were limited to the broad Title XX goal of reducing or preventing institutionalization. Rules governing service provision were general and were oriented toward tasks which could be provided rather than toward those which should be provided. The restrictions on provision of services were limited in scope and were subject to varying interpretations by both homemaker and project social worker. For example, the term "heavy housework" could be applied differently according to the homemaker's preference in a particular case situation. It appears that, through inadequate utilization of available limiting mechanisms, excessive responsibility was delegated to the homemaker. Furthermore, the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system failed to assure a focus upon program objectives. This task is an activity stressed by Bakke as being the responsibility of the authority system.[82]

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[82]Bakke, pp. 55-58.

Directly related to delegation of authority and responsibility is the nature of the span of control within the hierarchy. In the MDHA Homemaker Program, the span of control was one supervisor to twelve homemakers, while two Comprehensive Employment and Training Act positions were available. Afterwards, the ratio became one to ten, which is still higher than the traditionally recommended ratio of one to six.[83] Although the latter span of control within the MDHA Homemaker Program is compatible with Trager's recommendation, it should be recognized that the higher ratio advocated by Trager is based upon a program in which the administrator has no other responsibilities.[84] Appendix A indicates that this was not the case in the MDHA Homemaker Program, since the homemaker supervisor was also responsible for the driver aides. According to Blau and Scott, a wide span of control such as utilized by the MDHA Homemaker Program hinders rational evaluation of performance and rule enforcement by delegating inordinate responsibility to one position.[85] It follows that when rule enforcement is lax, work behavior may become correspondingly casual.

The full impact of the wide span of control upon service provision is affected by the degree of physical separation of staff within the work setting. Trager emphasizes the importance

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[83]Blau and Scott, pp. 167-171.

[84]Trager, pp. 98-103.

[85]Blau and Scott, p. 167-171.

of close daily contact between supervisor and homemaker.[86] Merton suggests that physical separation results in subordinate autonomy and inappropriate exercise of discretion.[87] It is likely that these conditions occurred in the MDHA Homemaker Program since homemakers were assigned to sixteen noncontiguous projects while the homemaker supervisor's job was performed primarily in the MDHA central office. Without direct contact at the point of service provision, the homemaker supervisor had to rely entirely upon reports independently completed by the homemaker or by informally reported observations of the project social worker. Although possessing line or formal authority, the homemaker supervisor's utilization of that authority in the performance of delegated responsibilities was hindered by inadequate communication procedures in view of the span of control and the nature of the work setting.

The project social worker had the most contact with the homemaker at the point of service provision, although this position was not formally a part of the MDHA Homemaker Program. The project social worker maintained monthly contact with recipients of homemaker service and regular contact with homemakers regarding service provision, yet there was no formal procedure for monitoring of homemaker performance by the project social worker. The project social worker was only indirectly involved in the performance review procedure, although

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[86]Trager, p. 93.

[87]Merton, pp. 339-350, cited by Blau and Scott, pp. 142-143.

responsible for over-all case management and assessment of case progress. The authority delegated to the project social worker has been variously termed staff, functional, and professional authority and is delegated to a position as a result of technical and professional competence, experience, or human relations skill. However, the acceptance of functional authority vested in a position may vary according to the person occupying the position or characteristics of the situation in which the authority is utilized. Therefore, the homemaker supervisor may or may not have been influenced by the recommendations of the project social worker. Furthermore, having been cognizant of the project social worker's lack of formal authority, the homemaker may have disregarded suggestions and requests originating from this position. In effect, the project social worker was delegated responsibility without having been delegated the authority necessary to demand compliance, a condition which severely limits potential for task accomplishment. As Brown contends, authority and responsibility must be equivalent and no limits should be placed upon a member's ability to perform assigned tasks.[88]

Authority was delegated throughout the MDHA Homemaker Program from the executive director, who retained the power to fire both homemakers and the homemaker supervisor. Since the executive director was not directly involved with

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[88]Brown, p. 19.

Homemaker Program administration and was separated from the homemakers by three levels of administration, it is possible that this position retained more authority than could be adequately utilized, unless firings were based primarily upon the recommendations of the homemaker supervisor. If not, the homemaker supervisor's ability to assure adequate service provision was hindered by lack of influence over the most important means of control. Since firing was resorted to only in cases of illegal activity or other irreparable circumstances, it appears that the homemaker supervisor had to rely heavily on the homemaker's belief in her authority to invoke negative sanctions.

Except for the limitations faced by the homemaker supervisor, authority and responsibility appear to have been appropriately delegated throughout the MDHA Homemaker Program hierarchy. That which was delegated and retained by each position was mutually exclusive. Exercise of authority by each position was limited to that which was formally delegated to it. No two positions delegated directly to the same position or shared the power to require performance from the same person. All of these factors have been discussed herein as contributing to system effectiveness.

Despite the basic soundness of the delegation process in the MDHA Homemaker Program, there was an important system imperfection that reduced its effectiveness. Although only one position held the power to require homemaker performance,

that being the homemaker supervisor, there were actually two sources of influence over homemaker behavior. The project social worker represented a source of functional authority which controlled important intangible rewards and negative sanctions, despite potentially varied acceptance by homemakers. The project social worker had the authority to report homemaker behavior and performance results to the homemaker supervisor, was responsible for resolving client grievances, and was instrumental in case closings and homemaker reassignments. Since the project social worker needed a certain amount of cooperation and compliance from the homemaker in order to fulfill case management responsibilities, it is likely that the project social worker utilized all such control mechanisms when necessary. Therefore, it was to the homemaker's advantage to recognize and comply with this source of authority. Yet the rules, procedures, and administrative chart emphasized that the homemaker was to report to and be supervised by the homemaker supervisor. The homemaker had to be cognizant of and comply with pressures from two sources, a situation which could create conflicting demands and expectations. As Trager points out, a strict definition of the authority system is particularly crucial in situations where more than one professional is involved in the service plan.[89] In the MDHA Homemaker Program, it appears that the authority system failed

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[89]Trager, pp. 93-103.

to meet this requirement in spite of existing definitions of responsibilities and procedures.

According to Brown, a system for assuring self-coordination is essential in situations where positions are independent by virtue of the formal authority system but interrelated in terms of task performance.[90] Although the written procedures and regulations of the MDHA Homemaker Program were designed to perform this function, the instances of ambiguity and overlap reduced its effectiveness. The prompt flow of detailed, adequate information to positions as it was needed for task accomplishment was obstructed by the reporting procedure. The problem-solving process was cumbersome and discouraged direct negotiation between key positions. The wide dispersion of staff created additional barriers to coordination in terms of time, scheduling, and transportation. Therefore, the homemaker was not only subject to two sources of influence, but also to a system that was not fully coordinated for maximum efficiency.

In addition to appropriate lines of authority and communication channels, an important factor in determining system effectiveness is the evaluation component. Bakke includes evaluation as one of the essential activities of the authority system in performing the control function.[91] In the MDHA Homemaker Program, evaluation of homemakers was the

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[90]Brown, pp. 144-145. [91]Bakke, pp. 55-58.

responsibility of the homemaker supervisor through the performance review procedure, although the homemaker supervisor did not have direct contact at the point of service provision. Furthermore, the project social worker was not formally involved in the evaluation process, despite his or her responsibility as case manager. These characteristics of the evaluation component indicate important discrepancies between the MDHA Homemaker Program and that suggested by Trager.

Potential for incompatibility, as defined by Dornbusch and Scott, also existed within the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system. Dornbusch and Scott propose that conditions within the evaluation system which prevent members from attaining acceptable evaluations regardless of their efforts contribute to incompatibility. This may result from contradictory, uncontrollable, unpredictable, or unattainable evaluations.[92] In the MDHA Homemaker Program, contradictory evaluations were not likely to occur, since the criteria for assessment included on the employee performance review summary were nonconflicting. The homemakers were not evaluated according to specific task accomplishments, so there is no way to determine whether conflicting task assignments affected performance results. However, the failure to evaluate homemakers according to specific services provided is incongruous with the objectives of evaluation, since the job of the homemaker was defined in terms of

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[92]Dornbusch and Scott, pp. 246-259.

provision of specific services. Uncontrollable evaluations were possible, since the project social worker was directly involved in homemaker service delivery but not in the evaluation process. Lack of coordination between staff in the performance of the control function could have resulted in incorrect assignment of responsibility for poor performance, and, consequently, reduced the homemaker's control over her performance ratings. Or poor evaluations might have resulted from assessment of the total service output, although the homemaker's contribution may have been adequate. The exclusion of the project social worker from the performance review procedure also made unpredictable evaluations possible in that the homemaker may have been evaluated according to standards established by the homemaker supervisor, while performance was based upon expectations of the project social worker. Although the performance review procedure required an explanation of the relationship between work record and ratings assigned, the procedure could not have corrected inadequate communication and coordination between the project social worker and the homemaker supervisor if it existed. Furthermore, unpredictable evaluations could have occurred as a result of nonrepresentative samples, since no objective, consistent system for monitoring work behavior was utilized. Reliance upon requests independently completed by homemakers, informal observations of project social workers, and subjective impressions of the homemaker supervisor contributed to an inconsistent and potentially

inaccurate method of determining performance levels. Since no formal, written standards were employed by the homemaker supervisor to determine factor ratings, it is not possible to assess the potential for unattainable evaluations. However, the lack of formal standards would be a hindrance to an effective evaluation system by reducing consistency and objectivity.

In summary, the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system incorporated aspects of all four models of authority systems, although the basic structure was hierarchical. The major incongruity with respect to the authority system was the exclusion of the project social worker from a formal position within the hierarchy and from the evaluation and control processes. The lack of direct supervision and the subjectivity of the evaluation process were characteristics which may have contributed to inadequate control over service output. Ambiguity which existed in the formal procedures and the communication process might have been an additional barrier to effective operation of the authority system. From analysis of the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system, it appears that significant discrepancies exist between this system and the criteria for effectiveness derived from review of the literature on formal organizations.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Review of the literature on formal organizations supports the contention that an authority system has substantial impact upon organizational productivity. The authority system has been discussed as a means of control within the organization, responsible for assuring performance, coordination, and a focus on objectives. Failure to perform these control activities adequately produces disadvantageous, irrelevant, or negative results.[93] Although authority systems may employ a variety of structures or designs, certain criteria for effective functioning are applicable to all systems. Among others, these include a pattern of coordination, a systematic ordering of positions and responsibilities, an effective communication system, appropriate delegation of authority and responsibility, and an appropriate evaluation procedure.

From the analysis of the MDHA Homemaker Program, it can be concluded that the authority system existing from January 1 to March 31, 1976 contained certain structural deficiencies which may have affected service output. An over-all failure of the system to assure coordination between persons involved in service delivery resulted from lack of specificity regarding goals and regulations governing homemaker performance and from

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[93]Bakke, pp. 55-58.

ambiguous, complex written procedures. The delegation of major program-related responsibilities to the project social worker without concomitant delegation of formal authority presented an additional barrier to effective system functioning. Exclusion of the project social worker from the formal evaluation procedure further weakened the project social worker's control over homemaker performance. The usefulness of the evaluation component as a control mechanism was also decreased by the absence of a system for direct observation and monitoring of homemaker performance by the homemaker supervisor. Extensive dispersion of staff and the wide span of control were additional barriers to effective supervision and evaluation. The procedure and tools employed for evaluation, in addition to being primarily subjective, were not entirely suitable for the nature and setting of service provision.

These deficiencies in the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system appear to have created an adverse situation which was reflected by inadequate service output. It is proposed that since the control function was not effectively performed, homemakers were allowed inappropriate discretion in service provision and substantial freedom from direct supervision. This situation resulted in faulty judgements regarding service provision, as indicated by failure to provide services requested and approved, provision of unapproved services, and lack of compliance with established schedules for service provision.

Through the analysis of the MDHA Homemaker Program authority system, a number of propositions regarding authority in homemaker programs were generated as follows:

1. The authority system of a homemaker program directly affects the service output of that program.

2. A relationship exists between the inadequate service output of a homemaker program and deficiencies in the structure and operation of its authority system.

3. The authority and responsibility for supervision and evaluation of homemakers should be vested in a position having direct contact with the homemaker at the point of service provision.

4. Authority and responsibility vested in a position must be equivalent to assure successful task accomplishment.

5. Specific goals, procedures, and regulations must be established and communicated for maximum staff performance.

6. The evaluation procedure must measure homemaker performance accurately and consistently and must directly influence the distribution of rewards and negative sanctions.

Any of the above propositions concerning the structure and operation of an authority system within a homemaker program could be developed into hypotheses and tested in programs similar to the MDHA Homemaker Program. Such hypotheses could also be utilized as a basis for research in other social service settings. From the testing of these hypotheses,

cause/effect relationships between characteristics of various components of authority systems in formal organizations and organizational productivity could be determined.

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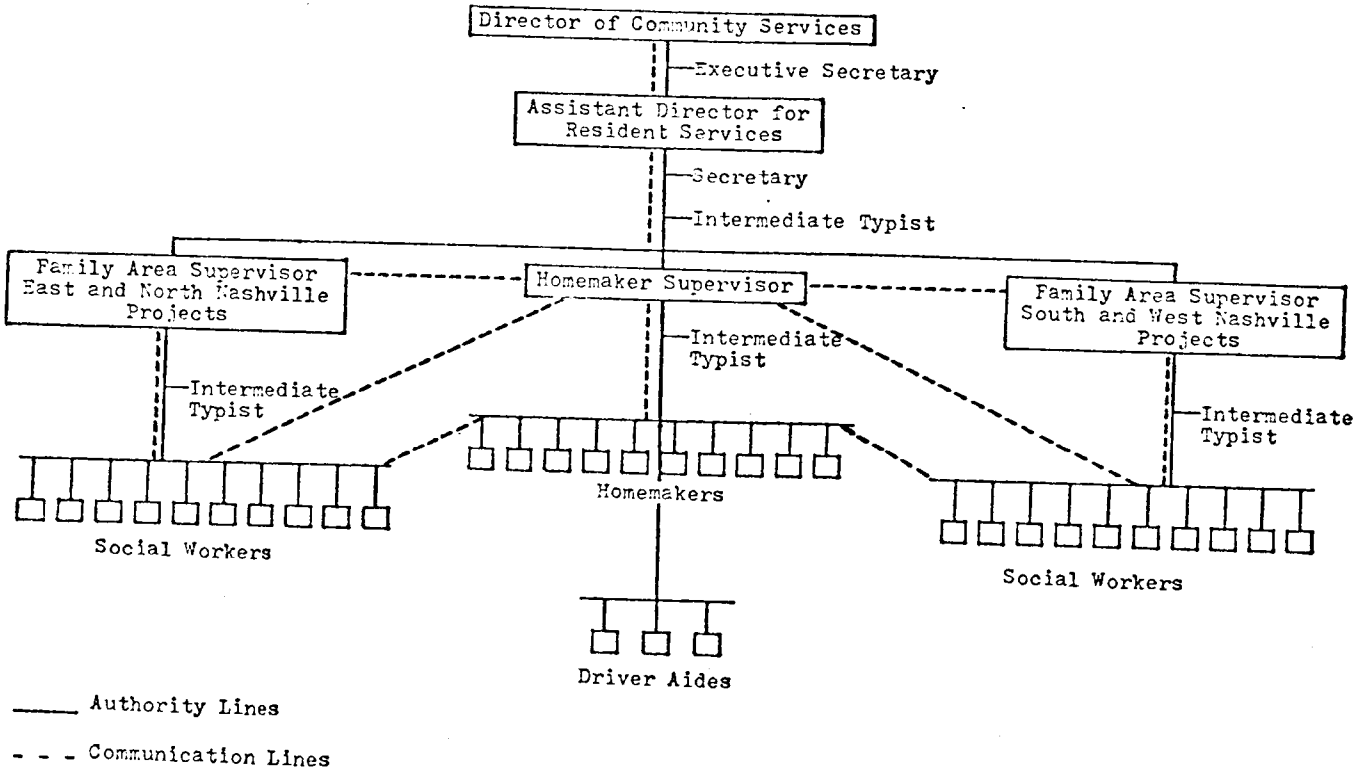
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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AGENCY

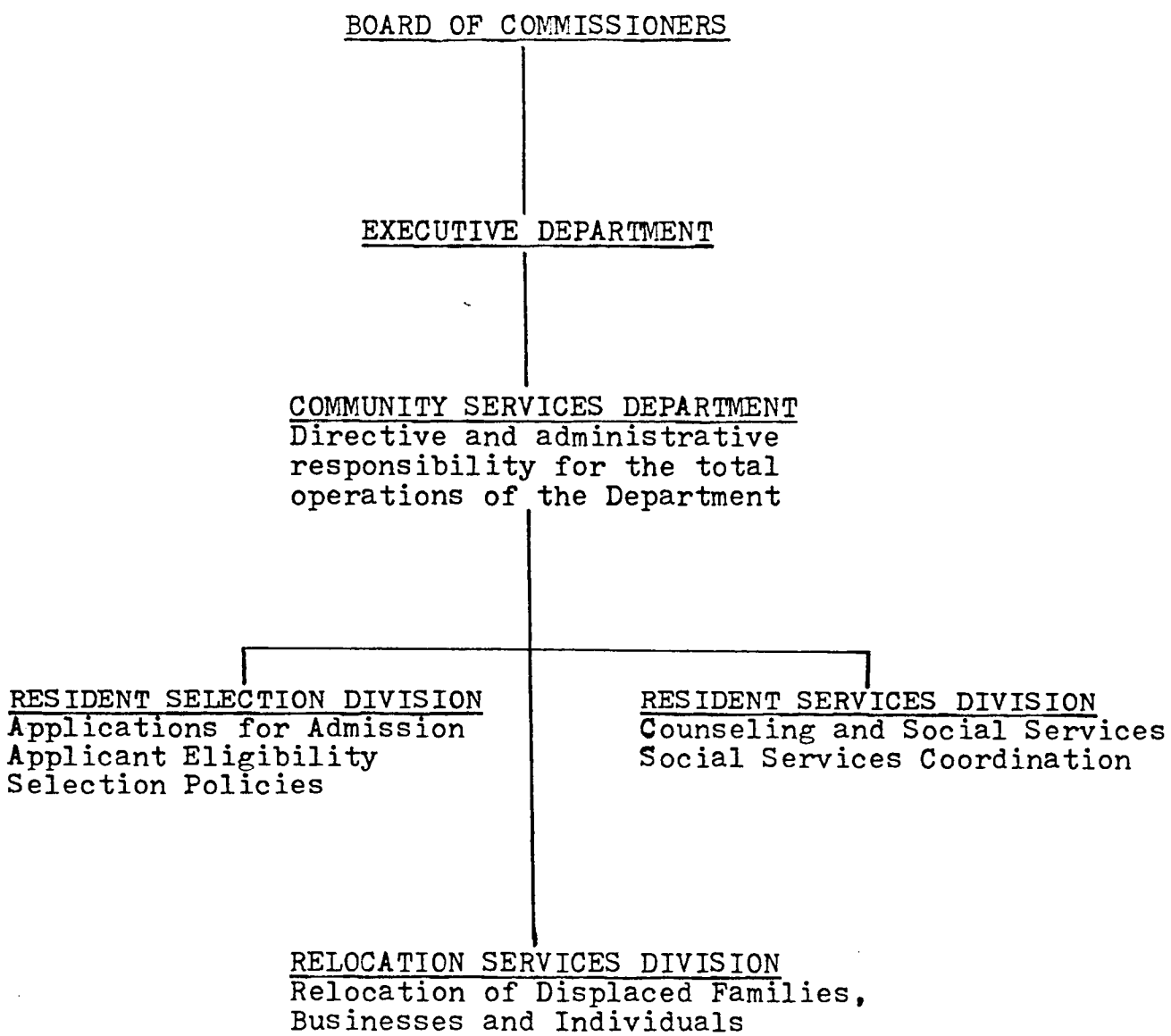
RESIDENT SERVICES ADMINISTRATIVE CHART



APPENDIX B

FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION

METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AGENCY



VITA

Kay Eileen Callahan was born in Jackson, Tennessee on August 31, 1952. She attended West Jackson Elementary School, Tigrett Junior High School, and Jackson High School, graduating in June 1970. In September of 1970 she entered Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro and, in June 1974, received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology.

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