INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of “sectioning” the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.

University Microfilms International
300 N. Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
PERSON-ENVIRONMENT INTERFACE AS "IMAGE": A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL-ACTIVE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The Ohio State University

University Microfilms International

Copyright 1985 by Ramo, Keetjie Joy

All Rights Reserved
PLEASE NOTE:

In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy. Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark √.

1. Glossy photographs or pages ______
2. Colored illustrations, paper or print ______
3. Photographs with dark background ______
4. Illustrations are poor copy ______
5. Pages with black marks, not original copy ______
6. Print shows through as there is text on both sides of page ______
7. Indistinct, broken or small print on several pages ______
8. Print exceeds margin requirements ______
9. Tightly bound copy with print lost in spine ______
10. Computer printout pages with indistinct print ______
11. Page(s) ___________ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author.
12. Page(s) ___________ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows.
13. Two pages numbered ______. Text follows.
14. Curling and wrinkled pages ______
15. Dissertation contains pages with print at a slant, filmed as received ______
16. Other ____________________________________________________________________

University Microfilms International
PERSON-ENVIRONMENT INTERFACE AS "IMAGE":
A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL-ACTIVE CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By
Keetjie Joy Ramo, B.S., M.S.W.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1985

Reading Committee: Milton S. Rosner
Robert M. Ryan
James O. Billups

Approved By
Milton S. Rosner
Adviser
College of Social Work
To my children, Anthony, Anne-marie, and Suzanne Ramo.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the help and support of my committee, Drs. Milton Rosner, Robert Ryan, and James Billups; as well as Dr. Robert O. Washington. Thanks also to Ms. Margo Dalager for her diligent and professional preparation of this manuscript; to Ms. Cindy Jensen, Mr. David McDougall, and Ms. Chris Haasch for their invaluable help in word processing and proofreading; and to Ms. Dianna Barrett of the College of Social Work for taking care of the details that allowed me to complete this degree at long distance. Finally, I wish to thank my colleagues, friends, and family without whose support and encouragement this dissertation could not have been written.
March 26, 1942..............Born - DeKalb, Illinois

1974.............................B.S., University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington

1974.............................Northwest Area Coordinator, The Systems Management Center, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California

1976-1977........................Graduate Administrative Associate, College of Social Work, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1977.............................M.S.W., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1977-1978........................Research Assistant, The Nisonger Center for Developmental Disabilities, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1979-1985........................Assistant Professor, Inland Empire School of Social Work and Human Services, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington

1982-1983........................Research Director, Institute on the Decision to Place or Not to Place, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington

1982-1985........................Undergraduate Program Director, Inland Empire School of Social Work & Human Services, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington


1985. Associate Professor, Inland Empire School of Social Work and Human Services, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington

PUBLICATIONS


Deciding to Place or Not to Place. Cheney, WA: Eastern Washington University, 1983. Co-author Eunice Snyder.


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Social Work

Studies in Human Territoriality.
   Professors Robert Keller and Riley Price.

Studies in Environmental Psychology.
   Professors Richard Klimoski and William Sims.

Studies in Generalist Social Work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of the Present Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative Features of the Present Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART I. BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT STUDY</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. CRITERIA AND NEED FOR A SOCIAL WORK CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of a Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need for a Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK'S EFFORT TO DEVELOP A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement Movement and Charity Organization Societies</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casework, Groupwork, and Community Organization</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Efforts to Develop a Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART II: THE ENVIRONMENTAL-ACTIVE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter

4. THE PURPOSE AND VALUE ASSUMPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The Purpose of Social Work Practice
Social Work Value Assumptions

5. KNOWLEDGE FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Image Theory: An Overarching Construct
The Hierarchy of Needs
The Systems Approach

6. SANCTION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

7. DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN PROBLEMS

8. THE NATURE OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE: SKILLS, METHODS, AND ROLES

Skills and Methods
Social Work Roles

PART III: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Chapter

9. THE SOCIAL WELFARE PROBLEM

Identifying the Problem
The Problem Statement
The Anticipatory Image
Data Gathering and Analysis
Problem Definition

10. ACCOMPLISHING CHANGE

Contracting and Planning
Priorities in Planning
Selection of Helping Models Within an
Environmental-Active Framework ........... 175
Implementation of the Plan ................. 180

11. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ............. 189

Critique of the Framework .................. 193

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................. 201
LIST OF TABLES

Table                                      Page

1. An Analysis of the Conceptual Frameworks Developed
   for the Madison Meeting                    38
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Practice Map: Scope and Locus of Problem</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In spite of numerous attempts to define the profession ever since its inception in this country, social work has entered the 1980's with no satisfactory conceptual framework of social work practice. The two most recent attempts by the National Association of Social Workers to develop such a framework have resulted in (1) a collection of possible frameworks that exemplify the fragmentation in the profession, and (2) a statement of social work's purpose that is so global and idealistic that it dooms practitioners to failure in terms of its accomplishment.

The present study develops a conceptual framework for social work practice that offers an alternative to this state of affairs. The author has used the literature on conceptual frameworks in general, and social work conceptual frameworks in particular, to establish guidelines and criteria for a workable framework. She has examined the history of attempts to define the profession and has assessed extant frameworks and critiques of these frameworks. Using this knowledge and integrating knowledge of practice and of human behavior theories, she has produced a conceptual framework of social work practice that addresses some of the problems social work authors have identified as present in attempts to define the profession so far.
Objectives of the Present Study

Provision of an Internally Consistent Framework

The first objective of the present study is to provide an internally consistent framework within which to describe the purpose, values, sanction, knowledge, and methods of the profession of social work. These five components of a conceptual framework must be clearly and specifically explicated if social work is to be distinguished from the other helping professions that share common features with this profession.

Identification of Overarching Constructs

The second objective of the study is to identify overarching constructs that will effectively span the myriad activities that characterize social work practice. The first of these overarching constructs is the concept of "The Image". It draws heavily on the ideas of Boulding (1955) and on the research and ideas of environmental perception theory and symbolic interactionism. Image theory suggests that human behavior, rather than being directed toward the objective environment, is directed toward the actor's image, or cognitive map, of that environment. It is the thesis of this work that it is this image that constitutes the "interface of person and environment" that social work talks about but has failed to adequately define.

A second overarching construct is the notion of the social system. Systems theory is no stranger to social work. It has achieved varying degrees of acceptance among social workers as an appropriate model for viewing social welfare problems. In the present work,
systems theory is necessary to provide conceptual linkages when working between and among individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities using an eclectic approach.

The third overarching construct is the concept of a hierarchy of needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954) is adapted for the present conceptual framework because of its extreme usefulness in formulating social welfare problems in a way that renders planning more effective.

Development of a Systematic Approach to Eclectic Practice

The third objective of the study is to develop from this conceptual framework an approach to social work practice that can be used at all levels of intervention, micro through macro. This model should provide a rationale for and systematic approach to differentially selecting and applying human behavior theories and intervention strategies. In other words, it seeks to systematize eclectic practice. It also provides a framework for knowledge building and for including social problems within the domain of social work in an integrative rather than merely an additive way.

Innovative Features of the Present Study

The major innovative feature of this study is the definition of the interface of the person and environment as the image of that environment. This definition suggests that there are three possible appropriate targets for social work intervention. These three targets are (1) the impinging environment, (2) the client/target system's image of that environment, and (3) the client/target system's coping behavior within that environment. Unlike views of practice that
assume humans' behavior to be both rational and irrational, the addition of the concept of the image suggests that human behavior always makes sense in terms of the impinging environment or image of the environment and thus the framework avoids victim-blaming.

The second innovative feature of the framework is that it will define the domain of social work practice in terms of a taxonomy of environments. This should allow the worker to determine the locus of the problem within the taxonomy in order to select most effective points of intervention.

The framework also articulates a range of significant effect of the problem that suggests the ideal scope of social work intervention. In other words, individual versus social approaches are cast, not as an issue inherent in the profession, but instead as a continuum of interventive strategies that should be determined by the size of the system significantly affected by the problem.

Viewing the domain of social work practice and the nature of problems in terms of environments and images of environments as described above has power for logically linking the wide range of activities social workers engage in within the profession. It also suggests implications for social work education and for the organization of social services.

The third innovative feature is the use of a hierarchy of needs to state problems in a way that avoids a clinical normative or nosological approach. The concept of basic needs is also used to suggest effective points of intervention and to identify appropriate social work methods and models.
The following chapters in Part I will present background information pertaining to social work conceptual frameworks: nature of and criteria for a conceptual framework, conditions that necessitate a clear conceptual framework; the history of efforts to define the profession; and the present state of the art. Part II will describe an environmental-active conceptual framework for social work practice, and Part III will identify implications and guidelines for practice.
PART I

BACKGROUND TO THE
PRESENT STUDY
CHAPTER 1
CRITERIA AND NEED FOR A
SOCIAL WORK CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Nature of a Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework or frame of reference for social work practice is a logically consistent system of constructs that defines and prescribes social work's domain and purpose, explicates assumptions that guide practice, and is capable of organizing and integrating knowledge for practice and of describing and guiding social work activities.

Part of the difficulty in arriving at such a conceptual framework is due to confusion or lack of agreement among social workers as to its nature. For example, of the social work writers who have discussed the nature of conceptual frameworks, some have focused on the descriptive aspect of a frame of reference, "that particular universe of discourse employed for perceiving, defining, evaluating, and communicating" (Vinter, 1967, p.427), while others focused on the prescriptive. Levy (1978), one of the latter, argued that a conceptual framework, "must offer an explanation or a constellation of principles of social work practice in general" (p. 351). He further stated:

A conceptual framework for social work practice ought to represent a guide to inquiry, a guide to diagnosis or assessment, a guide to the planning of professional treatment, programs, and intervention,
A guide to the choice of practice focus, and a guide to the formulation of principles of professional practice . . . . These guides would have to be expressed in terms that are generic enough to transcend particular applications and experiences as well as specific focuses of practice. (pp. 352-353)

A conceptual framework is at a higher level of abstraction than a theory, and, because of its value base, is closer to a philosophical orientation or theory than to a scientific theory (Gordon, 1968).

Such a philosophical theory is used by philosophers and scholars in the humanities to refer to consistent and logical formulations about man's place in the world. Theory of this kind is composed of a set of assumptions or considered beliefs derived from a scholar's personal experience in the world and his contemplation of it in relation to the studied experience of others. The scholar or writer develops an outlook by which he views man and attempts to explain his existence. (ASCD, 1968, p. 2)

The concept applies to tenets which have ethical power but do not lend themselves to scientific validation:

It is representative of another domain of theorizing equally as important to the understanding of man as is scientific theory. Much of past and present day educational theory is of this humanistic type and it holds a prime position in the study of education. (ASCD, 1968, p. 2)

In addition, a conceptual framework has some of the characteristics of a model. Miller (1955) defines a model as, "a formal identity between a conceptual system and a real system" (p. 520); while others define models as, "analogies which help one to think about problems"; or as the set of assumptions in any research project, which are not being directly tested (ASCD, 1968, pp. 26-27; Beshers, 1957). The conceptual framework, however, goes beyond a simple model in being
normative rather than merely descriptive, in keeping with the philosophical orientation it reflects.

**Criteria for Developing and Evaluating a Conceptual Framework for Social Work Practice**

The literature has yielded a number of criteria for developing and evaluating conceptual frameworks. In general, a conceptual framework is useful if it possesses the following characteristics:

1. logical internal consistency (Bartlett, 1970; Berger et al., 1966; Bloom, 1975; Boulding, 1956; ASCD, 1968; Walsh, 1973);
2. parsimoniousness (Bloom, 1975; Walsh, 1973);
3. use of generalizations through abstraction which go beyond the data and which reduce the number of concepts used to explain phenomena (ASCD, 1968; Bartlett, 1970; Berger et al., 1966; Bloom, 1975; Boulding, 1956; Gordon, 1964; Levy, 1978);
4. agreement with known facts (ASCD, 1968; Beshers, 1957; Gordon, 1964, 1965; Morris, W.T., 1970);
5. operationality (Beshers, 1957; Bloom, 1975);
6. organizing power (Boulding, 1956; Walsh, 1973); and
7. potential for generating research (ASCD, 1968; Bartlett, 1970; Beshers, 1957; Gordon, 1964, 1965; Levy, 1978; Walsh, 1973);
8. enough breadth to admit new thinking and also enough focus to bring together cumulative thinking (Bartlett, 1970).

In particular, a conceptual framework for social work practice is valid if it does the following:
1. achieves linkage with the historical thrust of the profession (Gordon, 1968);
2. offers a "constellation of principles for social work practice in general" (Levy, 1978);
3. has potential usefulness for guiding practice (Levy, 1978);
4. explicates behavioral and value assumptions (Thomas, 1967);
5. integrates knowledge from other disciplines in a way that has relevance to social workers (Bartlett, 1970);
6. explicates the relationships between the various components of the framework (Bartlett, 1970);
7. accounts for diversity in practice and identifies common elements (Carroll, 1977; Gordon, 1965); and
8. addresses appropriate goals and concerns for social work practice (Levy, 1978).

"The Working Definition of Social Work Practice" (1955) included value, purpose, sanction, knowledge, and methods as the key elements in a conceptual framework, and these elements will be used to organize the proposed conceptual framework. Kettner (1975), furthermore, elaborated on these elements in his framework for comparing practice models, and his framework has been adapted by the present author to guide the development of a new conceptual framework and the analysis of extant frameworks.

Dimensions of analysis adapted from Kettner include the following:
1. the author's view of the nature of social work practice;
2. the author's view of the purpose of the profession;
3. the author's view of the domain of the profession;
4. the range of intervention levels addressed;
5. the relationship of the worker to the client and to society;
6. assumptions about the nature of social problems;
7. assumptions about the nature of humans;
8. theoretical underpinnings;
9. how the knowledge base is to be used and built upon;
10. the methods, skills, and roles addressed;

The major components of a social work frame of reference bear particular and logical relationships to each other. It follows, then, that the change strategies that are employed within the framework should bear a consistent relationship to the components of the framework. The relationships of the major components of a social work conceptual framework are described below.

1. The stated purpose, sources of sanction, and value assumptions of the profession set the boundaries for what social workers will take on. In other words, social workers should not venture beyond what they, as a profession, set out to do; what they are sanctioned to do; and what their values allow them to do.

2. The selection of the knowledge base, or theoretical underpinnings, and assumptions about the nature of human beings are reciprocal. That is, each determines yet is also guided by the other. The combination of human behavior underpinnings and assumptions about the nature of humans leads the theorist to assumptions about the nature of human problems.
3. The domain of social work practice is a conceptualization of what exists within the boundaries set by the purpose, sanction, and values in Number 1 above, and is shaped by the assumptions and knowledge in Number 2. The present paper will describe this domain as a taxonomy of environments.

4. Finally, all of the above should lead logically to a selection of methods, roles, and skills to carry out the social worker's mission in a manner consistent with all the other elements of the framework.

To summarize, a conceptual framework for social work practice must offer some overarching concepts that can efficiently and logically integrate and explain the diverse activities of social workers and can justify and integrate the broad and diverse knowledge base that guides these activities. Such a framework must begin with a consistent value system. It must be capable of organizing present knowledge and concerns of social work, and must have a potential for generating practice principles and for integrating new knowledge and social problems relevant to the profession.

The Need for a Conceptual Framework

There are at least three areas of concern to the profession that would benefit from the development of a coherent conceptual framework for social work practice. These areas of concern are the right, capability, and responsibility of social workers to regulate their own profession; the development of professional identification; and the assimilation of new knowledge, methods, and target problems into the existing knowledge base.
Regulation of the Profession

In many states, social workers face a situation in which social work positions are defined by civil service job analysts rather than by members of the social work profession. Furthermore, these analysts are subject to pressures for open eligibility as well as to those pressures brought about by the current economic situation which has resulted in fewer jobs for college graduates. Poor public relations by the social work profession and the blurring of boundaries between social work and other helping professions have combined with the other factors to bring about a downgrading of social work positions. In other words, positions which should require an MSW or BSW are being written for pre-professional social service workers or for persons with bachelor's degrees in any field.

This trend toward allowing practice to be defined by civil service job analysts rather than social workers must be forestalled by a clear definition from within the profession. As Donald Brieland (1977) has stated:

if you want chicken soup, start with a chicken. If you want social work, start with a social worker. If you want recognition of social work training for social work jobs, define social work. For this a conceptual framework is a necessity. (p. 444)

The prerogative to do its own gatekeeping and to regulate and sanction its own members is one of the characteristics of a profession. Social work is poorly equipped to seize this prerogative until social workers can clearly articulate what it is that they accomplish, toward what professional purpose, and by what methods.
Professional Identification

A continuing dilemma for the social work profession lies in its diversity. Social workers do family counseling in private practice. Social workers organize tenants' groups. Social workers are involved in community planning. Social workers dispense material resources. Social workers help to develop social policy. Is it possible to find a common thread that links all these activities and more that social workers are involved in, and yet that distinguishes social workers from other professionals? What does one say when asked, as social workers frequently are, what social workers do? It is insufficient to say that social workers help people with problems. A clear statement, a conceptual framework, is needed.

Meyer (1981) has identified three present-day conditions related to professional identification that impinge on professionals and require that professions define themselves. The first is the knowledge explosion; the second, democratization of services; and the third, burgeoning bureaucracies.

The knowledge explosion has resulted in the popularizing of what used to be esoteric knowledge in the professions. As the public becomes more sophisticated about human problems, there is more demand for professionals with the expertise to translate knowledge into effective action.

Democratization of services means that consumers are taking a more active role in social welfare. Lay persons sit on the boards of social welfare agencies. Clients have access to their own case records and participation in planning their own treatment. Self-help
groups are springing up to deal with every conceivable problem of living. Meyer points out that social work deals in "the commonplace stuff of which lay people are the real experts" (1981, p. 73), and further that social workers have been reticent about asserting their own expertise because of the profession's emphasis on self-determination. Thus the knowledge explosion and consumer involvement place special pressure upon social work to justify itself by being able to articulate clearly exactly what it is social workers are experts in.

Finally, the proliferation of bureaucracies results in pressure for a conceptual framework because

social workers should know who they are and what they do best, so they never confuse professional purpose with the intentions of the bureaucracy, which necessarily are to maintain itself as a bureaucracy. (Meyer, 1981, p. 71)

Thus social workers need a professional identification that allows them to explicate not only to consumers but also to themselves the what, why, and how of social work intervention. A coherent conceptual framework would help provide that identification.

Knowledge Building

There is a famous mansion in California, the Remington House, whose owner was told by a psychic that no disaster would befall her as long as the house was under construction. The eccentric heiress to the Remington rifle fortune kept carpenters toiling away in the house for years, building in order to ward off the mistress of the house's inevitable death. The house stands today as a monument to the practice of building or adding on with no coherent purpose in mind.
Stairways end in space. Doors open to solid walls. Countless structures coexist in the house with no clear relationship to each other. Without a conceptual framework within which to integrate new knowledge, knowledge-building in social work today risks approximating the strange state of affairs in the Remington House.

There is a move afoot, spurred by pressures for accountability, to abandon theories and models as a basis for practice in favor of empirically tested techniques. Workers can read about a new gimmick here, attend a workshop in behavior therapy there, and apply the newly learned skills in their agencies. Single subject research will tell them if the new skills "work." With no guidelines for knowledge selection, social workers are faced with confusion. Schools of social work are also faced with a dilemma. Should they take a behavioral approach, teach psychoanalytic theory, or encourage eclecticism? What about social versus intrapsychic perspectives?

A number of scholars and authors have spoken of the need for conceptualizing social work knowledge in a way that would integrate and summarize the "booming, buzzing confusion" which characterizes the state of knowledge-building in the profession today. One of these scholars was Columbia University philosophy professor, Sidney Morganbesser, who, at the 1964 NASW Conference on Building Social Work Knowledge, noted the need for collating social work knowledge:

If this conference group could come up with some way of conceptualizing what is known more clearly and comprehensively, this, he advised, would in itself be important, whether or not such gathering and conceptualization would lead to a theory of social work. (Murphy, 1964, p. 108)
Participants in that conference echoed his concerns in calling for some anchoring points around which generalizations might be collected, and for the conceptualization of knowledge into a more compact, integrated form (NASW, 1964).

Gordon Hearn (1958) is another who saw a need for organizing the knowledge base. He stated:

Some ordering of experience according to concepts currently being used in the field is always possible, but eventually such activity must come to a standstill unless new integrating and higher-level constructs are formulated. . . . One of the more urgent needs, therefore, for both theory building and practice is the development of what Conant has called 'concepts on a grand scale.' (p. 23)

Hearn further stressed the need to define social workers in terms of social work methods, and for an integrative conception of the domain of social work.

Similarly, Vinter (1967) wrote:

In the long run, it is impossible to attain a systematic set of practice principles unless a consistent and comprehensive frame of reference has been formulated within which all segments are logically interrelated. (pp. 429-30)

And Germain (1970) suggested that diverse casework theories might be brought into harmony through the use of "overarching constructs."

Until such constructs are organized into a conceptual framework, knowledge-building in social work will continue to have a haphazard, patchwork quality which precludes new knowledge, concerns, and methods from being systematically built into a coherent body of theory or principles capable of generating and organizing new knowledge. The history of efforts to develop a conceptual framework will be discussed in the next chapter.
Having arisen from divergent roots, the social work profession has been subject to recurring efforts to identify a common base and develop a conceptual framework for practice. The first efforts attempted to describe a profession already fragmented by its diverse origins.

**Settlement Movement and Charity Organization Societies**

In the late 1800s, two movements arose within the social welfare field (then called "charities and corrections"). These were the settlement movement and the charity organization societies.

The settlement movement placed well-educated upper class young people to work within poor communities in settlement houses. The settlement houses became community centers providing social activities and classes in living skills for neighborhood residents. Living within those poor neighborhoods, settlement workers became aware of the dehumanizing conditions within the physical and social environments of the poor, and worked to improve these conditions. Thus, the settlement movement became characterized by an emphasis on social reform.
The charity organization movement was also concerned with the poor. However, charity organization societies were committed to developing a scientific approach to philanthropy. They aimed at case-by-case almsgiving which distinguished the worthy from the unworthy poor and which, it was hoped, would lead to the recipients' independence. Friendly visitors provided services to rehabilitate the poor, in conjunction with material aid. Thus the charity organization movement's emphasis was on individual help.

Both the settlement and charity organization movements established schools of advanced training for their workers. It was from these different two roots that social work as a profession sprang. Then, in the early 1900's, social work became further fragmented by the evolution of the methods of casework, groupwork, and community organization.

Casework, Groupwork, and Community Organization

Caseworkers were at the forefront of attempting to define social work practice. Spurred by Abraham Flexner's pronouncement in 1915 to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections that social work did not qualify as a profession, caseworkers spent much time and energy developing a professional method. These efforts were characterized by an emphasis on individual psychology cast within a medical model.

Groupwork, arising from the settlement house movement, emphasized organized recreation and progressive education as a means of promoting individual development toward the goal of fostering a democratic society. Moving away from this "social goals" approach, groupworkers'
attempts to develop a conceptual framework in 1959 resulted in the explication of several frames of reference by individual thinkers in the field.

Community organization, meanwhile, represented an amalgam of principles from both the settlement and charity organization movements, which found expression within the developing community chests and councils of the first half of the twentieth century. The method, however, did not evolve into a model or conceptual framework during that period.

The division of practice by method caused a tendency among workers to define problems according to the worker's practice orientation. There was little or no integration among the various methods. The resulting fragmentation led to struggles within the profession to establish a common core of social work practice. These struggles are described below.

**Collective Efforts to Develop a Conceptual Framework**


**The Milford Conference**

The product of the Milford Conference was a report entitled, Social Casework: Generic and Specific: A Report on the Milford
Dealing with the issue of fragmentation versus synthesis within social work, the report concluded that there were "sufficient commonalities among the various specialties to preserve the idea that all social workers are part of one profession." The conference recommended that the profession develop a generic knowledge base arising from common training programs.

While not advancing a definition of social casework, the Milford Conference report dealt with the following topics: the content and distinguishing concern of casework; the need for a philosophy and ethical system; the goal of social casework; and the intangible human elements of social work. Underlying the report was the view of social work as a profession bringing the resources of the community to bear toward helping the deviant individual "adjust" and making him or her self-sufficient. Thus, the conference saw the profession as an instrument of society.

The Hollis-Taylor Report

The Hollis-Taylor Report, *Social Work Education in the United States*, was produced in 1951 under the auspices of the National Council on Social Work Education. It shifted the focus of social work from the deviant individual to the interface of the individual and society. Thus, the mandate of the social worker was not to help the individual adjust to the environment, but to help individuals, families, and groups overcome barriers to "productive and satisfying living." At the same time, the worker was to help make community resources more responsive to classes of problems or classes of persons requiring attention.
The Hollis-Taylor report portrayed social work as distinctive from other professions in its integrative function which must take into account the interplay of impinging forces on the lives of individuals, rather than focusing on certain aspects of living such as psychological functioning. The achievement of professionalism for social work was a concern of the report. That concern was precipitated by one of those problems facing social work today: the blurring of lines between professionally trained, semiprofessional, technical, and non-professional workers in the field of social welfare.

The Working Definition of Social Work Practice

In 1958, "The Working Definition of Social Work Practice" was published by NASW after having been developed by a subcommittee of the Commission on Practice chaired by Harriett Bartlett.

The subcommittee described social work as distinctive from other professions by virtue of its distinctive constellation of values, purpose, knowledge, sanction, and method. The definition continued the emphasis of the Hollis-Taylor Report on the individual/environment "fit", and promoted as the ultimate goal of the profession, "the realization of the full potential of each individual and the assumption of his social responsibility through active participation in society" (Social Work 22(5), 1977, p. 344). Necessary knowledge for practice was described in the definition to include the effects of the reciprocal interaction of the individual and his social environment, predominantly, and the techniques enumerated give scant attention to intervention at the level of the environment-at-large.
William E. Gordon's "A Critique of the Working Definition," published in 1962, was the product of a second subcommittee on the working definition. The Critique discarded sanction as an essential component of the definition and stressed expert knowledge as the key to developing professional recognition. Gordon noted a confusion between values and knowledge in the working definition, and proposed as the ultimate value of social work the self-realization of the individual, balanced with his or her efforts to contribute to the self-realization of others.

The Curriculum Study of CSWE

The 1959 Curriculum Study of the Council on Social Work Education returned the focus of social work practice to individual deficit, and thus defined social work activities as performing three functions: "restoration of impaired capacity, provision of individual and social resources, and prevention of social dysfunction." Although the study described workers as serving the individual, it also emphasized social workers' responsibility to society. The thrust of the study, however, seems to be on a dualistic rather than systems approach to the interaction of the individual and society.

The Madison Meeting

In May, 1976, editors of *Social Work* and the *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, and members of the Publications Committee of NASW met at Madison, Wisconsin to address the following questions:

1. What are the mission and objectives of social work?
2. What are current social work practice activities?
3. What sanction, knowledge, and skills are relevant to the profession's objectives?
4. What are the practical and educational implications of the foregoing questions?

Rather than attempting to arrive at an overall conceptual framework for social work practice, the Publications Committee commissioned five papers representing divergent views of social work, as a basis for discussion at Madison (Minahan & Briar, 1977). In Social Work's "Special Issue on Conceptual Frameworks," the product of the meeting, Scott Briar (1977) summarized the results of the Madison Meeting and special issue as "an attempt to assess the current state of thinking about the common base of social work as perceived by a group of thoughtful social workers representing a range of perspectives on the profession" (p. 415).

Briar identified three major issues raised at the meeting—consensus on the mission of the profession; the relative emphasis on social versus individual change; and the generalist/specialist controversy—and concluded that a unifying conceptual framework for social work practice was not a realistic goal at that time.

The O'Hare Meeting

Briar's observation, and similar comments from social workers regarding the lack of agreement on social work's purpose and objectives, stimulated the Publications Committee to convene another meeting. Authors who had written about the purpose of social work and people from specialized areas of social work practice met with members of the NASW Publications Committee at O'Hare Airport in May, 1979. The
agenda of the meeting was to prepare a statement on purpose and objectives of the social work profession.

For *Social Work*'s "Second Special Issue on Conceptual Frameworks," participants from the "specializations" of schools, health, family, industry, aging, minority groups, and mental health wrote articles applying the resultant working statement on purpose to the selected areas of practice. The publications committee also solicited comments and critiques of the working statement for inclusion in the second special issue. The working statement is printed in its entirety on page 26.

None of the seven articles in "Conceptual Frameworks II" on specializations took issue with the statement of purpose, and each author saw his or her area as addressing the stated purpose. However, many of those asked to comment on the statement advanced criticisms, and critical comments were forthcoming in a subsequent issue (*Social Work* 26,4 1981).

Respondents indicated the statement was either too broad and general (Longres; Siporin; Crouch, 1981), or too narrow (Morris; Gitterman; Mattaini; Soufflee, 1981). Several writers complained about the statement's lack of clarity: Gilbert, Gitterman, and Valentine found the statement poorly written; Crouch and Reid labeled it vague and nebulous; Haar found it too complex; Gilbert and Alexander, too abstract.

Although Morris saw the statement as not addressing the dichotomy of individual versus environmental approaches, four respondents (Gitterman, Crouch, Meyer, and Valentine) called it "too global."
"Working Statement
On the Purpose of Social Work
(Developed by Participants at the Second Meeting
on Conceptual Frameworks)

"The purpose of social work is to promote or restore a mutually
beneficial interaction between individuals and society in order to
improve the quality of life for everyone. Social workers hold the
following beliefs:

"--- The environment (social, physical, organizational) should
provide the opportunity and resources for the maximum real­
izations of the potential and aspirations of all individ­
uals, and should provide for their common human needs and
for the alleviation of distress and suffering.

"--- Individuals should contribute as effectively as they can to
their own well-being and to the social welfare of others in
their immediate environment as well as to the collective
society.

"--- Transactions between individuals and others in their envi­
ronment should enhance the dignity, individuality, and
self-determination of everyone. People should be treated
humanely and with justice.

"Clients of social workers may be an individual, a family, a group, a
community, or an organization.

"OBJECTIVES
"Social workers focus on person-and-environment in interaction.
To carry out their purpose, they work with people to achieve the fol­
lowing objectives:
"Help people enlarge their competence and increase their problem­
solving and coping abilities.

"Help people obtain resources.

"Make organizations responsive to people.

"Facilitate interaction between individuals and others in their
environment.

"Influence interactions between organizations and institutions.

"Influence social and environmental policy.

"To achieve these objectives, social workers work with other people.
At different times, the target of change varies—it may be the client,
others in the environment, or both."

(Social Work 26(1), 1981, p.6)
Meyer and Alexander both felt the statement was too idealistic or unrealistic, and Alexander also commented that means and ends were confused. The failure to address the institutional context was noted by Gilbert, Meyer, and Mattaini. Siporin objected to neglect of the concept of social functioning. Finally, Crouch and Haar objected to the under-representation of practitioners in the framing of the statement.

Thus, the struggle to define the profession continues. A discussion of these recent NASW efforts appears in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3

PRESENT STATE OF THE ART

Where does one begin when developing a conceptual framework for social work practice? It seems logical first to look at the present state of the art. To propose a new role for social workers, or to conceptualize practice in terms heretofore relatively foreign to the profession, is unrealistic. Instead, one builds on the work of others. One must determine in what areas, if any, consensus has been achieved. Can differences be resolved, or must one necessarily choose between opposing positions and recognize the coexistence of competing frames of reference? Are there overarching constructs to link the diversity in the profession today? What are social workers actually doing in the real world?

Current Work

Current efforts toward developing a conceptual framework of social work practice have ranged from papers discussing what social work, as a profession, ought to be doing, to social work practice texts containing models which seem to address many of the criteria of a conceptual framework discussed above. This chapter will discuss the conceptual frameworks that developed out of the NASW Publications Committee Meeting. These frameworks are represented by commissioned articles by Minahan and Pincus, Morris, Dean, Cooper and Reid, and a
response article by Alexander. Each particular article can be critiqued on general principles and in reference to the criteria for a conceptual framework presented earlier. Specific criticisms are included.

The 1977 NASW Conceptual Frameworks

Minahan and Pincus

The Minahan and Pincus (1977) framework as described in the conceptual frameworks issue of Social Work is based on two key concepts: (1) resources, and (2) interaction of people and the social environment. According to their paper, "Conceptual Framework for Social Work Practice," what social workers do, then, is related to developing resources and to facilitating interaction between individuals and resource systems; within resource systems; and between resource systems. As an alternative approach to describing what workers do, Minahan and Pincus offer a problem-solving model for achieving any particular objective.

Minahan and Pincus view the client as social work's primary source of sanction, while sanction may also come variously from the agency, professional organization, and target system. Furthermore, they believe that the knowledge needed for the practice of social work includes understanding of various aspects of human behavior, understanding of systems interactions, and development of policy. Necessary skills include communications skills, organizing and negotiating skills, and teaching/consulting skills. The authors argue for a generic basic social work education, with specializations being
conceptualized around characteristics of the setting and populations served rather than according to the nature or scope of interventions.

Critiques of Minahan and Pincus

The Minahan and Pincus article fares well in the area of logical internal consistency, parsimoniousness, and use of generalizations through abstraction which goes beyond the data. Their conceptual framework was described by Siporin (1973) as a "full-fledged practice model"; yet Gilbert (1977) criticizes the framework as failing to adequately differentiate between, for example, direct and indirect practice, because of excessive abstraction.

The Minahan and Pincus conceptual framework is somewhat operational and has organizing power, yet, as a "phase model" it is relatively content-free. In other words, as Simon (1977) points out, the authors fail to delineate the boundaries of the knowledge base. This affects both the framework's agreement with known facts and its potential for generating research.

Minahan and Pincus's work is both descriptive and prescriptive. As such it is consonant with the profession's history. It also offers principles for generalist practice. However, as criteria deal with more explicitness, the framework tends to break down. For example, the lack of behavioral assumptions contributes to the framework's inability to prioritize the various factors that impinge upon a particular client system, as noted by Dykema (1978).

The model also fails to deal with the problems of involuntary clients or with clients' interactions with "noxious" resource systems (Morales, 1977). Alexander (1977) summarized the problem by lauding
Minahan and Pincus for their clarity in presenting examples, but citing them for their lack of specificity with regard to professional process.

Finally, Minahan and Pincus's promotion of social work values as the profession's mission is questionable at best. Alexander (1977) expressed the difficulty well:

the advocacy of social work values as the profession's mission can create a dangerous self-imposed deity, an abstraction that can become sectarian in the same manner as religious fanaticism. (p. 408)

Morris

Robert Morris (1977), in the same issue of Social Work, says that social workers presently assume ancillary roles in institutions dominated by other professions, and thus have no clear identity independent of their limited functions. He proposes in "Caring for versus Caring About People," an alternative conceptual framework which places the focus of social work efforts on those social problems which require continuous care to individuals for whom no therapeutic solution has been found. Such care may range from material through moral support.

Morris is suggesting a total redefinition of the role of social work in order to assure the profession's acceptance by society. He believes this acceptance can be attained through social work's being accountable for the care-giving function. Social work, then, would take upon itself the responsibility for "creating and managing social environments" (p. 357).
Critiques of Morris

Robert Morris's conceptual framework is, like that of Minahan and Pincus, internally consistent. The article proposes, however, the abandonment of traditional social work objectives in favor of what amounts to a custodial role for members of the profession. Thus, Morris is criticized by Morales (1977) and Dykema (1978) as having sacrificed social work values for a social control function—and for the economic security of the profession. Indeed, the major value identified by Morris seems to be that of "professional regard". While this may be realistic, it is not likely to gain widespread support within the profession.

Since it mainly advocates casting administrative and counseling functions into the new role of "caring for" people, the Morris framework does not seem particularly capable of organizing knowledge or generating research. Like the Minahan and Pincus model, it does not identify boundaries to its knowledge base. Nor does it account for the diversity in present day practice or identify common elements.

Finally, the Morris framework does not explicate behavioral or value assumptions and the extent to which it continues the historical thrust of the profession and addresses goals that are appropriate is open to debate. Thus, in the framework, abstractness is foregone in favor of concreteness and accountability.

Dean

Walter R. Dean, Jr.'s contribution to the conceptual frameworks issue, "Back to Activism" (1977), cautions that the trend toward
reprivatization in the profession represents a retreat from the social action perspective.

Dean seems somewhat confused over his own presentation of social work's mission, listing within the space of a page at least five "missions" of social work, without clarifying which one he regards as the primary mission. However, he does allege that social work must change social instruments, systems, and policies for the benefit of those who have difficulty functioning in society.

With regard to the work of practitioners, Dean believes such work has a dual focus on the individual and conditions in society. Although he adopts the traditional objective of helping the individual adjust to society, he also notes that the practitioner can't force an individual to adjust to an oppressive environment or situation. He emphasizes instead the need for attention to the cultural environment of clients, and the need for individualization.

According to Dean, social work gets its sanction from post-industrial western society, from clients, and from various elements of the profession and its values. Dean believes that the education of social workers, and thus the knowledge base, must include not only specific details of social work practice, but also knowledge of all aspects—social, economic, and political—of society. He asserts that social work's position as a borrower of knowledge is part of the profession's strength. A weakness, however, is the lack of knowledge about social problems. Dean concludes that the complexity of modern society and the range of social problems and programs demand that social workers be generalists.
Critiques of Dean

Dean's article lacks the requirements of a conceptual framework. Its message is that social workers must not retreat from the responsibility to change the social environments that impinge on individuals as well as to change the individuals themselves. However, his description of the knowledge base lacks boundaries, and there are no guidelines for practice other than the admonition that social workers must be generalists and work at all levels of society. Boylan (1978) criticized Dean's major premise, pointing out that social action as an intervention strategy has been largely unsuccessful.

Reid

Like Dean, William Reid in "Social Work for Social Problems" (1977), notes the lack of knowledge available about specific social problems and proposes a conceptual framework based upon attention to such problems. Objectives for the profession could be clarified by examining social problems according to the focus of change effort or target for change, locus of concern, and scale of formulation, individual through national. Reid believes that a focus on social problems is easier to develop empirically than is a focus such as "enhancement of social functioning." In the face of increasing diversity in what social workers do, and research findings which question the effectiveness of applying general methods to poorly understood social problems, Reid advocates that knowledge, technology, and specializations be developed from a highly specific problem focus. This approach, he believes, would result in the increased testability of methods and thus in increased accountability.
Sanction must also be highly specific, says Held, with each of the objectives and methods of a given intervention having been approved by members of the client system, except in the case where legislative or judicial sanction takes precedence. Graduate education in social work, then, would be specialized, with faculty and students collaborating in problem-focused model building.

Critiques of Reid

The conceptual framework of Reid is well put together in terms of the general criteria for a conceptual framework. It is logical and introduces concepts such as the locus of concern and scale of formulation which have organizing potential. The framework breaks down, however, in not providing generalizations or behavioral assumptions that allow the profession to relate social problems to each other in an integrative rather than an additive way.

Like Morris, Reid proposes a technology that is problem-specific and testable. Simon (1977) has complained, however, that such emphasis on empirical testing as the way to build the social work knowledge base neglects other important sources of knowledge such as "presumptive knowledge, explanatory concepts, and action-oriented principles" (p. 398).

The Reid framework is perhaps most deficient in ability to unify the profession. In fact, its focus on social problems and particular problem-specific methods tends to fragment practice and leads the profession farther away from its goal to find common elements.
Cooper

The Cooper "conceptual framework", "Social Work: A Dissenting Profession," did not fit the format of the other commissioned papers, and falls short in a number of regards. It lacks internal coherence and consistency. Indeed, the purpose of the article itself is not clear. Therefore, it neither clearly describes practice nor is it capable of organizing knowledge or generating research. In not prescribing principles or goals for practice, Cooper's article is in fact a non-framework.

Alexander

In "Social Work Practice, a Unitary Conception," his reaction paper to the conceptual frameworks, Chauncey Alexander (1977) includes an "alternative to the alternatives." He notes that social work arose to fill the gaps in need-meeting created by post-industrial society. He states that the mission of social work is "to provide a professionally disciplined service to enable people to deal with the individual, group, and organizational problems that derive from the conflict between societal and personal interests" (p. 411).

According to Alexander, social work as a profession requires the use of judgement developed from concentric or associative learning in the areas of purpose, knowledge, values, sanctions, and methods. Social work practice is a service system comprised of those five elements, and the objectives of practice are problem-specific, involving the following skills: clarifying the problem, achieving change, and evaluating results.
General Criticisms of the Frameworks

These attempts to develop a workable conceptual framework for social work practice resulted in a variety of criticisms, both general and specific, from social work authors. In 1958, Gordon Hearn had noted, "With the conceptual schemes that are currently available, we are incapable of doing much more than regard our work with individuals, groups and communities as different and discontinuous processes" (p. 30-31). This discontinuity had not been remedied in 1977 when Carroll wrote that historical formulations of practice had been characterized by emphasis on only one dimension of practice: nature of the unit of concern, social work method used, or the target problem or population. Schwartz (1977) echoed this concern with regard to practice models—that even those claiming to be generic were in reality elaborations of micro social work.

Commentaries on "Conceptual Frameworks I" appearing within that same issue of Social Work identified problems with the conceptual frameworks articles which were added to and elaborated on by subsequent critics. Their criticisms follow.

The mission of the profession as stated by various authors was clearly too vague and general and did not distinguish social work from other helping professions according to Briar (1977), and Gilbert (1977). Gilbert objected further to the lack of attention to social control objectives and to indirect practice applications of
### TABLE 1

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS DEVELOPED FOR THE MADISON MEETING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Social Work Practice</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of Social Work</strong></td>
<td>&quot;To promote the values that maintain risk reduction and safety of the public.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;To create and manage social environments for the protection of the population that needs supplementary care.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;To change the social system, helping individuals, groups, and families to change themselves and communities resolve societal problems.&quot; (p. 217)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of Social Work</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Problems related to resources, systems, interactions between people and resources, and systems and environments for social justice goals.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The interface of person and environment.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Radical life styles to social, economic, political, and social aspects.&quot; (p. 217)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range of Intervention Levels Addressed</strong></td>
<td>Individual through community (client system).</td>
<td>Micro (interagency) through macro (policy development).</td>
<td>Micro through macro.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship of Worker to Client</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative.</td>
<td>Carriage.</td>
<td>Subordinate helper, societal champion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumptions about Nature of Social Problems</strong></td>
<td>Due to a lack of resources, economic, and social problems, society's problems.</td>
<td>Causes of problems are societal, some are personal, some are communal.</td>
<td>Macro-determined, primarily by environmental forces.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical Underpinnings</strong></td>
<td>Systems theory, developmental theory and others.</td>
<td>Developmental.</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Knowledge Base in Social Work</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge base is used to support specific social work interventions.</td>
<td>Knowledge is needed to develop new knowledge, build upon research.</td>
<td>Knowledge is used to develop new knowledge base.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods, Skills, Values, Aims, and Focus</strong></td>
<td>General social work skills, including interpersonal, communication, knowledge building not addressed.</td>
<td>General skills, methods, including interpersonal, communication, knowledge building not addressed.</td>
<td>Full range of general skills and roles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of Professional Standards</strong></td>
<td>Societally, and the profession.</td>
<td>Societally, and the profession.</td>
<td>Societally, and the profession.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prescriptive or Descriptive</strong></td>
<td>Prescriptive.</td>
<td>Mostly descriptive to theoretical.</td>
<td>Both prescriptive and descriptive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of Values</strong></td>
<td>Traditional, client-focused.</td>
<td>Traditional, mission-focused.</td>
<td>Traditional, mission-focused.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 38**
objectives, in contrast to Simon who advocated a less "externally-oriented" definition.

Levy (1978) in commenting on the deficiencies of the first "conceptual frameworks issue," argued that part of the problem stems from a misunderstanding or misuse of the nature of a conceptual framework:

What are identified as conceptual frameworks—whether of social work practice or of the function of social work in society—are often conceptualizations of specific aspects of social work practice or preferences regarding particular approaches or views. (p. 351)

He followed that criticism with a discussion on desirable criteria for a framework for social work practice, some of which are presented elsewhere in this paper.

Siporin (1978) felt the first conceptual frameworks issue lacked a basis both in history and in present reality. He cited a lack of historical context and a failure to consider contemporary studies of what social workers were actually doing. He complained vehemently about the narrowness of focus, lack of attention to methods and models of practice, and to areas of agreement among the conceptual frameworks authors. He concluded that a major study of social work practice might "get us back to the real world of practice, which is where we belong" (p. 165).

This discussion of the results of the 1977 attempts to define social work practice brings us up to the present, and apparently little further in developing a coherent conceptual framework than we were before the Madison meeting.
Current Trends, Problems, and Issues in Defining Social Work Practice

Consistent with the conclusion that a clear conceptual framework is still lacking in social work, Briar and Brieland (1981), writing separately in "Conceptual Frameworks II," have identified trends to be addressed, areas of consensus to be included, and problems and issues to be resolved in future efforts toward developing a conceptual framework.

Trends and consensus areas

According to Briar and Brieland, current trends in social work include increasing emphasis on the case management function, increasing reliance by social workers on systems analysis and systems theory, and increasing use of the network concept. Consensus is evident in the efforts of social workers to focus on the interaction of person and environment, and in the notion of the preeminence of social work values.

Emphases on networking, systems theory, case management, and person-in-environment all reflect the movement away from clinical-normative social work models (Lutz, 1968), which tend to place the problem within the client, toward social provisions and eco-systems models, which place a greater emphasis (than the clinical-normative models) on the environment. These emphases also reflect a positive trend toward encouraging maximum development and use of normal need-meeting systems rather than emphasizing more stigmatizing forms of social welfare aid (Wolins's "Type B welfare"—see Wolins, 1967). These emphases are consistent with the environmental-active value
stance adopted in the present paper. While their relative efficacy is potentially testable through research, they are primarily value-based.

Problems and issues

The two major problems identified by Briar and Brieland as standing in the way of development of a clear conceptual framework relate to the two consensus areas above. First is the problem of person-in-environment. Briar (1981) noted that work remains to be done on the nature and variety of person-environment interactions and on the practicality of perceiving the person-in-environment as a whole or biosphere.

The second problem relates to social work values. That is, although social workers agree that values are an important component of any social work conceptual framework, the 1977 NASW efforts to define practice exemplify the fact that all social workers do not agree upon what those values are. In fact, a stumbling block in developing a conceptual framework has been to assume a well-articulated social work value base to which all practitioners adhere. This does not reflect reality (Neikrug, 1978). Unless social workers can achieve consensus in the area of values—an unlikely and not necessarily desirable prospect—conceptual frameworks may have to be developed for each competing value stance.

The issues that remain to be resolved, as identified by Briar and Brieland (1981), in development of a conceptual framework include the following:

1. Should social work's purpose be directed toward universal services or toward critical service needs?
2. Does the profession aim at improving the quality of life for everyone, or only at alleviating categorical problems?

3. Should interventions be aimed at changing people or at changing society?

Decisions regarding these various trends and issues in social work must be made based on a well-articulated value stance as well as the best available relevant knowledge. The conceptual framework presented in this paper will address the trends, issues, and problem discussed above by relating them to a specific value stance that has been identified by Neikrug (1978) as the environmental-active stance.

**Conclusion to Part I**

The imperative for social workers to regulate their own profession, the need for social workers to develop a professional identity that differentiates them from other helping professionals, and the need for systematic knowledge-building within the field, all necessitate a clear conceptual framework for social work practice. Such a conceptual framework should not only describe social work practice, but should also provide prescriptive guidelines for practice and for knowledge-building.

Social workers both individually and collectively have worked toward the development of such a conceptual framework. These efforts have been going on since the profession's beginnings. However, they have been hampered by the wide diversity in the activities social workers engage in, by fragmentation within the profession, by lack of agreement on the nature of a conceptual framework, and by the illusion
of a unitary value base for the profession. The two most recent collective efforts by the National Association of Social Workers, the Madison and O'Hare Meetings, show that problems still impede the development of a clear conceptual framework.

Part II will articulate a specific social work value base—the environmental-active value base—and will develop a conceptual framework for the profession that incorporates new ideas and yet maintains continuity with the history of the profession.
PART II

THE ENVIRONMENTAL-ACTIVE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
CHAPTER 4
THE PURPOSE AND VALUE ASSUMPTIONS
OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, a conceptual framework is a construct that describes and guides practice. Seen by the Harriett Bartlett subcommittee as comprised of a unique constellation of purpose, values, knowledge, sanction, and methods, a social work conceptual framework is not an objective reality, but historically has taken many forms to correspond with the views of particular theorists and with the social and political climates of the times. The purpose and value assumptions of the profession, as drawn by a conceptual framework, set the boundaries for social work practice. That is, they determine the goals of practice and help define how the goals will be accomplished. This chapter will describe social work purpose and values as drawn by the present conceptual framework.

The Purpose of Social Work Practice

The literature of social work reveals a surprising array of descriptions of worker purpose. There is further confusion of the terms, "purpose", "mission", "objective", and "goal".

In the first Social Work conceptual frameworks issue, authors were asked to discuss social work's "mission". Meyer (1981) later objected to the term because of its alleged connotation related to
zealousness and ultimate values. Yet the non-religious definition of mission is, "a specific task with which a person or group is charged" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1976, p. 736). Since purpose is defined in Webster's as "something set up as an object or end to be attained" (p. 937), the two terms differ slightly in the connotation of sanction and they also differ with regard to means versus ends. Purpose, objective, and goal have virtually the same dictionary definitions, although objectives are sometimes used to imply intermediate, rather than final goals. "Purpose" will be the term addressed in the present chapter, although it appears that purpose is used interchangeably with other terms by other authors.

The first conceptual frameworks issue of Social Work yielded at least a dozen different statements on social work's purpose (mission). There was little agreement among them. These statements ranged from the very client-centered ("find out what people need and help them get it"), to the society-centered ("promote the change necessary to preserve society and its institutions"). Several statements tended to be global and unrealistic ("the alleviation of social problems . . . the realization of each individual's human potential") while others proposed a totally new purpose ("creation and management of social environments").

Morales (1977) in commenting on the articles in "Conceptual Frameworks I" noted a growing discrepancy between social work's stated purpose and actual practice, but the articles make it apparent that at that point in time there was a social work purpose to suit every taste. Thus, when the Madison conference participants reconvened at
O'Hare airport, they worked to develop consensus on social work purpose. The result, NASW's "Working Statement on the Purpose of Social Work," states the following:

The purpose of social work is to promote or restore a mutually beneficial interaction between individuals and society in order to improve the quality of life for everyone. (Social Work 26(1), 1981, p. 6).

This statement of purpose is open to criticism on at least two grounds. First, it doesn't distinguish social work from other occupations, e.g., teaching or employment counseling. Second, it doesn't accurately reflect what most social workers do. In other words, the purpose of "improving the quality of life for everyone" is unrealistic, global, and presumptuous. Furthermore, it may run contrary to social work's conception of justice and equality. For example, in order to improve the quality of life for the poor, the quality of life of the rich, as they see it, may be worsened. The same is true for the quality of life of minorities vis-a-vis whites.

The fact is, most social workers deal not with improving the quality of life for everyone, but with alleviating personal and social problems, although this fact isn't mentioned in the working statement. While few would argue with the goals of "mutually beneficial interactions", and "improving the quality of life for everyone", most social workers day-to-day work has a much more limited purpose. This purpose is, "to minimize human suffering and to enable individuals to get their basic needs met in as normal a manner as possible." The present paper proposes this alternate statement of purpose as more accurate and workable than the one proposed by NASW.
This statement depends upon several assumptions. First, it assumes the right of clients or potential clients to accept or reject social work services toward that purpose. Second, it assumes that the alleviation of human suffering is of a higher priority than promotion of "normal" need-meeting. It follows, then, that when suffering of an individual or group is exacerbated by a societal norm—for example, sexual preference or family form—a purpose of social work may relate to promoting a less restrictive definition by society of normality. Third, it recognizes that qualities of the environment are as likely as the capacity of the individual to impede normal functioning. Therefore, the environmental factors are equally as appropriate or more appropriate than the client system as targets of intervention.

Social work should not shrink from society's charge to the profession, which seems to be to work with deviant and disadvantaged populations. To assume instead the quality of life of everyone as target of social work intervention puts social work in the category of a "boundaryless and boundary-busting system" (Dinitz and Beran, 1972): a system whose purposes can ultimately justify imposing its values on anyone, whose goals are unattainable, and whose potential effect can be to expand, rather than narrow, interpretations of who is deviant.

The alternative statement of purpose proposed above draws heavily on Martin Wolins's discussion, "The Societal Function of Social Welfare" (1967). Wolins identified four need-meeting systems: the family, or F System; the "marketplace", or E System; the informal, or I System; and the polity, or P System. Society has evolved a "normal" need-meeting process by which an individual approaches the appropriate
need-meeting system abiding by the "rules" of that system. The need-meeting system in turn, rewards the individual by supplying the needed resources.

Volins argued that the social welfare system steps in when the normal need-meeting process has broken down. He further stated that the social welfare system has the latent function of stigmatizing recipients as a means of forcing them back into the normal need-meeting process, at the same time that it allows them to acquire the necessary minimum resources without resorting to rule-breaking means.

Volina's thesis is very persuasive. Social workers still find themselves on the job where normal need-meeting processes have broken down. Historically, in fact, social work has struggled for professional status in part so that workers could have the professional autonomy to circumvent the stigmatizing role originally cast for them.

In the present framework, then, the use of the term "normal need-meeting" is based upon several premises or arguments. First, as discussed above, society has certain norms with regard to what constitutes acceptable avenues and behaviors for need-meeting. Second, individuals or groups who are perceived by others as getting their needs met through non-acceptable means are labelled as deviant and are punished through stigmatization and other means. This labelling and stigmatization is often as harmful to the individual or group as the situation that resulted in the deviant need-meeting process. Third, social work is asked to participate in this punitive process.

This stated purpose of social work that cites normal or normative need-meeting suggests that the social work profession can avoid this
punitive function and help client systems to avoid stigmatization through the following kinds of activities.

1. Facilitating, promoting, enhancing, and enabling interactions between systems that conform to the rules or norms for need-meeting imposed by society.

2. Working to change societal norms or rules for need-meeting when these norms or rules are overly restrictive or oppressive.

3. Working to move stigmatized residual forms of social welfare into the non-stigmatized institutional realm.

There are several other advantages to this statement of purpose. First, it asserts the obligation of a society to help its citizens meet their basic needs. Second, by focusing on the satisfaction of basic needs, it avoids placing blame on the victim or assuming that the client must change. For example, it does not assume that the failure to meet basic needs is due to the client's inadequate social functioning. Third, it is more realistic and attainable than the purpose stated in the NASW working statement. This is because in spite of the social work rhetoric on prevention, self actualization, and enhancing the quality of life, social workers ply their trade in the social welfare arena, and unfortunately, few if any social welfare agencies or programs have allocated funds for such exalted goals as improving the quality of life for everyone.

This discrepancy between the real and the ideal was recognized by Morales (1977) when he observed that the purpose of social work could be analyzed from three perspectives: That which is logical, that
which is feasible, and that which is self-protective. This section has aimed at defining a logical purpose that is a feasible ideal which neither infringes on the self-determination of individuals nor sells out to the social control function imposed on us by society. The following discussion on values will elaborate on the foundation laid by this statement of purpose.

**Social Work Value Assumptions**

Values play an important part in shaping social work practice and the way the social work profession is conceptualized. As previously noted, social work has identified as its primary values the following:

---

**The environment (social, physical, organizational) should provide the opportunity and resources for the maximum realization of the potential and aspirations of all individuals, and should provide for their common human needs and for the alleviation of distress and suffering.**

---

**Individuals should contribute as effectively as they can to their own well-being and to the social welfare of others in their immediate environment as well as to the collective society.**

---

**Transactions between individuals and others in their environment should enhance the dignity, individuality, and self-determination of everyone. People should be treated humanely and with justice (Social Work 26 (1), 1981, p. 6).**

Although there are some who question the very existence of social work values (Meinert, 1980), few social workers would quarrel with the above stated three core values or "beliefs." However, there are undoubtedly myriad interpretations of how these core values should be implemented. For example, assuming that the environment should provide adequate opportunity and resources, what price should be exacted
in turn from its beneficiaries? Should social services be institutional or residual? If individuals should take responsibility for the well-being of themselves, their neighbors, and the collective society, to what extent and through what methods should social workers hold individuals accountable for this individual and collective welfare?

Furthermore, there are a number of value conflicts within the profession. Keith-Lucas (1977) has identified the following six conflicts:

1. between the obligation to reform society and the obligation to help persons cope with their situations;
2. between responsibility to consumers and to donors;
3. between the good of the individual and the good of the group of which he or she is a part;
4. between a client's self-determination and what the worker perceives is good for him or her;
5. between equity and individualization;
6. between science and art; scientific versus humanistic processes (p. 352).

Most extant conceptual frameworks assume a shared, complex social work value orientation. However, in practice, social workers operate within the context of the core values but also out of any one of several identifiable value systems that make very different assumptions about the nature of humanity. Failure to explicate the specific assumptions about the nature of humans and the values that guide the authors has resulted in a lack of clarity in conceptualizing practice.
Assumptions About the Nature of Humans

Shimshon Neikrug, in a research study of social work values (1978), discovered that workers choose interventions from a range of possible approaches, and that the choices they make reveal their value orientations. These value orientations differ around several dimensions that include the nature of humans, and their relationships to time, action, and their fellow humans.

Of the value orientations described by Neikrug, the environmental-active approach was identified by this author as being most congruent with the present conceptual framework. The environmental-active value orientation supports using targets other than the focal system for direct intervention, and working through universal institutions for prevention. In the environmental-active approach, "man (sic) is seen as being basically healthy, capable of achieving mastery over his environment, oriented to the future, having an active 'doing' posture to life, and being collaterally related to his fellow man" (p. 39).

The orientation supports the view of humans as self-actualizing by nature when their basic needs are met, and the view that the knowable potential of any person has limits that are mainly environmental. Such an approach avoids the victim-blaming and labelling inherent in

---

1It must be noted that this use of "environmental-active approach" differs from Billups' (1984) use of the term. Billups uses the term to describe intervention strategies that tend toward the revolutionary: social action including a variety of conflictual strategies. By contrast, Neikrug's use of the term does not assume radical approaches, but comes closer to the approach described by Billups as the ecological systems approach.
orientations that assume illness or personal deficiency are at the root of human problems.

This conceptual framework further views humans as cognitive beings. The perspective is well expressed in An Introduction to Environmental Psychology by Ittleson et al., (1974):

Man is a cognitive animal. He does far more than see, hear, feel, touch, smell, in the simple sense of "recording" his environment. He interprets it, makes inferences about it, dreams of it, judges it, imagines it, and engages in still other human forms of knowing. It is all of these forms of knowing that permit the individual to accumulate a past, think on the present, and anticipate the future. The "poetry" of this human process is the substitution of an "inner reality" of words, images, ideas, feelings, and still other symbols and representations for an "outer reality" of shapes, sizes, objects, movements, sounds, structures, and other attributes of the environment. (p. 85)

Social workers as well as environmental psychologists have focused on humans' conceptualizing abilities, but have seemed to neglect the implications of this substitution of inner reality for outer reality that the former passage describes. For example, in 1958 Hearn noted that the ability of humans to form abstractions from experience and to represent them symbolically distinguished humans from other species. He saw this ability as enabling humans to gain and transmit knowledge and to attain increasing mastery over the environment.

In 1978, social workers were still focusing on this aspect of human conceptualizing nature as evidenced in Germain:

Man as a species is not completely bound by his genetically determined environment in the way lower animals are. His cognition and his ability to speak and to symbolize free him from . . . the determinism
of environmental conditioning so that he transcends environmental limits. (p. 547)

Although social work traditionally has not focused upon the idea of an inner reality that guides behavior, the present conceptual framework specifically focuses upon the assumption that humans do behave in relation to this very inner reality. The framework further assumes that the inner reality is characterized by a wide variation in the extent to which it corresponds with "outer reality," depending on individual, situational, and environmental factors.

The idea of this inner reality precludes the notion of one-way environmental determinism. It assumes a human being continually involved in creative interaction with the "actual" environment, and agrees with Bandura (1977) that "psychological functioning is a continuous reciprocal interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental determinants" (p. 194).

Furthermore, this framework assumes humans to be basically rational and oriented toward growth. The view of humans supported by the framework is congruent with the assumptions of the environmental-active approach described as a value orientation by Neikrug (1978) and discussed above. The view of humans as cognitive, symbol-using animals and the view of humans as growth-oriented, rational animals, combine to shape the assumption that human behavior makes sense and can be made sense of. Behavior can be interpreted as efforts to achieve mastery within one's impinging environments:

Human beings are active and not just reactive. They act spontaneously and purposively in goal-oriented ways; they are guided by their experiences in the past and by their anticipations of the future. (Germain, 1978, p. 547)
Under psychoanalytically based theories, human behavior was viewed as largely irrational. This framework postulates that human behavior can be understood if we can understand the impinging environment of the individual. It goes further to say that when the "actual" environment does not yield clues to the behavior, we may be looking at the wrong environment. It is then the internalized environment that must be studied. Or, in the words of Berger and Federico (1982), "The important point is that social workers believe that most people can be trusted to engage in behavior that is purposeful given their perception of reality" (p. 111, underlining added).

Value Assumptions of the Environmental-Active Conceptual Framework

Given these assumptions about the nature of humans, certain value assumptions follow. These value assumptions address the values identified by NASW, and some of the value conflicts identified by Keith-Lucas.

First, the environmental-active orientation is consistent with the value that the environment should provide the means for persons to meet their basic needs and realize their potentials. The framework further regards this value as a primary value that addresses the value conflict between the obligation to help persons cope with situations and the obligation to reform society. That is, if social workers hold to this belief, then any social work model must include strategies for assessing the extent to which each identified problem is a public issue as well as a private trouble, and must include strategies for social reform aimed toward developing environments that are capable of
providing the necessary resources and opportunities. Although resources and agency mandates may limit the extent to which these reform strategies can be carried out, the framework takes seriously a professional mandate to build environmental change strategies into the profession at the level of social work education.

Second, consistent with its statement of social work purpose, the conceptual framework recognizes that it is good and healthy for people to have their needs met through their primary groups and through normative need-meeting institutions.

As an implication of the above two primary values, it follows that social workers should pursue, as Wolins (1967) suggests, the goal of converting Type A welfare to Type B welfare. That is, services that affect significant groups of people should be transformed from residual services whose consumers are stigmatized to institutional services whose use is considered a right of citizenship for those who need it.

The framework recognizes a danger of victim-blaming inherent in the belief that individuals "should" contribute to the well-being of themselves, those in the immediate environment, and the collective society. Since this framework assumes that humans are "healthy, capable of achieving mastery over their environments, oriented to the future, having an active 'doing' posture to life, and being collaboratively related to their fellow humans," the framework assumes that people will contribute to the well-being of themselves and others if environmental constraints (past and present) are relieved. The framework also assumes that humans have a hierarchy of needs that includes
the need to have an influence on their environments. As Maslow (1954) has pointed out, an individual's needs for survival and security must be met before the individual can attend to needs for influence over his or her environment, affiliation, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The imposition upon persons experiencing problems in living the expectation that they should contribute to their own well-being as well as that of others may be premature if this hierarchy of needs is not taken into account. Instead, the value of need-meeting through normative need-meeting institutions presupposes mutual support within the society.

Third, the present framework asserts that people's ethnic heritage should be respected and preserved. This value of pluralism must be stated explicitly, since it is not implicit in the other primary values.

Fourth, the framework agrees that people's dignity, individuality, and self-determination should be enhanced. It also asserts that people are entitled to justice and humane treatment, and that social work should try to secure these entitlements for persons who cannot secure them for themselves.

The assumptions about humans and the value assumptions of the framework do suggest answers to some of the value dilemmas within the profession. For example, the values of this model preclude the imposition of the social worker's goals upon the client. Furthermore, since the emphasis is on basic needs, the worker's responsibility is most often toward client systems first, since their basic needs are usually preeminent over those of the donors.
Practice Implications

Several practice implications arise from the purpose and values discussed in this chapter. First, problems would be stated in terms of inability to have basic needs satisfied, rather than in terms of clinical diagnoses or deficits in social functioning. Second, clinical-normative approaches to change would generally be eschewed in favor of systems and environmental approaches. Third, contracting and client participation in planning and change efforts are inherent to the framework. Fourth, culturally-specific approaches should be used when possible. Fifth, social change as well as individual change strategies are frequently indicated. Finally, social work methods and therapy models are used differentially in this framework in a way that recognizes that people's failure to function normatively is usually a result of the interaction of the focal system and environments past and present, rather than of individual deficit. As Germain (1970) pointed out:

In the constantly changing conditions of a technological society, the arena for help may no longer be man against himself in intrapsychic terms, but man against malevolent forces and irrationalities in his environment. (p. 28)

These practice implications will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.
Social work is a borrower of knowledge from other professions and the social sciences, as well as a creator of new knowledge from research and practice. A distinctive body of esoteric knowledge has frequently been cited as one of the central prerequisites for professional status. Therefore, social workers have continued to discuss the nature of social work's knowledge base and of its knowledge-building activities, as well as their implications for the definition of social work as a profession.

Merlin Taber, in "A Knowledge Base for Social Work: Three Positions" (1969), cited several possible approaches to the relationships between social work and scientific theories. These approaches include the pragmatic pursuit of selected values, social work as an applied science, social work as a professional science, and social work as a scientific discipline.

According to Taber, the pragmatic pursuit of selected values described the situation for social work in 1969. Social work was viewed as an art rather than a science. Research was seen as an ad hoc response to answer immediate questions. It was not used to test or build theory.
The view of social work as an applied science separates the roles of practitioner and theory builder. In other words, according to this view, social work methods should develop out of tested theory, possibly from the social sciences.

As a professional science, social work would build a knowledge base related to the helping process and the function and purpose of the profession. "It is the selection, organization, and testing, using the methods but not necessarily the theories of scientific disciplines, which is the key activity" (Taber, 1969, p. 148).

Finally, social work as a scientific discipline would begin to establish a few highly general ideas which it would develop into a scientific discipline through testing and research.

Social work's present position among these various viewpoints remains unclear. Greenwood, in discussing the attributes of a profession, stated, "In the case of social work the basic information is a patchwork largely borrowed from the social sciences and allied helping professions" (1981, p. 271). He suggested that if social work wishes to be regarded as a profession, it must take seriously the importance of an esoteric knowledge base.

In 1970 Bartlett had written that interprofessional borrowing of knowledge could lead to inappropriate acceptance of borrowed theories as dogma, or confusion of social work's identification and function. She cited a need to integrate knowledge from other fields in a way specifically related to social work's purpose and focus, rather than haphazardly. She also noted that there was a wealth of knowledge
embedded in social work practice (i.e., practice wisdom) that the profession needed to extract and publish.

The present framework acknowledges that the social worker will draw on knowledge about the following phenomena first listed in the "Working Definition of Social Work Practice" (1958):

-- individual and group development and behavior in interaction with environments;
-- dynamics of giving and receiving help;
-- communication dynamics;
-- group processes and reciprocal influence between individuals and larger systems;
-- cultural diversity;
-- relationships among people;
-- the community;
-- the social welfare system;
-- the social worker him or herself.

However, the present conceptual framework uses three particular theories or models as overarching constructs to shape the framework and offer descriptive and prescriptive guidelines for practice. These are image theory, or the "new look" in environmental perception theory; Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as adapted by the present author for the framework; and the general systems approach.

Thus the present framework suggests the need for knowledge specific to social work, and therefore for the use of scientific method to study social work problems, issues, and questions. It also attempts to use knowledge from other disciplines which has been recast
to fit social work's purpose and function. In other words, the present conceptual framework places social work's stage of development in knowledge building between that of an applied science and a professional science.

Image Theory: An Overarching Construct

He who cannot change the very fabric of his thought will never change reality. Anwar el-Sadat

As noted in previous sections, most attempts to define social work practice have defined practice in terms of intervention at the interface between the individual and the environment. Yet it has been difficult to pinpoint and articulate the nature of that interface. Similarly in the real world, interventions tend to be thought of as being directed at the individual and/or the environment; not at the "interface." As Cooper (1977) has stated, "Our profession has always stood at the interface of person and environment—a tenuous place to be theoretically, since no theory to date has effectively spanned this bridge" (p. 362).

A central idea of this paper is that the most useful and appropriate way to identify the nature of the individual/environment interface is to define it as the "image" of the environment that is held by the individual or groups involved in the change effort. This image, comprised of perceptions and cognitions of the environment, is the interface, since various disciplines have shown us that we can never experience the environment directly, but only can experience our perceptions of the environment.
The concept of the image, then, adds an intermediate intervention point to social work practice. An environmentally-focused approach to practice, therefore, will aim interventive strategies at the impinging environment, at the client’s capacity for coping with the environment, and at the interface between the two, seen as the individual and shared images of the person-in-situation.

Of what value is the concept of the image to the social work profession? First of all, it provides a bridge between social work and the relatively young environmental studies fields that include environmental psychology, human ecology, human geography, and others. In spite of our self-description as an environmentally concerned profession, social work has made little use of knowledge from these new fields. Even Germain and Gitterman’s *Life Model* (1980), described as an ecological perspective, devotes far more space to developmental and interactional theories than to knowledge about human ecology derived from the above mentioned areas of study.

Second, by providing a bridge between direct and indirect practice, individual and environmental approaches, the concept of the image becomes an overarching construct for describing what social workers do. This utility as an overarching construct also creates the potential for an image-based conceptual framework that not only describes, but also guides practice at both macro and micro levels.

Third, image theory is based upon and is testable by empirical research.
Fourth, a conceptual framework based on image theory, as we shall see, affords workers a rationale for eclectic practice, as well as a systematic basis for selecting intervention strategies.

Fifth, image theory provides a theoretical rationale for the instrumental values of social work, for example, providing hope and practicing empathy.

The Image

Image-related ideas are not new to social work. They are inherent in the social learning theory of Bandura and in symbolic interactionism, both of which are taught in the human behavior sequences of many schools of social work. Furthermore, the basic skills of active listening are image-directed, and professional empathy is dependent upon the worker's ability to approximate the client's image of the situation.

The image theory used in this paper is based heavily upon the ideas of Boulding (The Image, 1956). Boulding, in turn, was influenced by the "new look" theory of perception. This theory has been tested extensively by environmental psychologists in recent years.

The new look, as it applies to environmental perception and cognition, is based according to Moore (1979), on the "constructivist assumption." Moore states:

this assumption suggests that the environment is conceived of in different ways by different people. There is no one 'environment'--rather 'environment' is a mental construct. The environment is imaged differently by different people as a result of different life experience. Humans do not apprehend the nature of the environment directly but through a highly developed interpretive process. This interpretive process acts as a filter--a schema in
Piaget's terms—and it is these schemata which are the subject of environmental cognition research and theory. (pp. 34-35)

This assumption suggests that social work models that direct intervention toward the objective environment or toward the individual without explicit attention to the way the environment is perceived and conceived by the individual, are incomplete.

Moore stated that present research on the imagery of the environment compares "objective" knowledge of the environment to (1) cognitive mapping, (2) the way people label their interaction with the environment, (3) images of the overall characteristics of the environment, and (4) the meanings and symbolism attached to different environments or aspects of the environment.

Kenneth Boulding summarized such processes and products under the rubric of "The Image" (1956). He stated that aspects of human image include the following:

-- a spatial image that locates the individual in the space around him or her;
-- a temporal image: individual's place in the stream of time;
-- a relational image: view of the universe as governed by regularities;
-- a personal image of the individual's place in the world of social relationships;
-- a value image that orders other aspects of the image on a scale of better or worse;
-- an affectional image: the emotional or feeling tone with which other aspects of the image are imbued;
conscious, unconscious, and subconscious dimensions;
- qualities of certainty/uncertainty, clarity or vagueness;
- degrees of correspondence with "outside" reality; and
- degrees to which the image is shared (public versus private).

Robinson & Dicken (1979) and Piaget & Inhelder (1971) further classify images into two categories: reproductive images, which represent things already known, and anticipatory images, which represent the individual's conception of the possible or the probable.

According to research on cognitive mapping, which studies how individuals psychologically represent spatial locations and relationships (Cadwallader, 1979), images, in relation to outside reality, are characterized by incompleteness, distortion, schematization, and/or augmentation (Downs & Stea, 1973). In other words, as we perceive, think about, and store information from the environment, we reduce, revise, and add to that information. The result is an image of reality that is unique to each individual.

According to the new look in perception, the degree to which the image corresponds to measurable characteristics of reality depends to some extent on qualities of the environment (Ittleson et al., 1974). However, it also depends upon, "properties of the perceiver such as his motives, habits, conflicts, and expectancies" (Dember, 1974, p. 162). These properties, in turn, are shaped by the perceiver's social and cultural experience (Cadwallader, 1979).

We have seen, then, that we can only experience the environment through our perceptions. Further, that these perceptions are revised
and stored as gestalts that Boulding calls images. Boulding refers to the image in this way:

> What I am talking about is what I believe to be true; my subjective knowledge. It is this Image that largely governs my behavior . . . . The first proposition of this work, therefore, is that behavior depends on the image. (1956, p.6)

As evidence that the image determines behavior, Boulding cited research using decorticated dogs. Decorticated dogs and normal dogs were presented with dog food laced with a bitter tasting substance. At first, neither the normal or decorticated dogs would eat the food. In time, however, the normal dogs overcame their aversion to the taste and ate the bitter-tasting dog food to avoid starvation. The decorticated dogs, however, never overcame the taste and continued to avoid the food. Boulding asserted that this phenomenon was due to the fact that the intact dogs were responding to a rudimentary image of the substance as food, whereas the decorticated dogs could only react to their sensory perception of the bitter-tasting mixture.

Similarly, environmental research with human subjects living in hazardous areas such as flood areas, has found that these residents have a distorted image of the area which allows them to return to their home after flooding. That is, their image minimizes the hazard more than is realistic, and influences their behavior in the direction of remaining in the flood area.

According to Boulding, there are eight levels of behavioral organization, from static structure (non-living) through human. The simplest form of image occurs at the third level, that of homeostatic control mechanisms. An example is that of the thermostat. The
The temperature registered by the thermostat's thermometer is the thermostat's reproductive image of the world. The thermostat also has a value, or anticipatory image, which is the ideal temperature. The thermostat's "behavior" is directed at making its reproductive image congruent with its anticipatory image.

Boulding also used the analogy of genetic processes to illustrate the idea of an image. He noted that the gene is both a blueprint and carpenter. Through the genetic process, cells not only can reproduce carbon copies of themselves (the genotype), but they also can produce a structure totally unlike themselves (the phenotype). Although the process is poorly understood:

we know that it must involve something like an image, that it must involve a 'teaching-learning' operation, and that it involves the organization of matter into patterned structures through the transfer of information. (1956, p.37)

In a similar way, humans, imbued with an image of the possible, produce behavior to bring the image into reality. They also behave in ways to cope in accordance with that image. The major implications for social work are the following.

First, planned change is unlikely if participants in the change process do not have and fail to acquire an image of the desired result (anticipatory image). Thus, any social work intervention should include anticipatory image work, which includes, but is more specific than "providing hope."

Second, if the individual's image is distorted, his or her coping behavior will be dysfunctional. Thus an understanding of the image held by an individual is often, if not always, a key to understanding
the individual's behavior. Furthermore, interpersonal behavior involves a complicated interplay of image upon image (Boulding, 1956).

**How image develops**

Boulding (1956) stated that image formation is composed of messages filtered through a value system. Moore (1979), in reviewing the research on environmental cognition, concluded that the image is a result of the interaction of internal organismic factors including the individual effects of social and cultural history; and external environmental factors, including the nature of the task at hand as well as human, social, cultural and physical characteristics of the impinging environment.

Or, in other words, how a person construes an environment is a function of what he or she brings to the situation in interaction with the demands placed on the organism by the situation. (Moore, 1979, p.49)

**How environment affects image**

The formation of images of the impinging environment is made complicated by a number of factors. First of all, the environment has a surrounding quality; that is, the individual is immersed in it. Second, messages from the environment are multimodal—they come to the individual through all his or her senses. Third, the environment affords peripheral stimulation. Fourth, it contains an overload of information which can be both inadequate and redundant as well as contradictory (Ittleson, 1973). McLuhan's (1963) classification of media may also pertain to environments: that is, environments may be "cool", in that the senses must fill in details, or "hot", wherein messages come relatively complete.
In any case, it seems clear that the nature of the environment requires of the perceiver the actions of selecting, augmenting, and organizing relevant messages. Gibson surmised that the messages that are perceived are the "affordances of the environment", that is, "information that has functional significance for the organism" (Heft, 1978, p.11). Other information tends to be disregarded.

Ittleson (1973) believes that the importance of the environment as a source of information has been underestimated in the formation of images. In addition to the influences of social and cultural factors, it is entirely likely that physical environments that are significantly different from each other may in themselves produce perceivers who are significantly different from each other. The premise is that an individual who is raised in the desert will employ a process of perception that is different from that of an individual raised in the mountains.

**Individual differences in the image**

Individuals differ in their images in terms of not only the content and amount of their knowledge, but also in terms of how they organize this knowledge. Furthermore, an individual's images change over time according to clear stages of development (Moore, 1979). So a child's images are qualitatively different from those of an adolescent.

Downs and Stea (1973) have stated, "we see the world in the way that we do because it pays us to see it in that way" (p. 22). In other words, our images are tied to our motivation and the rewards we expect from the environment. This is confirmed by the results of
environmental studies that show that people seem to organize their perceptions according to five identifiable levels of analysis. These levels of analysis include the following:

1. The level of affect which determines motivation and governs the kinds of experiences we expect and seek from the environment. This level shapes subsequent interactions with the environment.

2. The level of orientation, which helps us locate the positive and negative features of the environment and leads us from preliminary "mapping" to more detailed orientation.

3. The level of categorization, which labels and sorts aspects of the environment according to objectives, attitudes, and generalized expectations that have been internalized by the individual.

4. The level of systematization, wherein relationships, causal connections, and regularities within the environment are identified and analyzed.

5. The level of manipulation which helps us determine to what extent action and perception can be mutually supportive in goal accomplishment (Ittleson et al., 1974).

Our images, then, are shaped by where we are developmentally and by the incoming messages from the environment. However, they are also influenced by our attitudes, motivations, and goals. These individual differences cause us to selectively perceive environments and situations in a way that protects and sustains our images and value system.
How images change

As suggested in the previous paragraph, images are resistant to change. However, when change does occur in images, it is due to the input of messages from the environment. These messages, which are defined by Boulding as information in the form of structural experiences, can produce three types of result in the image. In the first instance, the message has no effect. This result can come about when a message is congruent with the image. When this result occurs in spite of the fact that the message is incongruent with the image, Schein (1979) notes that the lack of change can be a function of a lack of psychological security. In other words, if a climate of psychological safety is not present, defense mechanisms will prevent discrepant messages from being incorporated. Occasionally, discrepant messages will introduce doubt regarding the image, but no immediate change in the image.

A second possible result of a message is "simple addition". When a message supplements, rather than contradicts an image, the image can grow in a simple and regular manner. A message can also help clarify an image.

Revolutionary change or conversion is the third possible effect of messages on the image. Symbolic interactionist Edgar G. Schein (1979) asserts that such change can only take the place under certain conditions. First, messages that are discrepant with the image are apprehended by the individual under conditions of relative psychological safety. This causes an unfreezing process in the individual. Second, new information is accommodated to the image through processes
of either modeling or scanning. Third, refreezing occurs when the environment will support the change.

Boulding stated that values are the main determining factor related to the effect a message will have on a person's or group's image of the world. Value-neutral images will have a minimal effect on the image. Positive messages will be easily accommodated, but will produce little change. Messages that have a negative value will be resisted. The inner stability of an image also influences its resistance to change. This inner stability relates to the image's logical internal consistency as well as its beauty, appeal, or elegance (Boulding, 1956). As suggested above, Schein has contributed valuable ideas on the conditions under which these messages will produce change.

In short, learning is a process of the changing of images. It occurs as a result of contact with nature as well as through face to face interaction. In literate and technological societies, learning can be brought about through the writings and recordings of people we will never meet. Humans' images are also capable of growth from within, due to humans' capacity for imagination.

**Shared or common images**

Humans' potential for language makes possible the sharing of images. That is to say, communication creates public, or shared images. Boulding (1956) stated that there are as many public images as there are cultures and subcultures, and this statement has been substantiated by research from sociology and social geography, which
indicates that group values, lifestyle, and culture may be the most significant variables to explain differences in images (Moore, 1979).

Public images change in ways similar to individual images. The interaction of subcultures with differing values results either in re-establishing barriers or distance or in the changing of the images of both. Latent processes, planned change efforts, and the feedback from both also bring about change. However, Boulding notes that defense mechanisms against rigorous change efforts have sometimes perpetuated images that would otherwise have collapsed under their own weight (Boulding, 1956).

Planned change and the image

The preceding theory of the image offers us some predictions about planned change. First of all, as suggested by the Anwar el-Sadat quotation at the beginning of this section, planned change first requires an image of change and of the anticipated results of that change. Second, in order to realize this image, the action system—those involved in bringing about the change—must possess the necessary know-how, energy, and resources, or must have them at its disposal (Boulding, 1956). Third, when the planned change involves more individuals than oneself, change may be more difficult since it will be resisted by those who do not share an image of the change and its result.

Social Work Implications

Image theory provides a set of ideas that bridge the gap in social work practice between the environment and the coping
capabilities of the client. As such, it is capable of providing a rationale for well-established social work methods and instrumental values, as well as providing a framework for explaining the fact that change is difficult to accomplish.

The major implication of the image is that environmental change is not likely to be a straightforward process, but instead involves the individual and common images of those involved in and affected by the change process.

A further implication is that a major goal of ongoing assessment in social work should be to ascertain the images under which people operate. This is the theoretical basis for active listening and empathy in interviewing, and makes it more likely that the worker can make sense of the other's behavior and feelings. The implication is supported by research that has shown that workers who are perceived as most helpful by clients conveyed an attitude of desiring to understand the client's problem, and worked at clarifying or openly stating client's feelings (Rogers, 1982).

Nevertheless, social work students are taught empathy skills as tools or "instrumental values," without an articulated theory base. Image theory provides that base. Put in general terms, if people's behaviors are shaped by their images, it behooves social workers to discover, through active listening and empathy as well as inductively from the behavior itself, what those images are.

Individuals function in a number of environments, including the physical and social environments. Boulding's framework and the research methods of the environmental studies disciplines can be
adapted by social workers not only to assess individuals' images of these various environments, but also to become sensitive to the differences in perceptions of various minority groups. Research in environmental perception reinforces for social workers the notion that ethnic groups differ not only in their values, customs, and behavior, but more importantly in the very way the world appears to them. Thus it becomes more relevant to view the world through one's lenses than to walk a mile in his or her moccasins. Furthermore, the intermediate concept of the image may contribute to knowledge about prevention by helping to explain the differential effects of the environment on different individuals' functioning.

Social workers must assess clients' reproductive images in order to make sense of their behavior, to determine the relationship of the images to various public images and to objective reality, and to determine the extent to which the images are functional to the clients' coping. In addition, clients' anticipatory images are important to social work practice. First, social workers must realize that anticipatory images related to change are necessary before change can occur. This is the rationale for the social work principle of providing hope. Social workers may also have to help provide clients with images related to their goals. For example, improved parenting may be impossible for a client who lacks an image of a good parent, regardless of the skills the worker teaches him or her. Furthermore, change is unlikely to be stabilized if others in the social environment do not share an image of change. By the same token, social
reform efforts must take into account public images and the images of leverage persons, if efforts are to succeed. Finally, social workers can use information on how images change to be more effective change agents in all types of professional relationships, consensual through conflictual.

The Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is a fixture in the knowledge base of social workers, other helping professionals, and social scientists. Maslow postulated five sets of basic needs that form a hierarchy. These sets of needs are, from lowest to highest, the physiological needs, the safety needs, the belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization. Maslow stated essentially that when a particular set of needs such as the safety needs is clearly unmet, then all the needs that are located above safety needs on the hierarchy—the belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization—will disappear or recede into the background.

The physiological needs include, according to Maslow, such things as hunger, sex, thirst, sleepiness, and fatigue. Safety needs relate to freedom from illness and pain; absence of danger; need for structure; need for the familiar; and job, economic, and family security. Belongingness needs include needs for affectionate relations and a place in one's group. Esteem needs include the need to evaluate oneself highly, needs for self respect and self-esteem, and for the esteem of others. The esteem needs also include needs for recognition, status, importance, appreciation, and so forth. Finally, the
need for self-actualization describes, "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (p. 92).

Beyond the basic needs, Maslow hypothesized certain preconditions for basic need satisfaction. These include the various individual freedoms, freedom of speech and expression, for example, and also justice, fairness, and honesty. The absence of these preconditions supposedly jeopardizes satisfaction of the basic needs and may even prevent it.

Maslow went on to explain that humans' level of aspiration is constantly rising. In other words, when the basic needs are met at a minimal level, then an individual will raise his or her expectations and will strive to meet the needs at a more optimal level. For example, a person who has lost his or her job will find the need for safety and security unmet. Once this need is met by the person's finding regular employment, the person's concern with regard to safety might, according to Maslow, switch to concerns about building a savings account, a pension plan, or an insurance package.

Maslow also postulated, but did not elaborate upon a hierarchy of cognitive needs (the need to know and understand) that bears some relationship to the hierarchy of basic needs. Finally, he identified a need for beauty, a basic aesthetic need present in some individuals.

The use of a hierarchy of needs is important to the present framework for several reasons. First, since the framework describes the purpose of social work practice as minimizing suffering and enabling individuals to get their basic needs met in as normal a
manner as possible, it is important to define the nature of these basic needs. Second, Maslow's work suggests that if social workers aim their interventive strategies at self-actualization needs of clients while the clients' lower needs are still unmet, the interventions are likely to be ineffective. Third, in focusing on the hierarchy of needs, one finds that certain helping methods and models are appropriate for meeting some basic needs but not others. For example, Goldenberg (1978) points out that an existential approach targets self-actualization needs, but not physiological or safety needs. Thus a hierarchy of needs is of central usefulness to a social work conceptual framework that emphasizes basic needs.

A Hierarchy of Needs for Social Workers

In working with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it soon becomes apparent that there are some conceptual and practical difficulties with the model. For example, placing freedom from illness and pain among the security needs rather than among the physiological needs seems somewhat arbitrary. Second, some of the physiological needs such as sleepiness, being short-term needs, have slight relevance for social work practice. Third, the present author finds that a crucial level of needs was omitted from the hierarchy by Maslow. The present author therefore proposes an alternative hierarchy of needs that has greater usefulness for social work. This hierarchy includes, in ascending order, survival/well-being needs, safety needs, effectance needs, belonging/love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.
Survival/well-being needs

Survival/well-being needs are slightly different from Maslow's physiological needs, in that they are not concerned with short-term needs or non-survival needs such as sleepiness and sex. This is not to say that social workers should disregard these physiological needs, but that these needs generally do not enter into intervention planning unless they are long-term or recurring deficits. Furthermore, the survival/well-being needs include, as Maslow's physiological needs do not, freedom from illness and pain.

Thus, survival/well-being needs include access to and the capacity to utilize resources including an adequate diet, protection from the elements, and adequate health care. Survival and well-being also requires the absence of or the capacity to withstand undue injurious/noxious factors such as aggressors/predators, toxins, disease, accident, mechanical stress, and catastrophe.

Safety/security needs

Safety and security needs include the freedom from danger or threat to satisfaction of the survival needs, as opposed to the actual absence of resources to satisfy the survival needs. As in Maslow's hierarchy, safety/security needs also include the need for order, structure, predictability, and sameness; and for employment, economic, and family security.

Security requires the assurance that the meeting of survival needs will remain reasonably constant and predictable. Thus it requires reliable access to the resources needed for survival,
including being treated with justice, as well as the perception or image of those resources being available on a continuing basis.

**Effectance needs**

It is the observation of the present author that Maslow's hierarchy of needs is deficient in that it omits one universal basic need. This need is the need for effectance, defined as the need to have an impact on one's environment, to influence others, to have some control over one's own destiny.

Evidence of the primary nature of the need to affect one's environment is found in research studies involving environmental stressors and their effects on task performance (Glass, Singer, & Pennebaker, 1977). Studies cited by these authors involving environmental noise, electric shock, and social stressors such as bureaucratic frustration, arbitrary discrimination, and crowding, found that deleterious after-effects of such stress are reduced by subjects' perception of their ability to control the stressor, even though subjects often voluntarily chose not to exercise that control.

Although this example could be interpreted as being related to safety and security needs, other evidence indicates that the need for control occurs separately from safety and security issues. For example, we know that both over-restrictiveness and overprotectiveness in parenting is unhealthy for children. Since the child's immediate safety is seemingly secured rather than endangered in these types of parenting, we can surmise that the damage results from the child's
inability to affect the environment, make decisions, and influence others.

Furthermore, the need to be able to control one's own environment seemingly for the ability's own sake appears at a very early age. For example, Hanus Papousek, a Czech pediatrician, found that six to ten-week old babies quickly could learn to activate flashing lights by slight turns of the head. Evidence that this activity was motivated by the infant's wish to influence the environment rather than simply by the stimulation of the lights is confirmed by the description provided by Bruner & Sherwood (1983):

With success, their reactions became slight and economical, just enough to bring on the lights. More interesting still, they looked at the lights only briefly, a short glance as if to confirm that the lights had gone on as expected (following which there was often a smile), and they would then begin visually to explore other features of the situation. (p. 39)

The examples cited above seem to argue for locating the need at the third highest level, between safety needs and belonging needs, and possibly even lower. (Further research may be needed to determine its exact place.)

Effectance generally requires the meeting of one's survival and safety needs, a basic capacity to function in the environment, specific skills and abilities to influence the various environments within which one functions, and the capacity of these environments to respond to the efforts of the individual. In order for one to affect one's environment, not only must these conditions prevail, but also one must perceive that they prevail.
The addition of effectance to the hierarchy of needs not only makes sense logically and on the basis of empirical information, but it also has practical importance for social work practice. This is because it identifies self-determination not just as a social work value, but as a basic need that occupies a specific place within a hierarchy. Thus it is unlikely that the social worker will be able to affect the satisfaction, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs if the client's self-determination or effectance needs are unmet.

Belonging/love needs

Belonging needs in this hierarchy are the same as described by Maslow: the need to have a place in one's group and the need for affection. Belonging requires the opportunity for meaningful contact with others, perception of the ability of others to meet one's needs, the capacity and skills to initiate and maintain relationships, acceptance of and by others, perception by others of the ability of the individual to meet their belonging needs, and the capacity of others to initiate and maintain relationships.

Esteem needs

Esteem needs in this hierarchy also echo Maslow: the need to be well thought of by others and to have a high opinion of oneself, as well as the need for status, recognition, and appreciation.

Self-esteem generally requires that one's survival, effectiveness, belonging, and security needs have been met in the course of one's early development, or that one has had corrective experiences in
later life. It also requires the continuing validation by others and
the experience of effectiveness in the environment. This is because
self-esteem involves a perception of oneself as being worthwhile,
lovable, and competent.

**Self-actualization needs**

As in Maslow, the self-actualization needs refer to the needs
people have to strive toward the realization of their potentials.
Since satisfaction of these needs depends upon having met the other
needs in the hierarchy to some extent, it is interesting that social
workers frequently cite the self-actualization of all as a profes­sional objective or value. One might caution the observation that
perhaps this goal is a bit beyond our reach at this time.

Although frequently misconstrued to suggest that people can
become self-actualized, the concept of self-actualization instead
refers to the capacity of people to become self-actualizing. Self-
actualization requires the resources to meet one's needs beyond the
basic subsistence level. This includes the time, energy, and material
goods to develop one's creative capacities, continuing access to know­
ledge and the acquisition of new skills, and continued feedback from
the environment. It requires the perception of oneself as a growing,
creative being and perception of the environment as supportive of
growth and creativity.

The consideration of this hierarchy of needs for social workers
adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, will help change agents to
articulate problems, prioritize goals, and choose appropriate methods
for bringing about change.
The Systems Approach

The systems approach described by Churchman (1979), Anderson and Carter (1974), and others, provides another overarching construct—that of the system—to the present conceptual framework. The concept of the system is important to the environmental-active conceptual framework because within such a framework the social worker does not view the individual as an entity whose problems are determined by his or her inner drives and capacities. Instead, the individual is viewed as an actor who both contributes to and requires from his or her surroundings a variety of resources, and who influences and is influenced by other individuals, groups, organizations, and bodies of knowledge and belief—that is, systems.

Since the systems approach is an established part of the social work knowledge base as it presently exists, the objective of this section is not to elaborate upon the systems approach or to describe it in detail, but to touch on highlights of the systems model and describe its relationship to the environmental-active conceptual framework.

The Social System

A system is a group of components that are interrelated in an organized way to accomplish a set of objectives. In order to accomplish these objectives, a system must be able to import energy in the form of information and resources from outside its boundaries, and it must also exchange and compound energy among its components. We can identify systems and delineate their boundaries based on the idea that
energy exchange within a system is greater—more intense or more frequent—than energy exchange across system boundaries.

However, the idea of the social system, the system of concern to social workers, is a fluid concept, since components of various social systems are constantly interacting with each other to accomplish new objectives and thus to form new systems that may be temporary or enduring in nature. Furthermore, systems have a nested quality in that systems are made up of subsystems, but also form subsystems of larger social systems. If a social unit is a subsystem of any particular larger system, then a change in that social unit that is related to the objectives which make it part of the larger system will cause a change in the larger system.

The systems approach causes us to look at social phenomena in a new way. For example, Churchman (1979) explains that system components should be defined not in the traditional (non-systems) way, but instead as the various missions of the system. Thus, whereas the traditional way of looking at the family is as a "system" comprised of (traditionally) a mother, father, and one or more offspring, the systems approach to viewing the family would be as a system comprised of various "missions" such as socialization, reproduction, affection, mutual support, etc. In terms of the present framework, we might define the social system in terms of the missions related to meeting the basic needs of its members. Thus, a system is not in fact a physical reality but is a construct for viewing and analyzing phenomena.

In using a systems approach, social workers will find it useful to look at six basic considerations with regard to the system in
question. These are:

1. the total system objectives and, more specifically, the performance measures of the total system;
2. the system's environment: the fixed constraints;
3. the resources of the system;
4. the components of the system, their activities, goals, and measures of performance;
5. the management of the system (Churchman, 1979, p. 29);
6. the nature of the boundaries of the system (Anderson & Carter, 1974); and
7. the number, nature, and quality of linkages between the focal system and other systems in the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Chin, 1969).

**System objectives**

According to Churchman (1979), the true objectives of a system may not be apparent by ascertaining the stated goals of the system, but are discovered by determining whether or not the system is willing to sacrifice other objectives for their accomplishment. Thus, an agency may state that its goal is to provide effective counseling, but its performance may be measured in terms of numbers of clients served, indicating that the actual objectives relate to quantity rather than quality.

**Environment**

The definition of environment as the "given" that affect the system is the most functional definition of environment for an
environmental-active conceptual framework. The systems approach identifies the proximal environment by two criteria: (1) by the fact that it has an impact on the focal system in terms of that system's goals, and (2) by the fact that the focal system can't do anything about it. These criteria, applied to the definition of the client system above, have potential for greatly clarifying social work practice.

The implications of looking at the environment as those considerations that impinge on the client system and that the client system can't do anything about are as follows:

1. Since the client system is defined in relation to the identified problem, then the environment focused on is limited to those considerations that relate to the system-in-problem.

2. Unlike conventional definitions of environment as conditions and objects that surround the focal system, this definition of environment includes considerations that by other definitions are thought of as part of the focal system. For example, an individual's body chemistry could be part of the client system's environment, as could a personality trait such as shyness. Under this definition a member of a family or group that is the focal system could be part of that system's environment with relation to the presenting problem.

---

2This definition overlaps Bronfenbrenner's (1979) definition of an exosystem as "one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (p. 25).
3. Therefore, the definition increases the range of strategies defined as environmentally focused interventions.

4. Environmental work as part of the change effort is often aimed at influencing the relevant environmental constraints. Paradoxically, when the action system gains influence over the constraint, then that constraint may by definition cease to be part of the environment.

**Resources of the system**

Unlike the environment, the resources of the system include the information, material goods, capabilities, and energy over which the system has some control and which can be brought to bear to accomplish the system's objectives. Identifying these resources is an important part of planning for change.

**Components of the system**

The social worker analyzes the components of the system by looking at who (or what) does what types of activities with regard to the particular mission or missions in question. In the example of the family, then, instead of analyzing the role of mother, if the mission being focused on is the physical nurturance of children, the social worker would look at who carries out this mission through what activities. This may be the father, the babysitter, and/or siblings. The social worker may find, in fact, that the activities of the mother do not contribute substantially to the nurturance of the children. The way the components of the system relate to the mission in question—the way the people involved carry out their activities and the extent
to which they accomplish goals may be a target of change in the intervention process.

**System management**

System management is determined by who in the system actually makes the decisions about how the system's resources are used. In families, organizations, and communities, the decision-makers may or may not be the people who hold formal positions of authority. It is important for social workers to analyze system management, first because the decision makers are important leverage people for change within the system, and second because system management that is ineffective or inefficient may be an appropriate change target.

**System boundaries**

Social systems are open systems and require interchange of energy with other systems. On the other hand, if there is more interchange across system boundaries than within system boundaries, systems tend to break down and lose their identities or integrity. Thus the system boundary must be semipermeable: not too closed to allow input from the outside, and not so open that vital energy is lost to the system.

Gatekeeping is another issue related to boundaries. A social agency may not be effective in helping its target population if the eligibility requirements (a form of boundary) are so restrictive that people in need of services are turned away, or if they are so loose (as in the example of foster care) that clients are taken into the system inappropriately.
Linkages with other systems

In order for the exchange of energy and resources to occur, there must be linkages between systems. Chin (1969) refers to these linkages as "connectives," and proposes elaborating the system model into an "intersystem" model based on analysis of the dynamics of interaction between systems.

Chin's differentiation between a system model and an intersystem model is based on the observation that interacting units do not always form a system. However, he is unclear in specifying the criteria for analyzing interacting units as a system versus using an intersystem model. The present author suggests that when the interacting units (e.g., social worker and client) share a common objective, then the system model is appropriate for analysis. When the units are interacting in the service of their own separate objectives, then an intersystem approach is appropriate. Since the present conceptual framework mandates shared objectives between worker and client system, the system model predominates.

However, analyzing the linkages or connectives between systems is an important assessment tool. This is because the number, nature, and quality of linkages between the primary systems of which a person is a part (e.g., family, school, organization—identified by Bronfenbrenner [1979] as microsystems) directly influence the development of that person (Whittaker, Garbarino, and associates, 1983). Furthermore, the complex of linkages among these microsystems (called the mesosystem by Bronfenbrenner), when of good quality, tends to serve as a social support network (Whittaker, Garbarino, and associates, 1983).
All of the above seven basic considerations explain how systems function and point to possible targets for social work practice. Other human behavior models and theories can be used within the systems framework to help explain the "whys" of system functioning. The focus of analysis on systems and systems environments supports the orientation of the present conceptual framework. The three constructs described in this chapter—image theory, needs hierarchy, and the systems approach—provide a framework for understanding social welfare problems and points of intervention within an environmental-active conceptual framework for social work practice.
Sanction of the social work profession refers to "authoritative permission, countenance, approbation, or support" to carry out the profession's purposes and tasks ("Working Definition of Social Work Practice," Social Work 3(2), 1958). The "Working Definition" (1958) listed three sources of social work sanction: government agencies, voluntary incorporated agencies, and the organised profession. Later, in his "Critique of the Working Definition," William Gordon (1962) asserted that sanction was not an integral part of the constellation that comprises a working definition. However, the present paper argues that the conflicting natures of the sources of social work sanction make sanction a unique influence on social work practice. It further asserts that there are several sources from which social workers derive sanction to carry out their purposes, and that one of the most important of these may be the client.

Probably no other profession in society is as subject to conflicting sanctions as social work. The individual worker is sanctioned by a minimum of four systems with differing goals: the community or society, the profession, the social agency, and the client. The community sanctions the worker to provide funded services for controlling "deviant" members in order to maintain the societal
system. The profession sanctions the worker to be a societal change agent on behalf of disadvantaged groups in order to "improve the quality of life for everyone." The employing agency sanctions the worker to perform specific functions defined by and in accordance with the agency's charter. The client system sanctions the worker to assist it in alleviating distress, developing or gaining access to needed resources, or improving functioning.

These conflicting sanctions pose a continuing dilemma for social workers. The profession eschews the social control function expected by society, yet the profession and indeed the social welfare system need the sanction of society in order to survive. The client as well as the profession may sanction the worker to pressure for change to increase the responsiveness of the employing social agency, yet the worker needs the agency's sanction in order to function professionally. The profession sanctions the worker to improve the life situations of the very groups that the society attempts to keep in a disadvantaged position.

The nature of social services and the populations they deal with make the situation even more complex. This is because social workers

---

3This appears to be the prevalent (structural-functional) social work view of the societal function of social work and of social control. However, there are dissenting views. For example, Stein (1976) asserted that the functions preferred by the profession—social development and system change—cannot come about in a given country until necessary system maintenance functions have been fulfilled. In other words, the societal functions of social welfare must progress through necessary developmental stages. And Gilbert (1977) noted, "indeed, social control functions are necessary for regulating legal, political, and social relationships in a complex society whose members are interdependent" (p. 405).
often work with compulsory "clients" (an apparent contradiction in terms), including abusing families and adjudicated offenders. They also work on behalf of persons unable to contract for services: children and the mentally disabled.

In these compulsory cases, or cases of incompetent clients, the issue of sanction is difficult to sort out. Pincus and Minahan (1973) have done much to clarify the issue of sanction by clearly defining the systems involved in a given change effort: the client system, the target system, the change agent system, and the action system.

There are two criteria for defining the client system: (1) the client system is the system that contracts for the worker's services, and (2) the client system is the expected beneficiary of the worker's services. Keeping these two criteria in mind is important when dealing with adjudicated populations and children whom others have defined as problems. In the former case, it is the community which is the client, and in the latter the client is the parent or other who has contracted for the worker's services. The adjudicated person or child remains a target of change except to the extent that the worker contracts with him or her to bring about specific changes of which he or she will be the beneficiary. The worker must otherwise deal with the ethical dilemma of working with a powerless or coerced target system on behalf of a third party. (Stein [1976] asserts, "Where the total system of which social work is a part is essentially oppressive, social work either has no place, if it retains pretensions to ethical foundations, or, if its function can be justified at all, is heavily compromised morally" [p. 2].)
The situation is even more complicated when dealing with dependent children and the incompetent. In these cases, the person who is the object of services cannot contract for, and indeed may reject those services. Furthermore, although the child or incompetent person is the expected beneficiary of services, social workers who have worked with these populations are aware that unfortunately the "client" is often not helped, and frequently is harmed as a result of services provided.

There is, as yet, no easy answer to this dilemma. The present conceptual framework attempts to clarify this problem by introducing the notion of the identified beneficiary system. This system is defined as any individual or group of individuals who has been labelled as vulnerable, whose basic needs are clearly being interfered with, who is clearly unable to contract for services because of age or competence, and who is expected to benefit as the result of services.

The well-being of these involuntary and/or vulnerable populations is dependent on the best available knowledge for practice and the ethics brought to the practice situation by the worker. Ironically, in state child protective services and other settings that serve such populations, caseworker positions are still often filled by nonclassified employees who possess no foundation of social work knowledge and ethics and therefore are poorly equipped to deal with such complex ethical problems. The addition of the concept of identified beneficiary system at least differentiates between the vulnerable object of services and the true client system in order to alert the social worker that special ethical considerations apply.
The present conceptual framework also introduces a notion of limited client sanction. This is the idea that client sanction must be specific with regard to problem of attention, target system, strategy, and method. Thus social work practice requires a detailed contract with the client. This is consistent with the principle of client self-determination, and also with the concept of anticipatory image. That is, the more detailed the client's image of the change effort, the more likely that the change effort will be successful.

The conflicting sanctions of the social work profession cause stress for social workers and affect the credibility of the field. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, this increases the need for the profession to define itself. A clear conceptual framework would enhance social work's ability to maintain its professional integrity while functioning within bureaucracies whose purposes are different from those of the profession. The present conceptual framework has attempted to bring client and professional sanction closer together by integrating specific client sanction into any helping effort.
The purpose and values of social work, assumptions about the nature of humans, and the overarching constructs that make up a conceptual framework all influence the way human problems are viewed. According to the present framework, human problems that social workers deal with have five dimensions. These dimensions are:

1. the basic human needs being interfered with;
2. the sources of the interference;
3. the characteristics of the problem;
4. the locus of constraint; and
5. the scope of the problem, or range of significant effect.

Basic Human Need Being Interfered With

Since this framework describes the purpose of social work as helping people to get their basic needs met in as normal a manner as possible, then it follows that problems should first be described in terms of what basic need (or needs) is (are) being interfered with. These basic needs would be categorized as survival/well-being needs, safety/security needs, effectance needs, belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

A major advantage of defining problems in this way is that there are often a number of alternative ways of meeting a basic need. By
contrast, if one looks at a problem as, for example, a social or psychological diagnosis, it is implied that one must "cure" the client system in order to solve the problem.

Thus interference with survival or well-being needs would include such problems as untreated illness and toxic states, hunger and malnutrition, exposure to the elements, victimization by physical or sexual abuse, and attempted suicide. A threat to a survival need depends to some extent upon the duration and severity of the problem and the sufferer's ability to withstand the stress, but often, survival needs constitute emergencies that require concrete services.

Interference with safety and security needs include such problems as threat of eviction, presence of an abuser, job loss or threat of job loss, cutbacks or cessation of needed services, inconsistent parenting, threat of nuclear war, pollution, or threat of loss of family love. Further threats to safety and security include arbitrary, dishonest, or unjust treatment either at interpersonal, judicial, or policy levels. At the level of safety and security needs the image is virtually as important as objective fact. That is, a perception of threat to safety and security has the same effect on the individual as actual threat.

Interference with effectance needs is manifested by powerlessness due to oppression or to autocratic or non-democratic governance at any system level. It is also evidenced in lack of self-determination for any reason, rigidity or non-responsiveness of social and organizational environments or ineffective efforts to influence environments
and produce change. Satisfaction of effectance needs requires mutual accommodation of people and environments.

Belonging needs may be interfered with through death or departure of a significant other; discrimination that results in exclusion or isolation of certain racial, ethnic, age, gender, or handicapped populations; family breakup; parental rejection; interpersonal problems; loneliness; and social isolation. In order to be able to meet one's basic needs in a normative manner, it is usually necessary for individuals to belong to one or more primary groups.

Even more than safety and security needs, esteem needs depend on images—in this case, on images of the worth of individuals or groups. Interference with esteem needs includes prejudice, poor self-concept, devaluation of individuals or groups, failure to recognize the dignity or accomplishments of oneself or others, or simply the absence of positive feedback. It also includes ethnic or gender self-hatred. Self-esteem is enhanced by experiences of mastery as well as by valuation by others.

Interference with self-actualization needs results in people's functioning at levels and in areas that do not reflect their potentials, talents, capabilities, interests, wishes, and aspirations. All humans are faced with the existential dilemma that to become self-actualizing in one area of living may preclude self-actualization in another area. However, self-actualization in even one area of living is unlikely when other basic needs are unmet. Thus self-actualization is often beyond the reach of all but the privileged in society. As expressed by Goldenberg (1978):
In theory as well as in practice the more goods an individual possesses, the less time he must devote to the problems of basic survival, and consequently the more energy he can employ to pursue the particular drummer whose tune has fallen upon his receptive ear . . . . Goods and power are, in short, the stuff out of which survival is either transformed into a full-time career or relegated to a part-time activity. (p. 59)

Self-actualization requires, therefore, that the meeting of other basic needs be facilitated, and also that people have access to the resources they need to develop themselves in the directions of their inclinations. The environmental-active value orientation assumes that persons whose other basic needs have been fully met will naturally strive to become self-actualizing.

Social workers working within this conceptual framework will aim interventions at removing constraints that prevent the satisfaction of basic needs. Furthermore, they will prioritize their objectives by attending to these needs according to their position on the hierarchy.

Sources of Failure to Meet Human Needs

The situation social work strives for is one in which individuals or groups with unmet needs can approach other individuals, groups, or institutions, and in interaction with these other systems can get their needs met in a way that enhances, or at least does not detract from, the dignity of all persons involved in the need-meeting process. At the time that the need-meeting process is occurring, the system with the need and the system with the resources to meet the need (the response system) comprise the need-meeting system. When the need-meeting process breaks down, any factor that obstructs that process becomes part of the environment vis-à-vis that need-meeting system.
That is, that factor has an influence on or matters to the need-meeting system, and the system at that point in time cannot influence the obstructive factor. If the normal need-meeting system cannot resolve the problem, social work may be asked to step in and help get the need met.

The sources of the interference with normal need-meeting fall into six broad categories. These categories are (1) obstructions or deficits in the normal response system; (2) absence or nonexistence of a response system to address the particular need; (3) impingement of noxious or injurious stressors from outside the need-meeting system; (4) obstructions, deficits, or lack of fit in the interactions of the focal system and response system; (5) obstructions or deficits in the coping behaviors of the focal system; and (6) constrictive or restrictive definitions by society of what constitutes normal need-meeting.

These sources of problems are recognized in NASW's objectives of social work which are restated here:

--- Help people enlarge their competence and increase their problem-solving and coping abilities.
--- Help people obtain resources.
--- Make organizations responsive to people.
--- Facilitate interaction between individuals and others in their environment.
--- Influence interactions between organizations and institutions.
--- Influence social and environmental policy.

(Social Work 26(1), 1981, p. 6)

The categories of sources of interference with normal need-meeting are elaborated on below.
Obstructions or Deficits in the Normal Response System

Deficits or obstructions in the response system can be manifested in several ways. First, the response system may not have the resources to meet the need. Second, the response system may have the necessary resources but does not provide them. This could happen if the response system does not recognize the need; if resources are scarce and others are perceived as having a prior claim; if the response system is unwilling to provide the resources; if the response system does not recognize responsibility for providing the resource; or if the response system is unable to provide the resource without help.

Absence or Nonexistence of a Response System

Absence or nonexistence of a response system can occur when no normal response system exists to meet a special need, or when the focal system lacks a normal response system for a particular need. The former circumstance can occur, for example, when there is no normal system prepared to meet the special needs of a person with a particular handicap. The latter can occur if a person has no living family members.

Noxious or Injurious Stressors

Impingement of noxious or injurious stressors from outside the need-meeting system can include congenital problems in the individual, illness, abuse, discrimination, crime, accident, disconfirmation, conflict, overload, oppression, and other stressful situations. Such conditions are considered interferences with normal need-meeting
because they are likely to tax the response and coping capacities of normal need-meeting systems.

**Obstructions or Deficits in Interactions**

Obstructions or deficits in the interactions of the focal system and response system occur when the response system has the necessary resources and capabilities to meet the need, and the focal system has the ability to approach the response system appropriately, but there is a problem in the interface between the two systems. This can occur when the focal system and the response system are in conflict, when they have conflicting needs, when they have differing perceptions of the appropriate response to need, or when communication between the two systems has broken down.

**Obstructions or Deficits in Coping Behaviors**

Obstructions or deficits in the coping behaviors of the focal system can occur for a number of reasons. First, the focal system may not recognize the need. Second, the focal system may be unable to access resources available through the response system. This may be due to unawareness of their availability; lack of capacity to access the resources (as in the case of children and certain types of disabilities); or lack of skills, knowledge, or power. This inability may also occur because parts of the focal system are interfering with the need-meeting process. Third, the focal system may be unwilling to access the response system for reasons related to perceptions of need-meeting or help-seeking, perceptions of or feelings about the response system, perceptions of the consequences of help-seeking, or
perceptions of the resources available. Fourth, the focal system may
neglect to access the response system because of lack of motivation,
conflicting needs, or because it lacks an image of the need-meeting
process or results.

Determining the sources of the interference with normal need-
meeting suggests possible points of intervention for the change
effort. It may also suggest strategies for alleviating the problem.
Attention to the characteristics of the problem gives further informa-
tion as to how the change effort should proceed.

**Characteristics of the Problem**

In addition to problems being defined by the need that is inter-
fered with and source of the interference, problems are also distin-
guished by their characteristics in terms of their suddenness of
onset, urgency, severity or amount of distress generated, and remoto-
ness from their origin or cause. For example, a developmental crisis
related to a life transition may be quite sudden in onset, moderately
urgent, moderately severe, and coincident with its origin. An indi-
gidual's inability to form satisfying relationships is likely to have
been gradual in onset; non-urgent, moderately severe, and quite remote
from its origins (e.g., inadequate childhood nurturance). A problem
can be remote from its origins in distance as well as time. For exam-
ple, an individual problem may be the direct result of cutbacks in
federal funds to a particular social program. The characteristics of
the problem will help determine the pace and intensity of the change
effort and will also give clues as to appropriate helping methods.
The Domain of Social Work Practice

The domain of social work practice can be illustrated with a "map" that charts the scope and locus of the problems that social workers address. These problems are problems that impede the individual's ascension through the hierarchy of needs described in Chapter 5, and may affect individuals uniquely, universally, or at any level of human system.

The problem map, when used as a guide for teaching and practice, suggests the scope of the problem and the locus and nature of the environmental constraint as primary considerations in planning interventions.

Locus of Constraint

This paper defines the locus of the constraint as the environment within which the obstacle to need-meeting is found. These environments include the physical environment, the economic environment, the political environment, the social environment, the bio-physiological environment, the cultural environment, the internalized environment of images, and the social welfare environment.

The physical environment includes the actual tangible "surround" that impinges on the focal system. It can include the physical aspects of the home, neighborhood, region, or job. Problems related to the physical environment include overcrowding, pollution, safety hazards, poor sanitation, harsh weather, and natural disasters, among others.

The economic environment is the environment that provides for the formal exchange of resources: goods and services. Problems in the
Map goes here
Domain of Social Work

Primary Locus of Constraint Axis

Physical Environment

Economic Environment

Political Environment

Social Environment

Cultural Environment

Bio-physiological Environment

Social Welfare Environment

Internal/Symbolic Environment

\[ x_4 \text{ e.g., poor housing} \]

\[ x_5 \text{ e.g., recession} \]

\[ x_2 \text{ e.g., hereditary illness} \]

\[ x_6 \text{ e.g., depletion of energy sources} \]

\[ x_7 \text{ e.g., racism} \]

\[ x_1 \text{ e.g., poor self-concept} \]

Scope of Problem Axis

unique family community society universal

(individual)

FIGURE 1

PRACTICE MAP: SCOPE AND LOCUS OF PROBLEM
economic environment include but are not limited to unemployment, low pay, poverty, unfair tax structures, inflation, and scarcity of or lack of access to goods and services.

The political environment consists of the climate of political conservatism or liberalism; the governmental system including bureaucratic structures of organizations; the formal policies, laws, and regulations that direct the operations of larger systems, and the systems of enforcement for those policies and laws. Problems related to the political system include institutional racism and sexism, overly restrictive definitions of normalcy, limitations of civil rights, policies that limit people's access to resources that are necessary to life with dignity, and totalitarianism.

The social environment is the world of interpersonal relationships. It includes social networks, kinship relationships, gemeinschaft communities, friendships, and acquaintanceships. The social environment interacts with and overlaps the economic and political environments since both politics and economics are mediated by social relationships. Problems in the social environment include interpersonal conflict, estrangement, social isolation, and role strain.

The bio-physiological environment relates to the body's biochemical, physiological, and anatomical functioning. Although not thought of as an environment in most models, it fits the definition of this model in that it affects the individual but the individual's influence over it may be minimal. Problems in the bio-physiological environment include addictions, physical handicaps, organic brain problems, and illness.
The cultural environment includes the art, artifacts, language, knowledge, technology, customs, norms, and mores of the focal system and of the dominant culture. Problems related to the cultural environment include racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, and other forms of prejudice and oppression; generational problems among immigrant families; difficulties in transcultural communication; culture shock; future shock; and differential access to information and education.

The internalized environment of images consists of an internal, symbolic representation, or image, of all the other environments. This image, as previously described, corresponds in varying degrees to the outer, "objective" environment. Problems related to the internalized environment include distorted perceptions of "reality," inadequate stimulation resulting in an impoverishment of images, lack of empathy, discrepant images interpersonally, and failure to accommodate and assimilate new images.

The social welfare environment consists of programs and services provided to meet human needs that either would not be routinely met within the other environments or are not being met within these environments due to the sources of problems described in a previous section. Problems within the social welfare environment include a lack of particular programs and services, lack of access to services, social stigmata associated with provision of services, and iatrogenic problems.

These environments are obviously not mutually exclusive. A problem in one environment is likely to have an impact within other environments.
The locus of constraint axis of the problem map suggests the type of solution that should be sought for any given problem. For instance, unemployment is a problem located within the economic environment, and thus should require an economically related intervention. Although this seems self-evident, the principle has not always been followed by the social work profession. For example, some models of social work practice target the ego strengths of the client system, regardless of the locus of the constraint, and similarly, some models approach problems through direct clinical methods regardless of the scope of the problem.

**Scope of the Problem**

Problems vary in scope from unique through universal, in terms of the range of significant effect. The range includes individual, family, group, organization, community, society, and universal. These systems can be further divided in terms of couples, municipalities, neighborhoods, and so forth.

The range of significant effect refers to the numbers of persons who suffer directly as a result of the problem. Thus, depletion of energy resources is a universal problem, while poor self-esteem of a particular individual may be unique, and the failure of an industry is likely to affect an entire community.

The scope of the problem may have little to do with the locus of help seeking. For example, a single parent may seek help with problems related to lack of adequate child care. Although this parent may be one of few in the community who have sought help for this problem, the problem may actually affect families nationwide. In short, the
scope of the problem addresses the question of the extent to which private troubles are also public issues.

The level at which the problem is identified by a given worker is likely to depend upon that worker's position. For example, a planner is more likely to encounter a problem as it affects the community level or beyond. The clinician normally encounters problems as they affect the individual or family. However, by keeping in mind the scope of that problem, each worker is professionally obligated to give attention to the entire range of significant effect. This means that the clinician must determine whether a client's problem is an isolated case or is an example of a problem of larger scope (a public issue).

A worker in a guidance center, for example, receives a number of referrals from school psychologists of children allegedly experiencing emotional problems related to learning disabilities. She determines that the referrals are being used in lieu of providing the children with appropriate special education. The worker has the option of providing help to the children on a case-by-case basis, but, under the present conceptual framework, she also must give attention to the community-wide scope of the problem. This attention might consist of referring the problem to a worker who specializes in advocacy or group work, or the worker may choose to deal with the entire scope of the problem herself. She might, for example, organize parents to secure appropriate special education for their children from the educational system.

Conversely, planners and administrators who work on solutions to problems at the community, national, or organizational levels must
give attention to individuation of services and/or provision of support services to individuals and families affected by the problem or the proposed solution. In other words, the present model requires assessment of an attention to the scope of the problem as a necessary part of responsible social work practice.

This chapter has described five dimensions of human problems: the basic need being interfered with, the sources of the problem, the characteristics of the problem, the locus of constraint, and the scope of the problem (or range of significant effect). These latter two can be charted visually by means of a "map" that depicts the domain of social work. The dimensions of human problems provide a particular perspective for interpreting problem situations and shaping intervention.
CHAPTER 8

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE:

SKILLS, METHODS, AND ROLES

Since the focus of this conceptual framework is on the meeting of basic needs rather than on social problems, the framework prescribes generalist rather than specialist education and practice. This is because the social worker may need to apply a wide range of generic techniques in order to facilitate and individualize need-meeting for clients. The more flexible the worker is—the wider his or her repertoire—the more effective he or she is likely to be in bringing about change. In this framework, social work skills, methods, and roles are directed toward images, environments, and/or systems.

Skills and Methods

Under this framework, the social worker utilizes a full range of generic social work skills. These include interviewing, data gathering, and data analysis; problem-solving, and record-keeping. The social worker must be able to develop and use relationships, exercise influence, provide support, and set limits. He or she must also be able to convene and facilitate meetings and group sessions; organize people, data, and activities; and identify resources.

Social work methods are made up of generic skills and can be
classified as environmental work, image work, and systems work. It should be noted that environmental work, image work, and systems work are not mutually exclusive. For example, when speaking of environmental work, this framework is referring to work that the social worker does in the environment of the client system. However, the worker may perform system work or image work within that environment. Similarly, system work, especially system development, may involve image work, and conversely, image work may also be system work in the sense that images themselves comprise systems that are subject to the principles of systems theory. With the caution, therefore, that environmental, image, and system work tend to blend and overlap, each of these constellations of methods will be discussed below.

Environmental Work

As discussed elsewhere, the environment consists of the "givens" that affect a particular situation; in this case a problem situation. As explained by Churchman:

The environment is not the air we breathe, or the social group we belong to, or the house we live in, no matter how much these may seem to be outside us. In each case, we must ask, "Can [the system] do anything about it?" and "Does it matter relative to [the system's] objectives?" If the answer to the first question is "no," but the second is "yes," then "it" is in the environment. (1979, pp. 36-37)

To deal environmentally with a particular constraint one can remove the constraint, remove the client system from the environment, make changes in the environment, or bring part of the environment into the relevant system. Social workers perform environmental work at all levels, individual through universal, and within all environments.
Analyzing environments

Social workers must analyze or assess environments to determine the extent to which they meet or are capable of meeting basic needs, and the extent to which they impose stress or danger upon the focal system. Workers must also assess the resources available in the environment and the degree to which an environment is amenable to change or capable of being integrated into the focal system or action system.

Monitoring environments

Monitoring environments is necessary to assure that they meet minimum standards of care or nurturance or to determine that they are providing reinforcements that are consistent with behavioral goals. Monitoring includes licensing and accreditation activities, program evaluation, and less formal processes such as maintaining contact with neglectful or abusive families.

Manipulating reinforcements and punishment in the environment

The intervention plan can include manipulating reinforcements in the environment to change the behavior of either a client system or a target system. This strategy may be chosen for a client system when the assessment indicates that a problem behavior or the inability to adequately perform a needed behavior is interfering with basic need-meeting. In this case, the method would be environmental work, while the objective would be strengthening the client system. Managing reinforcements is part of the group of social work methods known as behavior modification or behavioral, sociobehavioral, and social
learning approaches. It can be used with individuals, families, and small groups as client systems.

Manipulating reinforcements with client systems has ethical implications. Worker and client must be able to determine that the behavior is not merely a problem for others, but is truly interfering with normal need-meeting. The client must then specifically sanction the worker to manage such a reinforcement program. When behavior modification is used to treat an identified beneficiary system, or underage or powerless target system, the ethical problems become more complex, since the identified beneficiary system or target system is unable to give informed consent. Social workers should consider involving a guardian ad litem or special advocate to protect the rights of the target of the behavior modification under these circumstances.

Managing or manipulating reinforcements is also used to change the behavior of adult target systems. This is usually considered either a quid pro quo or conflictual strategy. In the former instance, bargaining is used to elicit a desired behavior or service in exchange for a behavior or service of more or less equal value. In the latter instance, "punishments" such as negative exposure, boycotts, lawsuits, demonstrations, and other sanctions may be brought to bear against a target system (negative exposure and demonstrations are also image strategies). The worker may either work to employ these sanctions or mobilize or organize a client system or other action system to do so.
The use of environmental work to apply negative constraints against a target system must, of course, be considered carefully. Once a conflictual strategy is employed, it is extremely difficult to engage that target system in subsequent collaboration or negotiation. Furthermore, backlash against the client system or worker is also a possibility. Clients must be informed of the practical and ethical considerations when such a conflictual strategy is contemplated.

Direct manipulation of the physical environment

Intervention in the physical environment is a strategy social workers may employ at micro through macro levels. A social worker might help a family arrange a home to secure more privacy for family members, or may use knowledge of environmental psychology to arrange meeting spaces and waiting rooms in an agency. He or she might also work to make public spaces accessible to the handicapped or might participate in city or regional planning. Finally, the social worker may work to remove or reduce noxious stressors or hazards from the environment.

Moving people between environments

Social workers are frequently involved in moving people from one physical and/or social environment to another. This often involves the formation of new systems as well. Foster care, adoptions, and hospital social work are a few of the areas that involve moving clients between environments.
Milieu therapy

Planning and managing environments designed to be therapeutic by nature is a form of social treatment usually used in residential settings such as group homes and mental hospitals. The therapeutic milieu can include any number of factors from physical design to a token economy to a democratic governance structure.

Political action

Political action covers a broad spectrum of interventions designed to change the political environment. Strategies include lobbying for legislative change, campaigning, registering voters, and informing policy makers.

Changing the organizational environment

Social welfare organizations and agencies can be made more responsive to clients through various changes in the organizational environment. These include changes in organizational rules, policies, and procedures; changes in organizational structure, roles, status, or objectives.

Producing change within social, cultural, and economic environments

Social workers may work to change social, cultural, or economic environments by exercising influence, developing systems, or changing activities, roles, communication patterns, or objectives within these environments.
Developing environmental resources

Developing resources in the environment involves identifying resources and organizing them to make them available to focal systems.

Image Work

According to the present conceptual framework, image work is a crucial part of all social work practice. It is important at every stage of the helping effort that those involved as client system, action system, and preferably target system, share a common image of the objectives and process of the effort. Empathy is the first form of image work. It consists of the worker attempting to approximate in his or her own mind and to verbally reproduce the other's image of the situation. Other forms of image work are discussed below.

Uncovering, discovering, and examining people's images

This process is one of the core processes of social work practice. It begins with the first contact with the client system, and with other systems as well. The worker uses empathic skills and active listening in interviewing with smaller systems, and research skills such as conducting surveys with larger systems in an attempt to approximate the images of the problem situation that are held by those who are involved.

Translating images to others

At various points in the helping process, the task of the social worker is to serve as an image translator. First of all, he or she must continually share his or her own perceptions of the situation
with the client system. However, social workers are often called upon as well to interpret or translate varying images of the problem situation between systems. This translation occurs in the social work roles of mediator and advocate, and in conjoint and family interviewing or therapy and group facilitation.

**Promoting positive images**

The social worker may at various times be called upon to promote a program, an agency, a client group, or a cause. As an advocate, he or she may need to promote a positive image of the client system to a target system, and may need to promote the client's strengths and assets to the client herself. Promotion of positive images is involved in advocacy, public relations, advertising, and publishing.

**Creating/communicating anticipatory images of change**

Developing a realistic image of the results that can be expected from the social work intervention and making sure that this image is mutual is a task of worker and client system. This creation and sharing of anticipatory images is part of the process known as "providing hope." Guided imagery and creative visualization are more specific techniques related to the anticipatory image.

**Constructing a clear and complete image of the problem situation**

Data gathering and assessment is nothing more than developing an image that will aid in planning for change. This is true at whatever level the assessment occurs. Although this constitutes the bulk of the worker's activities early on in the helping effort, the image will
continue to be augmented and modified throughout the entire change process.

In the assessment process, the social worker gathers and organizes data in an effort to develop an image that fits with objective reality. The social worker then matches this image of the presenting situation with a prototypical image in the form of hypothesis and/or theory to develop a problem definition.

Changing people's images

In the assessment process, the social worker must decide to what extent the images of the client system and/or potential target systems correspond to "objective reality," taking into account the particular cultures of the people involved. If these images seem distorted, the worker must determine whether this is interfering with the client's ability to meet basic needs. When distorted images are contributing to the problem the client system has brought and seem amenable to change, then part of the intervention plan when agreed upon by the client will be to work on those images. At times this may be accomplished simply by providing new information, or it may require more extensive counseling. Other methods used to change images include persuasion, expert testimony, teaching, publication, demonstration projects, and lobbying.

Adding to people's image systems

Providing people with new images is a necessary part of personal change, according to Schein (1979) who notes that in personal change an unfreezing process is followed by the person's learning new
behaviors or attitudes through modeling or scanning. Thus the helping process may include modeling new behaviors, bibliotherapy or other educational strategies at the micro level and may include expert testimony, publication, media exposure, and informing policy makers on the macro level.

System Work

The work that social workers do can ultimately be called system work: according to this conceptual framework, strengthening, developing, and augmenting social systems, and forming new systems toward the ultimate goal of enabling citizens to meet their basic needs through normal need-meeting systems whenever possible. System work consists of the following classes of activities.

System analysis

System analysis involves identifying and assessing system components, objectives, boundaries, energy exchange, linkage, and management functions. It also consists of identifying parts of the system that have become the system's environment by virtue of no longer being effectively influenced by the system.

Boundary work

Boundary work consists of loosening system boundaries to allow energy to more freely either enter or leave the system. Conversely, it also consists of tightening system boundaries to impede the energy flow in and out of the system.

The types of boundary work are myriad. At the level of the individual, the social worker may work to reduce dysfunctional defense
mechanisms (a form of boundary) in order to facilitate personal change; may help a client with assertiveness to reduce energy drained by excessive outside demands, or may help with budgeting to conserve economic resources. He or she may work to reduce a family's self-imposed social isolation or to limit outside interactions of a family (extramarital affairs, excessive adolescent peer influence, workaholism) that drain energy from the family system. As a group leader, the worker may plan for group membership to be open or closed, depending on the objectives of the group.

Gatekeeping at the agency level is a form of boundary work, and workers must frequently deal with loosening eligibility requirements to increase access to services by those who need them. Conversely, boundaries to services may be too loose, to the detriment of clients. For example, clients may be too readily placed in institutions or foster care. Finally, at the policy level, the way a target population is defined constitutes a form of boundary that may be a target of intervention for social workers. A variety of social work skills, roles, and methods may be employed in boundary work, including counseling, advocacy, planning, and organizational change.

Linking the system to energy from outside the system

Remembering that energy sources for social systems include information and resources (Anderson & Carter, 1978), then much of social work practice consists of this type of system work. Many client systems come to the social worker with specific energy needs. These include money, food, health care, or shelter, jobs, job skills, or job
finding skills, information, or social interactions. The social worker performs this linkage function through brokerage, advocacy, and teaching and consulting.

**Compounding energy from within the system**

Entropy can occur within a system if energy/resources are used inefficiently, or are used to manage disruptive parts of the system. It can also occur if communication does not flow freely among the various parts of the system.

Reduction of intrasystem conflict can be sought through mediation, advocacy, and counseling. Improving communication within a system may be accomplished by conjoint counseling, change in the formal structure of the system, performing boundary work among subsystems, and changing system policies and procedures. Reduction of conflict and improved communication can also be accomplished at times through a change in composition of the system (e.g., changing group membership). Finally, the social worker can increase the efficiency of how resources are used through effective management or consulting on management skills, changing the formal structure of a system, changing system roles or membership, or changing technologies.

**Augmenting systems**

Social workers frequently function to augment existing systems. In these cases the social worker may actually become part of the need-meeting system to extend that system's capabilities. Thus, system augmentation consists of supplementing a system with temporary or permanent "artificial" support which becomes part of the normal
system. It occurs when gaps or deficits occur temporarily or permanently in a normal system. For example, maintaining the home is a function normally performed within the family. When for some reason family members are unable to maintain the home and a threat to normal need-meeting results, the social worker may augment the family system with homemaker services. Furthermore, system augmentation may also be mechanical. For example, providing a motorized wheelchair for a paraplegic or a hearing aid for someone who is hearing impaired are both forms of system augmentation.

This augmenting function is most common when a client system is in crisis so that its coping capabilities are temporarily unable to deal with the situation. The social worker may provide emotional support, aid in decision making, and negotiate systems for clients whose coping capacities and energies are temporarily depleted because of the crisis. Social workers also augment systems in cases of long-term or permanent disability such as Morris (1977) described in his conceptual framework. In this instance the "caring-for" function including, for example, assigning a volunteer advocate or guardian to an incompetent client, provides system augmentation.

Forming new systems

A central goal of social work is to form effective need-meeting systems. In some cases this involves reuniting the focal system with a part of the need-meeting system from which it has become estranged, or linking a focal system to a normal response system. In other instances, the social worker may need to help the focal system find alternative ways of meeting its needs, thus forming new effective
need-meeting systems. Therefore, the change effort may accomplish networking, may result in establishment of a daycare cooperative or self-help group, or may form new systems through homesharing, adoption, or foster care arrangements.

As pointed out by Pincus and Minahan (1973), one of the steps in the helping process is forming action systems. An action system consists of those persons who will be directly involved, that is, those who will have tasks to complete or decisions to make in the intervention process. The action system usually exists only for the duration and purpose of the intervention. The worker forms and maintains action systems as part of the case manager's role.

The worker also helps to form action systems when organizing within a community. Examples of this include grassroots organizing, forming client groups and coalition groups, and convening interagency committees.

Finally, planning, program development, and grant writing by social workers often result in the formation of new systems for the purpose of addressing a particular social problem. These new systems may be of long standing.

System maintenance

System maintenance consists of those activities that keep the system running smoothly. Social workers perform these activities in their agencies, in organizations, groups, and other systems of which they are members. They also perform system maintenance within the action systems they have formed to accomplish the change effort.
System development

Developing systems consists of helping systems to acquire new or improved ways of functioning in order to meet needs more effectively. To accomplish this, social workers may teach new skills, reorganize systems, model behaviors, or improve system management. They may also remove barriers to effective functioning. Social workers do systems development with client systems as well as target systems.

System repair or integration

As noted elsewhere, when part of a system moves beyond the control of that system and interferes with or fails to contribute to the goal attainment of that system, then that phenomenon or subsystem has moved outside the system and has become, by definition, part of that system's environment. Under these circumstances, the system may continue to exert energy trying to bring that factor back into the system. If this interferes with normal need-meeting, the social worker and client system must decide whether to achieve normal need-meeting around or in spite of the errant subsystem, or to reintegrate the system. An example of this is the effect of an acting-out teenager on a family system. Social workers must also repair or reintegrate systems that have been artificially split, for example, moving a child from foster care back into the family.

In implementing social work methods, one must bear in mind that the purpose of social work is to promote normative need-meeting. Thus, social workers' priorities are always first to facilitate normal need-meeting, second, to assure that social welfare services are available and accessible to client systems who cannot access normal
need-meeting systems, and third, to work to institutionalize, normalize, and destigmatize social welfare services set up for the alleviation of problems whose scope of significant effect extends beyond the family.

Social Work Roles

The environmental, image, and system methods described above enter into the performance of social work roles. These roles are adapted from Klenk and Ryan (1974) and include the roles of:

1. Broker. As broker, the worker facilitates the linkage of the client system which has the problem to the services which potentially can resolve or alleviate the problem. The broker works to prepare the client system and the response system for the interaction to ensure a positive result. This preparation often involves image work while the linkage may result in forming a new system: the need-meeting system with regard to the specific problem.

2. Advocate. The advocate works to obtain help, rights, or dignity for a client system or disadvantaged population from a response system that has been reluctant or has failed to meet the client system’s needs. This response system may be in one of the normal environments, or in the social welfare environment. The advocate would begin the advocacy activities in a cooperative stance using image work, and if necessary would progress through bargaining and conflict strategies, using environmental work to point out or manipulate the
reinforcements or sanctions to the response system for responding or not responding to the client system's needs.

3. Teacher/consultant. Teaching and consulting are methods of system development. Both consist of providing information, instructing in skills, and modeling behaviors. However, consultation is aimed at helping agencies and organizations perform their functions more effectively while teaching is aimed at individuals singly or in groups. Both image work and environmental work (reinforcements) are inherent in the teacher and consultant roles.

4. Data manager. This role involves gathering, organizing, and analyzing data at any level of social work practice, micro through macro. As previously discussed, data management or information processing is primarily image work.

5. Caregiver. The social worker as caregiver provides ongoing support or care to a client system that temporarily or because of permanent or long-term disability is unable to effectively get its needs met and care for itself. This role involves system augmentation.

6. Administrator. The administrator manages a program, organization, agency, facility, or service unit. Administration involves decision-making, supervision, policy development, and implementation. Administration is mainly a system maintenance and system development function, but all types of environmental, image, and system work may be involved.
7. Outreach worker. As outreach worker, the social worker seeks to identify and offer services to individuals, groups, or populations who are experiencing problems in living or are at risk for problems. Outreach work requires environmental and system analysis and empathy with the target population. In identifying risk, the worker compares the identified situation with a prototypical image in the form of a theory or model of causation. Finally, in order to proffer services, the worker must be able to provide hope in the form of anticipatory images of services and change.

8. Case manager. As case manager, the social worker identifies the services and activities necessary to address the problems of the client system, and coordinates the implementation of these activities and services. The case manager role consists of environmental analysis; and system analysis, formation, development, and maintenance. Additional image, system, and environmental work may also be involved.

9. Mediator. In the mediator role, the social worker seeks to bring about solutions to problems between or among parties who have more or less equal power and resources with regard to the problem situation and/or who all recognize a desire to arrive at a collaborative or compromise solution. Mediation involves image interpretation and image development through modeling collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills and providing information.
10. Mobilizer. The main objective of mobilization is to "assemble and energize existing groups, resources, organizations, or resources, and bring them to bear on current or incipient problems. Its principal focus is on available or existing institutions, organizations, and resources within the community" (Klenk and Ryan, 1974, p. 11). The mobilizer role primarily involves systems work of all kinds.

11. Planner. The social worker as planner identifies human service needs on a micro or macro level, envisions a desired end state with respect to these needs, identifies existing and potential resources that can be brought to bear upon the needs, decides how the end state can be most effectively and efficiently achieved, and identifies participants, activities, tasks, roles, and schedules for achieving the end state. In short, planning consists of creating an anticipatory image and specifying how objective reality can be transformed to correspond with the image.

12. Evaluator. Evaluation involves weighing the actual against the desirable. The evaluator assesses system strengths against weaknesses, problems against advantages, and assets against liabilities. He or she weighs alternatives and priorities in decision making. Evaluation is used at all stages of planned change in order to assess the progress of the intervention plan. At the end of the change effort, or as part of a program's activities, the social worker evaluates the change effort or program to determine to what extent
goals have been met. In terms of the image, this involves comparing the reproductive images of the change or program outcomes with the anticipatory images of those outcomes. Evaluation also involves environmental and systems analysis.

Social control agent. Social workers are sometimes cast in the unwelcome role of social control agent. In fact, this is the role that many donors would impose upon social work vis-a-vis most disadvantaged client groups. However, the role is never justified except when actual risk exists to the community or to a powerless individual or group. Social workers may participate in the social control of convicted felons as probation and parole officers and may also serve as social control agents toward abusive or neglectful families of children, the aged, and the handicapped. Social control involves monitoring systems and environments and managing the reinforcements and punishments in the environment in order to regulate or change behavior.

The previous chapters in Part II have recast the practice of social work within an environmental-active conceptual framework that prescribes a generalist approach, defines the purpose of the profession in terms of meeting basic needs, and uses image theory, a hierarchy of needs, and the systems approach as overarching constructs. Thus in this chapter, social work methods and roles were described as environmental work, image work, and system work. Subsequent chapters will discuss the implications for practice of this conceptual framework.
PART III

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
CHAPTER 9

THE SOCIAL WELFARE PROBLEM

This chapter will describe considerations that the worker operating within an environmental-active conceptual framework should attend to when engaging and assessing the presenting social welfare problem. These considerations are related to six aspects of engagement and assessment: problem identification; problem statement; anticipatory image; data gathering and analysis; and problem definition. Note that Part III is not intended to be a "how-to-do-it" section. A number of excellent social work texts are available to teach social work skills. Rather, Part III is intended to provide some specific practice implications of following the framework described in Part II.

Identifying the Problem

Social work intervention begins when a problem is identified. That is, the change agent system or individual social worker becomes aware of an individual, group, or population potentially in need of social work services. How this problem identification comes about has implications for the course of the social work intervention.

Locus of Help Seeking

Help seeking or problem identification can be initiated at any level, individual through societal, and can arise from any
environment. The nature of the change agent system or the social worker's job description are primary determinants of the locus of help seeking. That is, a direct line worker will likely experience help seeking at the level of individuals and families, planners at the level of communities, and so on.

Problem identification at the societal level comes about when funding is made available to serve particular populations or to ameliorate specific social problems, or when social programs mandate inclusion of certain groups, as when federal community mental health legislation mandated services to rape victims, for example. Social workers who encounter problem identification at this level are usually administrators, planners, researchers, and educators. It is up to them to direct practitioners to translate these public policies into direct services, but a major concern at the point of help-seeking is, in this case, the requirements of the donor.

At the societal level, problem identification usually occurs within the political environment. Therefore, it is important for the worker to know the political climate in which the problem identification has taken place. What competing interests are being served by the proposed policies? What social control agendas are involved?

At the community level, problems may be identified in the political environment, in the economic environment, in the social welfare environment, or in the cultural environment; for example, the media or the schools. It is the community that frequently imposes services upon involuntary target groups. The social worker who works with these captive groups has special ethical considerations. Who is the
client? What are the ethical and practical problems in providing services to a person who is not there by choice?

Social workers often identify problems at the organizational level. They may do so through needs assessments in their community, or they may become aware of problems through their day-to-day work. These problems may even arise within the change agent system. For example, gatekeeping mechanisms may be too stringent and may exclude potential clients whose needs could be appropriately served by the agency. Similarly, the agency may not provide services during hours when working people can make use of them. Such situations place the worker in the situation of targeting for change the system that provides his or her livelihood. This raises ethical and practical problems for the worker. In these situations, the worker may also be working without explicit client sanction. Rather, the profession of social work itself is often the major sanctioning body for organizational change.

Problem identification at the level of groups can occur when an already existing group targets a situation that requires intervention, or when several persons with a common problem join forces to work on that problem.

The social worker in direct practice often encounters problem identification at the level of the family. Family members may request services on behalf of an entire family system, but often they request services on behalf of one family member; for example, a child or spouse. Frequently one family member may be targeted by the family for change. The social worker must then determine whether this family
member is an appropriate target and whether he or she can be engaged by the worker. If not, the worker must grapple with the ethical issues involved in targeting for change the behavior of an individual who has not contracted for the worker's services.

Finally, problems are identified at the level of the individual when a person approaches the change agent system on behalf of himself or another individual.

Questions to Ask at the Problem Identification Stage

The problem identification stage of social work practice begins the assessment process. The questions relevant to the problem identification stage include the following:

1. Who has brought the problem? At what level of system and within what environment has the problem been identified? Was the problem identified by donors, recipients, helping professionals, or others?

The main implication of this question is that the social worker is always accountable to the systems involved at the locus of help-seeking. This can mean that the worker must meet complicated regulations in order to acquire funding at the societal level, or only that he or she must provide feedback to another professional who has referred a client.

The environment within which help is sought will give the worker a clue to the nature of the end result that is desired by the problem identifier. It will not necessarily, however, give clues to the nature of the solution. For example, an employee may be referred to a social worker by her employer (the economic environment) because of
alcoholism. The end result sought by the employer relates to the employee's job effectiveness. However, the nature of the intervention may not lie within the economic environment.

2. Whose problem is it?

This question relates to who is the expected beneficiary of services. Although the motivation for bringing a problem to the attention of the change agent system is sometimes purely humanitarian, the person or group who identifies the problem often expects to benefit from the interventions. The employer in the above example expects improved job performance from her impaired employee. The family with an acting out adolescent expects a more peaceful home environment. Part of the worker's accountability to the system that brings the problem is to communicate a realistic image of the worker's responsibility to that system in terms of confidentiality issues and the extent to which the worker will pursue that system's goals and agendas. The more individuals involved in the problem identification stage, the more complex the image work involved.

The question of who "has" the problem also relates to whether services are sought, proffered, or imposed (Germain and Gitterman, 1980). The issues and activities of the social worker in the beginning stages of the intervention process will be different in each of the three situations.

3. Why is the problem being brought at this time? Is the problem an ongoing situation or a crisis? What is the political, economic, cultural, or social climate at the time that the problem is brought?
At the micro level, the fact that an ongoing problem is being brought at this particular time may point to a change that has either made the problem more difficult to tolerate or has created hope that the situation can be improved. At the macro level, the timing of the problem identification may signal increased public awareness to the problem, a decreased tolerance of deviance, or a climate more sensitive to the plight of the needy.

Thus when a problem is identified, the worker will begin to form an image of the environment to which the problem is related, who is concerned about the problem situation, who expects to gain from the intervention, and the climate within which the problem situation has been identified. The following section will discuss the considerations related to how the problem is framed by the client system, the social worker, and others involved in or affected by the problem situation.

The Problem Statement

The problem statement process of social work intervention coincides with or overlaps the problem identification process. The problem statement process requires careful image work and may require system and environmental work as well. According to Johnson (1983),

The manner in which the problem is stated gives direction to all the stages that follow. The more precise the statement and the more individualized the situation, the more relevant and salient can be the goals and desired solutions. (p. 73)

Thus, when a problem is identified, the social worker must carefully use his or her skills to develop a clear image of the problem as the client system sees it, as the target system sees it, as
significant others who have an impact upon or who are affected by the problem see it, and as the problem exists in its "objective" reality. At the macro level this requires data gathering and data analysis skills. At the micro level it requires interviewing and relationship skills. The problem statement phase may extend into other phases of the helping process, since the most pressing problem may not immediately emerge from the client system's description of concerns.

Empathy is the key to the problem statement stage. Again, in terms of the image of the problem, empathy is the extent to which the social worker is able to approximate the other's image of the problem situation and to convey this image in words. Without empathy, intervention tends to be inefficient because the social worker and client system, in effect, are relating to two different problems.

Questions to Ask at the Problem Statement Stage

The first question to ask about the problem is

1. How clear and complete is the other's image of the problem?

If the problem statement seems unclear, confused, or incomplete, one or more of a number of factors may be operating. There may be communication barriers that are preventing the worker from understanding the problem. This may be due to poor communication skills of either the client or the worker, or it may be due to cultural differences.

Another possibility is that the image of the feelings or values associated with the problem may be more paramount to the client system than is the problem situation itself. For example, the client's feelings of panic, shame, or depression may obscure the problem.
Similarly, values or feelings associated with the help-seeking process may interfere.

Yet another reason for a vague or confusing problem statement is the possibility that the other's image of the antecedents to the problem or the results expected may be clearer than the problem itself. In a typical example of the former, parents may bring a child into an agency for services because of something that has happened to the family in the past—a divorce, neglect, or abusive behavior—but they may have a hard time describing a problem in the present (indeed, there may not be any). In the latter case, a client system may be bringing a problem because they are aware of services that may be beneficial to them rather than because of the immediacy of the problem. (This is a frequent situation in social service agencies, but is sometimes also characteristic of grant writers.)

The question of the clarity and completeness of the image of the problem should be asked with regard to the client system and also the target system and collateral contacts. When discrepancies exist between the various social systems involved in the problem, the social worker may act as a mediator, interpreter, or facilitator in an attempt to bring about a shared clear image of the problem.

A second question to ask at the problem statement stage is:

2. How 'realistic' is the client's (and others') image of the problem?

(The social worker must bear in mind, however, that reality is relative, so that asking this question is sometimes tantamount to
asking, "Does the client's image of the problem coincide with my enlightened image of the problem?)"

At the macro level, an example of an unrealistic view of a problem occurred when one of Reagan's top advisors, Edwin Meese, stated that there was not a hunger problem in America. At a micro level, the lack of realism may be evident in paranoid thinking or in overblown expectations of a relationship or of the behavior of another.

In general, a lack of realism is manifested at the problem statement phase in one of two ways: first, the person's image of the immediate situation may contain significant distortions, so that the situation looks much different to him or her than it does to others. Second, the person's prototypical image of the situation may be unrealistic. For instance, an agency administrator may expect more work from her staff than is reasonably possible, or a person who has lost a spouse may expect not to have alterations in functioning as a result.

A third question to ask at the problem statement stage is:

3. What is the meaning of this problem situation to the client? In the client's mind, what does this situation say about the client? About others? What does the client think causes and perpetuates the problem? What is the meaning of the situation within the client's unique culture?

According to Green (1982):

the meaning of a problem for the client is not simply in the fact that a disruptive personal event has intruded upon his or her daily affairs. Its meaning is in what the client makes of that disruption and on what it suggests to him or her about how reality
is constructed and what can be done about it. It is the meaning of a problem, not simply its occurrence, that must be of interest to the culturally responsive worker. (p. 36)

Green notes that any culture has its own set of explanations for problems. These explanations include causes of the problem, the role of the person with the problem, the prognosis, what should be done, and the valued result.

These explanations amount to a "cognitive map" that is more or less shared by members of the culture, by which they organize and act on the information concerning a problem. This map or "explanatory model" is part of the conception of the problem that the client brings to the therapist. (p. 32)

In other words, most people have an image of types of problem situations that is culture-specific. This culturally based image includes distinct views of "the self, of others, of classification and relationship, of time and space, and of force or power" (Green, 1982, p. 33). Therefore, any problem statement must take into account the individual's cultural background. In order to put the problem statement in context, the worker must either be familiar with or learn about the shared images of the culture. He or she must then check these images against what Bloom (1975) calls "individualizing information" in order to avoid stereotyping the client.

Green says, therefore, that the worker should determine whether or not the client relates to a cultural model of the problem. If the client can articulate such a model, then the cultural model must be taken into account in the helping process.

The implications of the questions in the problem statement stage then, are the following: First, based on what is known about environ
mental perception, the social worker must pay particular attention to being able to approximate the images of the significant systems involved in the problem. This is necessary because we know that each party will be relating or behaving in relation to his or her own image of the problem situation rather than in relation to some objective definition of the problem. Second, for the same reason, the worker may at this stage begin working on image translation within and between systems, including the client and change agent system. Third, the degree of realism in the client's image of the problem situation suggests concerns and activities for the intervention. For example, when the client has an unrealistic prototypical image of the presenting situation, changing that image to a more realistic one and offering support is frequently the main or only service needed. Finally, if the client's view of the problem situation contains obvious distortions, the worker and client must decide to what extent these distortions affect his or her need for services.

Clearly, the problem statement process benefits from the introduction of image theory as an overarching construct. The next section on the anticipatory image continues to emphasize the use of the idea of the image within the assessment process.

The Anticipatory Image

At the anticipatory image stage of assessment, the worker asks the question, "Does the client system have an image of an expected outcome of the intervention?" This question is important, because we know from image theory that if an image of change or progress doesn't exist, change either won't occur or will be stifled (Boulding, 1956).
Therefore, in this model, specific attention is paid to the anticipatory image.

If the client system lacks a clear anticipatory image of the expected outcome of the intervention, there could be a number of reasons for this. In larger client systems, anticipatory images may exist but may be numerous and conflicting because of competing interests, resulting in a lack of a unified image. Or a community or society may want something done about a problem, but may not have been involved in systematic thinking about a specific possible outcome.

Smaller client systems may lack an anticipatory image if the problem situation is overwhelming. They may lack hope that change can occur, or they may lack realistic models of the desired outcome. For instance, as mentioned earlier, if the parents in a family have lacked adequate parenting themselves, they are likely not to have a picture of what good parenting looks like.

The worker must also determine whether or not the client's image of the desired outcome is realistic. First of all, is it consistent with legal and ethical practice? For example, is a target system other than the client system involved, and if so, what are the ethical implications of targeting this system? Or, in another instance, is an adjudicated client requesting a result that violates the terms of his or her court order, and, if so, what are the implications of this?

Second, are the necessary resources available to bring about the desired change? Furthermore, does the worker have the sanction necessary to help the client gain access to these resources? Note that within this conceptual framework, social workers assert that the
client is entitled to assistance in meeting basic needs, so that if the resources to meet these needs are unavailable, this situation may become a public issue that requires attention.

Third, does the technology required to bring about the desired change exist? Therapies to cure most chronic mental illness, for instance, have not been found, and Morris asserts that about ten percent of the population has problems for which we have no adequate therapeutic solutions (Morris, 1977, p. 354).

The skills and activities of the worker involved in the anticipatory image stage include interviewing and data gathering skills to ascertain the nature and extent of the client system’s image of the desired outcome of the intervention. As in the problem statement activities, this may require considerable empathy as the worker attempts to verbally approximate this image.

However, whereas empathy is the theme of the problem statement phase, particularly in direct practice, providing hope is the theme of the anticipatory image stage. In effect, beginning to share or develop realistic anticipatory image of the expected outcome of the intervention provides a systematic framework for this important social work theme. The significance of realistic hope is well expressed by Germain and Gitterman (1980):

> Always, in helping people with problems in living, including life transitions, it is important to convey a sense of realistic hope. With hope, people take action and strive toward achieving goals. Without hope they become apathetic, despairing, and unable to move forward. Hope seems to be a necessary condition for help to be effective, although it is not sufficient in itself to cause a person to change . . . . If neither the worker nor the client has any hope of change, then it seems likely that no
change—except, perhaps, for the worst—can be achieved, and the contact is best terminated before it begins! (p. 111)

Again, it is the contention of this paper that image or environmental perception theory provides the theoretical basis for the above observation. Furthermore, image or environmental perception theory would suggest that something more explicit is required than a sense of hope. That is, that the more explicit and realistic the image of change that can be shared and in fact visualized by worker and client, the more likely that positive change will occur.

It follows, then, that if client systems lack a realistic image of the change or outcome, developing this image, which begins in the anticipatory image stage, may be identified as a goal for the intervention, and strategies such as modeling, teaching, bibliotherapy, and imagery may become part of that intervention.

As client systems become larger and more complex, and as target systems and action systems become engaged in the helping process, the multiplicity of images of the desired outcome must begin to be addressed. Images must be shared, translated, and clarified. In fact, it is likely that it will be necessary for the worker to attempt to negotiate a shared image of the desired outcome. The more discrepant the images of change held by the various participants in the helping process, the more difficult it will be to produce and sustain positive change. Thus with larger systems—community through society—skill at image promotion, management, and negotiation is extremely important when implementing change efforts.
A final comment on the anticipatory image stage is that it is ongoing. The anticipatory image will continue to be clarified, developed, changed, and negotiated as the problem becomes clearer, resources are identified, and the capacities of the systems involved in the change effort are identified.

**Data Gathering and Analysis**

Upon developing a preliminary problem statement and shared anticipatory image of the desired result, the worker continues to gather data as part of the assessment process. These data are chosen to answer questions that will aid in strategy selection.

Perhaps the most important question related to this stage is:

1. What is the best available knowledge related to this problem?

This question requires that the social worker maintain access to the current literature and to other experts with regard to specific problems rather than to assume a generic or common sense problem definition. The worker then individualizes this knowledge to the specific client system and problem situation.

Though this aspect of data gathering is not specifically discussed in many social work models, it is a vital step for two reasons. The first reason is that there are some problems that at best will not be helped, and at worst will be exacerbated by generic social work intervention. Among these are, for example, alcoholism and classic school phobia. Furthermore, the discovery of highly effective and/or efficient approaches to certain problems may be overlooked without attention to the current literature. The second reason is that the best available knowledge can provide clues if not answers to some of
the remaining questions, and/or can guide the direction of further data collection.

A second question to which data collection may be addressed is:

2. What human need is being interfered with? Where does this need fall on the hierarchy of needs discussed elsewhere? If located above the survival needs, are the survival needs and other needs that fall below the identified need being adequately met?

This question is more complex than it appears on the surface and it also interacts with development of the problem statement because often the presenting problem is a reaction to the interference with a need rather than a direct expression of it.

A related question then, asks in which environment the problem has its basis. That is:

3. What is the locus of the problem?

A fourth question asks:

4. What is the scope or range of significant effect of the problem?

The interaction of the best available knowledge, human need being interfered with, and scope and locus of the problem are well illustrated by a case example from Gilbert, Miller, and Specht (1980). In this example, Mr. Stringfellow, a middle-aged aeronautical engineer, has recently begun to drink excessively and has developed a set of prurient sexual interests and behaviors. The worker finds these behaviors began after Stringfellow was laid off (having little chance of reinstatement) as part of a depression in the California
aeronautics industry. Investigation of best available knowledge showed that such behavior was common among otherwise well-functioning men who had experienced sudden job loss (Gilbert, Miller, & Specht, 1980, pp. 70-71).

In the Mr. Stringfellow case, the literature pointed to answers to the other questions asked so far. Although the information on the case is sketchy, we might surmise that the basic needs being interfered with are esteem needs, safety needs, and the need to affect one's environment. Furthermore, we find that the locus of the problem is in the economic environment. Finally, we can hypothesize that the scope, or range of significant effect of the problem is at least community wide, in that a number of aeronautics workers in the community are likely experiencing problems with an identical source.

Next, to further refine definition of the client and focal system, the worker must identify the environments of these systems related to the identified problem. As previously discussed, the framework follows Churchman's definition of the environment on page 115.

If the client and worker believe that the social worker's intervention can make a difference in "it," then "it" (the environmental factor), will become one of the targets of the intervention. If not, then objectives must be met in alternative ways or in spite of the environmental constraints. When the environment thus identified is, by conventional definition, part of the focal system, then a goal of the intervention whenever feasible should be to reintegrate that system.
Assessment of the problem situation as well as the resources available for dealing with it continues with analysis of the various systems related to the problem. The first aspect of this part of the assessment process is identifying these systems.

5. Who is the client system?

Remember that according to Pincus and Minahan (1973), the client system must meet two criteria: first, they contract for the worker's services, and second, they are the expected beneficiary of those services. For social workers in such fields as criminal justice and child and adult protective services, the client system initially is often the community. For social workers who work with children, the client system is often the parents or school system. Social workers often confuse the client and target system, which can result in practical and ethical problems in the intervention process.

6. Who is the focal system?

In this model, the focal system is defined as the unit of attention. This can be the same as or different from the client system. It is the system to which the worker will focus the intervention. For example, in the child welfare case, the client system may be the community (and may remain the community if the family cannot be engaged), the target system may be a parent, and the focal system is the family.

7. Is there an identified beneficiary system?

The presence of an identified beneficiary system, such as a mentally incompetent individual or a population of underaged or incompetent individuals, alerts the social worker that special ethical and practical considerations apply. The beneficiary system will probably
be unable to contract for the worker's services, and the worker should try to involve an objective third party—if not an advocate, then at least a supervisor, to protect the interests of this system.

8. What is the normal need-meeting system(s) if any, related to the identified problem? In other words, in terms of the need or needs being interfered with, where would the necessary resources ordinarily be secured?

According to Wolin, (1967), the normal need-meeting systems are the family, the marketplace, the informal system, and the polity, which we shall assume to include government and law, including institutional or Type A social welfare.

9. What alternative response systems have been identified or engaged related to the identified problem?

These systems would include Type B, or residual social welfare systems, as well as systems not traditionally seen as meeting the identified need.

After identifying the client system, focal system, impinging environments, normal need-meeting systems, and alternative response systems, the worker must analyze each of these systems and environments. The assessment will be guided by the worker's general knowledge of human behavior and by the best available knowledge related to the identified problem.

What are the resources available to each of these systems that could be brought to bear on the problem? What are the deficits in each system? How are the management functions carried out? In addition to these questions, the worker assesses the characteristics and
location of system boundaries, the nature and quality of linkages between systems, and the potential for forming new linkages.

Analyzing the impinging environments involves identifying and analyzing stressors and potential stressors, identifying and analyzing potential resources, and determining the potential for integrating the impinging environment into existing systems or involving it in the formation of new systems.

Social workers don't always have the luxury of time, resources, and access to information that allows a complete data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the change process in direct practice should begin at the meeting with the client even before the assessment process is complete. Even so, a thoroughgoing collection and analysis of data is to be strived for, in order to develop a clear and complete definition (or reproductive imago) of the problem. Considerations related to problem definition are discussed in the next section.

**Problem Definition**

A problem definition is a clear, complete, logically consistent, and concise verbal picture or image of the nature of the problem situation. It gives an in-depth description of the problem and of the desired change that includes a hypothesis about dynamics and the factors that have caused and/or are perpetuating the problem. It further describes the imaginal, environmental, and system constraints that stand between the presenting situation and the desired end state. Thus the problem definition points to potential systems, environmental factors, images, and behaviors that might effectively be targeted for change. The problem definition is the culmination or goal of the
problem identification, problem statement, anticipatory image, data gathering, and assessment processes.

The major overt sources of the problem definition are: (1) theories of social systems and human behavior; (2) best available knowledge pertaining to the type of presenting problem, related or similar problems, or aspects of the presenting problem; and (3) individualized assessment. Also contributing to the problem definition either overtly or covertly are the worker's and client system's personal and cultural interpretations of the problem.

Definition of the problem is mainly image work. It consists of the worker and client system mutually arriving at a complete and accurate reproductive image of the problem situation. This reproductive image is then matched against various alternative prototypical images. These prototypical images are, in a sense, hypotheses derived from theory, models, current knowledge, cultural knowledge, and other sources. They provide alternative possible explanations of the dynamics and causes of the problem, what is perpetuating it, and what is blocking or preventing change.

The development of a reproductive image and the utilization of prototypes is a reciprocal process that begins in the problem identification process and continues throughout the helping effort. Theoretical, empirical, cultural, and experiential knowledge tend to be used by the worker to guide data collection. The information that is gathered then tends to direct the worker toward one or another alternative prototype.
The nature of this reciprocal process argues for an eclectic approach to problem definition. This is because helping professionals who are trained under a particular school of human behavior theory, ego psychology for example, in effect have only one (or at the most a limited number) of prototypical image(s). Thus they tend from the start of the assessment process to gather data that confirm the particular image of the problem and to ignore data that don't fit.

The worker makes decisions among alternative prototypical images based upon goodness of fit of data to prototype, and client systems' perception of the appropriateness and goodness of fit of the prototype. The worker also chooses among alternative prototypes based on parsimoniousness and proximity of the hypothesized causal or problem perpetuating factors to the actual problem.

In the present conceptual framework, the problem definition is designed to pinpoint need, deficits, and barriers in the various images, environments, and systems that impinge upon the problem situation. Therefore, it should be couched in the language of the framework. The worker infers whether the problem or parts of the problem are imaginal, systemic, or environmental from the matching of problem situation to prototypical image.

Furthermore, problem definition in this model is always couched in terms of what human need or needs are being interfered with and what is causing the interference. This avoids a nosological definition that results in a circular labelling process. This form of problem definition also helps to prevent a clinical/normative approach to
the problems brought to social workers, and aids in the process of planning.

For example, suppose that the client system happens to be a chronically schizophrenic individual. Under a medical model, the problem definition would state that the problem is a mental disorder brought on by dysfunctional family interactions or by chemical imbalances, or by other factors, depending upon one's favorite model of schizophrenia. It is likely, then, that the individual would be routinely referred to a physician for medication, and placed in a therapy group or given individual psychotherapy. Depending on the nature of the agency, the worker might also provide or link the client to supportive services.

However, the present model would state the problem as the individual's inability to get certain basic needs met. In this case the worker may find that needs are unmet at every level. The worker may then initially determine why each of those needs is unmet. For example, the physiological and safety needs may be unmet because the individual is unable to hold a job or is unable to maintain a routine. Belonging needs may be unmet because people in the community are afraid of the mentally ill. In this case it is an oversimplification to assume that what is causing and perpetuating these problems is the disorder of schizophrenia. Instead, the worker would consider the disorder along with other data. He or she would ask, for example, "Does the disorder matter to the system?" "Can the system do anything about it?"
At the time the client enters the agency, the answer to the first question is likely to be "yes," and the answer to the second is probably "no," placing the disorder in the category of environment. Best available knowledge about schizophrenia would then help provide the worker with an answer to the second question with regard to the action system. In other words, could a potential action system do anything about the disorder? If so, the disorder could become a potential environmental target of intervention, but not necessarily the primary or sole target.

In other problem situations, the presenting problem may be the unmet need itself, but also could be a result or symptom of the unmet need. Again, theoretical or empirical knowledge can help provide clues to the nature of the unmet needs.

Defining the problem in terms of unmet needs has the further advantage of helping to clarify who is the client system and of identifying possible ethical issues. For example, services of a social agency are sometimes sought by a third party on behalf of an individual who is in some way deviant. The need being interfered with in such an example is often not readily apparent. The worker must then suspect that he or she is being asked to perform a social control function and must attend to the ethical and practical issues inherent in such a situation.

As in the case of the schizophrenic individual client system, the failure to meet basic needs may be multidetermined. The problem definition then would include all the significant factors that impinge on the problem situation.
The information to be included in the problem definition is shown in the following outline.

Outline of the Problem Definition

I. Locus of help-seeking: Who has sought help at what system level, and in what environment. May or may not coincide with client system. Suggests first level of accountability.

II. Client system: System that has contracted with the worker and that is the expected beneficiary of services, not including any phenomenon within the system that has an impact on the problem but is presently beyond the influence or control of the client system.

III. Identified beneficiary system: Any identified vulnerable system whose basic needs are clearly being interfered with, who is clearly unable to contract for services because of age or competence, and who is expected to benefit as the result of services.

IV. Statement of the Problem.

A. Basic needs that are being interfered with.

B. Nature of the problem.

1. Urgency/seriousness.

2. Time proximity to precipitating factors.

3. Space proximity to precipitating/perpetuating factors.

C. Meaning of the problem.

1. Client's image of the problem and its meaning as well as the image and meaning of the problem to others involved in the helping process.

   a. Cultural meanings associated with the problem.
b. Discrepancies, conflicts, and agreements among the various images and meanings: degree to which these may contribute to or detract from change effort.

V. Anticipatory Image: The images held by those affected by and affecting the problem situation of the desired end result of the intervention.

A. Clarity/completeness of an anticipatory image.

B. Feasibility of realizing the image.

1. Existence/nonexistence of technology to realize the image.

2. Availability/nonavailability of resources to accomplish the imaged change.

VI. Analysis of the problem situation: That which stands between the problem situation and realization of the anticipatory image of change.

A. Best available knowledge related to the problem:

1. For each basic need being interfered with:

   a. Description of other systems that have an impact or potential impact on the problem, or are influenced by the problem.

      i. Likelihood that each impacting or impacted system can be engaged in the helping process.

      ii. Relevant strengths and weaknesses of each system.

   b. Descriptions of environmental factors that have an impact or potential impact on the problem;
likelihood that each environmental factor can be influenced by a potential action system in the helping effort.

c. Description of imaginal factors that have an impact or potential impact on the problem; likelihood that each imaginal factor can be influenced by a potential action system in the helping effort.

2. Scope of significant effect of the problem.

B. Environment in which the normal need-meeting system related to this problem is located. Likelihood that a need-meeting system within this environment can be mobilized on behalf of the client system.

C. Resources available that can be brought to bear on the problem.

1. Strengths, coping capabilities, and resources available to the helping effort from:

   a. client system
   b. normal need-meeting environments

2. Supplementary or alternative resources available to the helping effort from the social welfare environment.

   a. Technologies available to address the problem.
   b. Accessibility to client system of social welfare services and resources to address the problem.
   c. Sanction and resources available to worker to implement most effective strategies.
The objective of developing the problem definition is to create the clearest and most complete reproductive image of the problem situation possible. To the extent that this objective is accomplished, the worker will arrive at a concise analysis that suggests how needs should be prioritized, what are the likely points of intervention, what changes are desirable, what changes are feasible, to what extent the problem is a public issue, and what end result can be expected. In other words, a clear definition of the problem tends to point to the professional solution. Considerations related to solution of the problem will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 10

ACCOMPLISHING CHANGE

The environmental-active conceptual framework assumes that failure of normative need-meeting may occur and be sustained because of a variety of constraints related to environments, systems, and images. Furthermore, the framework relates to a full range of client systems. Because of the range of problem definitions and client systems, an eclectic approach to intervention strategies is advocated. Differential selection of strategies takes place during planning and contracting with the client. These strategies are then implemented and evaluated toward the objective of accomplishing change. The implications of the environmental-active conceptual framework for these activities are discussed in the present chapter.

Contracting and Planning

The Contract

The contracting process consists of developing a verbal agreement between the client system and worker and possibly others regarding the nature and direction of the anticipated change effort. According to Gilbert, Miller, and Specht (1980), the contract consists of these elements:

1. A statement as to what will be worked on or toward.
2. A statement of how the objective will be attained, that is, a description of the anticipated process.

3. A prediction of how much time will be involved in achieving the agreed-upon end.

4. A delineation of the mutual responsibilities of worker and client during the endeavor. (p. 57)

5. Specification of outcome measures (added by present author).

The present era of accountability is making increasingly scarce the emergent, open-ended, psychoanalytically based modes of social work practice. In their place are now models of social work practice of which social work contracts are an integral part. Effective social work interventions are increasingly characterized as mutual, explicit, and time-limited.

Environmental perception theory, or the idea of the image, supports the notion of the social work contract. To put it simply, the contract and the contracting process facilitate the development of a shared image of the change effort. To the extent that the images of the client system and the worker coincide, the potential success of the change effort will be enhanced. Thus the present framework views the goal of the contracting process as the development of a mutual, explicit image of the goals of the change effort and the means to attain these goals. The time framework included in the contract further increases the explicitness and mutuality of the contract and thus the image.

From this standpoint, the problems of double agendas and corrupt contracts on the part of the worker or client are not only unethical
when used by the worker, but are unsound on the basis of image theory and will impede the change effort. Failure to clearly explicate the plan is likely to have the same results. Fischer (1978) and Compton and Galaway (1979) both cite research to support this idea. In fact, Fischer points out that a lack of congruence in the expectations (anticipatory images) of worker and client is a major factor in client discontinuance.

Because the present model uses the idea of image to support the use of contract in social work, the process of developing the contract as well as the process of assessment in this model emphasizes empathic skills. In other words, even when the contract is written, detailed sharing, negotiation, and clarification is necessary to ensure that the contract does indeed reflect shared images of the change process. Contracting is also sound as a system development strategy. The development of a contract, either written or unwritten, removes the worker from the category of environment vis-a-vis the client and vice-versa, and results in the creation of a new system developed specifically to work on the client's problem.

For system reasons as well as image reasons, the ideal procedure for any given problem situation would be to develop contracts with everyone involved in the change effort, including members of target and action systems, or to involve everyone in the original contract. Social workers should not regard contract negotiation as a strategy for use only with client systems. For target systems as well, collaboration is more effective than conflict, energy exchange within system boundaries is easier than energy exchange across system boundaries,
and shared images of change are more likely to be fulfilled than discrepant images.

A third rationale for use of the social work contract relates to the hierarchy of needs. This paper has shown elsewhere that the need to influence one's environment belongs on the hierarchy and occurs at a fairly basic level. The social work contract assures the client system the opportunity to influence its environment. Without this opportunity within the change effort, higher needs to be addressed by the change effort, such as belonging and esteem needs, are likely to recede or vanish. This helps to explain why clients whose expectations are not addressed tend to drop out of the helping relationship.

The social work contract may be written or unwritten. (Fischer [1978] points out that a written contract is preferable, since it is not subject to lapses in memory or understanding and provides a visible measure of progress toward a goal.) Contract negotiation begins with the first contact and continues throughout the intervention. Its requisites, according to Maluccio and Marlow (1974), include mutual agreement, differential participation, reciprocal accountability, and explicitness.

Thus we see that the social work contract has a theoretical basis in environmental perception/image theory, general systems theory, and motivational theory ala Maslow. As shown by Fischer (1978) and Compton and Galaway (1979), the contract's positive relationship to the success of an intervention has empirical support as well. Because of these empirical and theoretical bases, the contract should be considered by the worker for use with target and action systems in
addition to client systems. The social work contract has been used effectively with individuals, families, groups, and communities (Maluccio & Marlow, 1974). The content of contract components is discussed below.

Components of the contract

What will be worked on or toward

In the present framework, the contract should include both what will be worked on and what will be worked toward. The latter is specified in terms of basic needs that will be met or need-meeting that will be enhanced by the intervention. That which will be worked on includes specification of such barriers to need-meeting as discrepant, incomplete, or distorted images, inaccessibility of resources, system boundaries that are too tight or too loose, inefficient system management, environmental stressors, and so forth. What will be worked on is determined by

1) Barriers to normal need-meeting identified in the problem definition.

2) Likelihood of impacting those barriers based on amenability of the target system, image, behavior, or environment to change; availability of technology to accomplish the change; availability of resources to accomplish the change.

3) Willingness of both the client system and change agent system to support the specific change effort.
Description of the anticipated process

The environmental-active conceptual framework supports an eclectic approach to intervention. This means that strategies for change should be selected differentially based upon best available knowledge about the type of problem as well as knowledge about the particular situation. Since the failure to meet basic needs is often multidetermined, a variety of methods, roles, and skills may be used for any particular intervention. Furthermore, change strategies may include only specific, discrete activities, such as providing food in an emergency or referring a client to a service provider, or may involve the employment of rather complex social work or therapy models, such as gestalt therapy or locality development.

The client system and social worker agree specifically to the process to be used in accomplishment of the goal. This requires explaining the rationale for the particular process used in order to achieve informed consent and in order to develop a shared image to support the process.

Time frame

Specifying a time frame for achievement of the stated goals sets boundaries on the change effort, increases its efficiency, and enhances the shared image of change.

Mutual responsibilities of worker and client system

The contract will specify the tasks, roles, and activities that both the change agent system and the client system will engage in. It may also specify tasks, roles, and activities of others engaged in the
helping effort. (Pincus and Minahan [1973] identify the system made up of those individuals who can be engaged in a particular helping effort as the "action system" related to that effort.)

Since social work roles have been spelled out elsewhere, it may be helpful in the contract to describe the roles of the client in proactive terms as well. These roles may include planner and evaluator as well as advocate for self or others, learner, information provider, consumer, or citizen. Describing the roles of members of the client system in active terms enhances both the worker's and the client's image of the client as self-determined and self-actualizing. (Of course, this image must also be supported behaviorally).

Specification of outcome measures

Worker and client system must stipulate at the planning stage what the outcome measures of the intervention will be. In other words, what measurable behavioral or tangible indicators will be taken as evidence that the objectives have been achieved? This assures accountability for the intervention, facilitates evaluation of the change effort, and enhances the anticipatory image.

Relating the Contract to the Problem Definition

The contract, which specifies objectives and how they will be accomplished, must be directly related and linked to the problem definition. In fact, the intervention plan should follow logically from the definition of the problem. Their interrelationship is discussed below.
Locus of help seeking, client system, and identified beneficiary system

The first contact, when the worker provisionally agrees to address the problem brought by another system, requires an initial agreement or contract. Although this initial contract is rudimentary and usually not written, the worker should begin to address these areas:

- Mutual expectations of initial contacts;
- Confidentiality issues and procedures;
- Agency, professional, ethical, and personal limitations on the helping effort;
- Social control issues;
- Practical considerations: fees, locations, times, etc.;
- Hope that positive change can occur (anticipatory image).

Statement of the problem and anticipatory image

The problem statement and/or anticipatory image, as noted previously, constitutes the first element of the social work contract (what will be worked on or toward). In complex or difficult problem situations, part of the task in working the problem statement and anticipatory image into the contract is to partialize the problem and expected results, and to prioritize the various aspects of the problem and accompanying goals.

This first element of the contract rarely shows up on the contract in the form in which the client system initially presents it. It tends to change over time as a result of skilled image work which begins during the first contact. Again, the goal of this image work
is to arrive at a shared image of the situation and shared vision of feasible results.

Analysis of the problem situation

The analysis of the problem situation provides worker and client system with an image of the nature of the constraints and barriers that stand between the present and desired situations as well as the resources available to the change effort. This image contains possible points of intervention, and possible systems and resources to enlist in a specific plan. The selections made from the identified alternatives will form the remainder of the contract: nature of the intervention process, time frame, and roles and responsibilities of worker and client system. Priorities in choosing among these alternatives will be discussed in the next section.

Priorities in Planning

The value and theory bases of the present model suggest that there are definite priorities in the selection of intervention points and strategies within the parameters of the problem definition. These priorities relate to the needs being interfered with, normative need-meeting, system preservation, environmental approach, cultural specificity, client self-determination, mutuality, and empowerment. These priorities will be discussed below.

Needs Being Interfered With

In general, unmet needs of the client system should be addressed in an order or priority that corresponds to their place in the hierarchy of needs. In other words, if a problem statement includes abuse
in the home as well as marital problems and lack of cultural opportunities, the abuse problem—a safety need issue (and sometimes a survival issue)—should be targeted first, for reasons of effectiveness discussed elsewhere (and for reasons of common sense, as well).

There will be situations in which the client system will not be aware of the entire spectrum of unmet needs. For example, client systems may be unaware of how a toxic condition such as alcoholism, a physiological state and survival issue, is affecting the higher level needs such as belonging, which may have been the presenting problem. Image work may be necessary to help the client system become aware of these needs.

Normative Need-Meeting

Strategies and tactics that promote need-meeting through "normal" environments and systems should, when feasible, be selected over strategies and tactics that promote need-meeting through the social welfare system. This means that networking, developing normal response systems, enabling or inducing normal response systems to meet clients' needs, and enabling client systems to obtain help from normal response systems are important goals. Social workers should also work to institutionalize and normalize residual social programs that affect large numbers of people for whom normal response systems have proven inadequate. These principles are consistent with the present conceptual framework's value stance that it is good and healthy for people to have their needs met through their primary groups and through normative need-meeting institutions.
System Preservation

Intervention plans designed to maintain, strengthen, or repair social systems should take precedence over plans that ignore, disrupt, or dismantle social systems. This principle is seen as consistent with the value that people should be dealt with justly and humanely, and is related to the notion that the environment should support social systems in their task of meeting the needs of their members.

Environmental Approach

Intervention plans that utilize environmental strategies and targets should be preferred over plans that assume individual deficit, illness, or culpability as the target for change, and that use individual remediation as the preferred strategy. This is in keeping with the environmental-active approach and enhances the dignity of clients by avoiding victim-blaming.

Cultural Specificity

Especially when the client system is of a racial, ethnic, or cultural minority, intervention plans that pay specific attention to cultural values and practices should take priority over plans that are not culturally specific. This principle enhances the dignity of individuals and supports the value that people's cultural environments and heritages should be respected. Furthermore, it is practically sound from an image theory standpoint since it increases the likelihood that client and worker images of the change effort will be congruent.
Client Self-Determination

Strategies and tactics that give the client system greater influence over its own destiny should take priority over strategies and tactics that fail to enhance the client system's influence. Client self-determination has long been a primary value of social work. This value has been supported by empirical research (Fischer, 1978). Furthermore, the modified hierarchy of needs presented in the present paper provides theoretical support and predictive power to this principle. To reiterate, if the need to influence one's environment belongs on a hierarchy of needs at one of the lowest levels, then, as Maslow's (1954) work shows, if this need is ignored, higher needs will disappear or recede. Thus to work on, say, a person's self-esteem by approaching the problem unilaterally from the worker's perspective will be self-defeating.

Mutuality

Problems and proposed solutions upon which there is the greatest amount of agreement among those involved in the change effort should take priority over problems and solutions upon which agreement can't be reached. Image theory is the basis for this principle, as discussed elsewhere. Again, research supports the prediction of image theory that an intervention is unlikely to be effective if it is not the result of shared expectations (Fischer, 1978).

Empowerment

Plans aimed at empowering client systems to work on their own behalf should be chosen over plans that either do not involve clients
or that encourage clients to adjust to oppressive situations. This principle is consistent with the assumption of the environmental-active approach that humans are proactive, growth oriented, and capable of mastering their environments. It also enhances the dignity of clients and helps assure that esteem needs will be met.

Selection of Helping Models Within an Environmental-Active Framework

In addition to generic skills, roles, and methods discussed in relation to imaginal, environmental, and system work, the social worker using this conceptual framework has a wide variety of helping models from which to select intervention strategies. The present conceptual framework contains a number of considerations for picking and choosing from among these models.

For example, certain social work models initially are ruled out by the values and priorities of the present conceptual framework. Among these are social work models that are open-ended or that allow for covert goals and agendas on the part of the worker. The functional and psychosocial models of social work practice are examples of such models. Although each has contributed a number of worthwhile ideas to social work practice, these time-honored models are now giving way to models that are less likely to assume that problems result from clients' weak egos and that allow for more client participation in the problem definition and planning processes. The open-endedness of these two models and the possibility for the worker to have intervention goals that he or she does not share with the client system specifically violate the principles lent to the present
conceptual framework by environmental perception theory, and also tend to violate this framework's assumptions about the nature of problems, for instance. This example points up the necessity for workers to have a clear conceptual framework from which to operate, and to be able to identify points of agreement and conflict with established intervention models.

Relationship of Helping Models to Basic Needs

The hierarchy of basic needs must be considered when choosing intervention models. This is because some helping models do not contain provisions for meeting the needs that are low on the hierarchy: survival needs, safety needs, and effectance needs. A prime example of this is existential social work (Johnson, 1983), which addresses self-actualization and to a lesser extent belonging and esteem needs. Goldenberg (1978) points out that this model is appropriate for use with affluent clients who have a need for, "a rekindled sense of personal integrity, interpersonal closeness, and a sense of completeness that is more than symbolic in nature" (p. 109). On the other hand, Goldenberg suggests the strategy of community organization for the oppressed for whom survival needs are paramount:

Increased individual and group self-determination is the psychological referent in the struggle for resources. By self-determination is meant the ability to control the basic conditions under which survival takes place. The principle vehicle for the acquisition of goods and power as well as for the development of the self-determination that invariably accompanies the possession of greater economic and social resources lies in the dynamic of community organization. (Goldenberg, 1978, p. 108)
Models that allow for the direct provision of resources to meet physiological and safety needs include the service provision model (Lutz, 1968), the ecological systems model (Pincus and Minahan, 1973), and the situational model (Siporin, 1975), for example. Social action is a strategy that empowers people to obtain resources to meet basic needs such as physiological needs, as is the sociobehavioral model, while the socialization model (Johnson, 1983) for working with multi-problem families is designed to enable a normal need-meeting system (the family) to meet the needs of its members. On the other hand, the higher needs, for belonging, esteem, and self-actualization, are the needs addressed by many models of individual, family, and group counseling or social treatment.

Relationship of Helping Models to Nature of the Problem

The basic consideration in choosing a model with regard to the nature of the problem is whether the situation is ongoing or crisis in nature. Obviously, crisis intervention is a strategy of choice for dealing with crisis situations.

In addition, however, the time proximity to precipitating factors may influence strategy selection. For example, failure in need-meeting resulting from emotional problems or problems in social functioning that stem from early experiences might be handled differently from problems stemming from recent life transitions. Although helping models based on ego psychology and psychoanalytic theory have traditionally been interventions of choice in such cases, the present framework views the idea of the image as a more parsimonious way to view such problems. For example, if a client is having difficulty
meeting esteem needs or even effectance needs because of problems with authority, a psychoanalytic model would focus on such phenomena as the oedipal complex, castration anxiety, and superego. An image approach would suggest that the client might be superimposing an image of parent as authority on all authority figures, and would work on changing that image. Thus rational or cognitive therapy might be an appropriate intervention strategy. Or, worker and client might choose to focus on the behaviors involved, using a social learning or sociobehavioral approach.

Space Proximity to Precipitating/Perpetuating Factors

The event or phenomenon that "caused" the presenting problem may be in the client system's immediate surroundings, or it may be far away. For example, clients in rural Washington State may be suffering because of policies enacted in Washington, D. C. In such a case, in addition to ameliorating the conditions locally, a mezzo or macro model such as social planning, social action, or social goals, according to the present framework, should be considered.

Relationship of Helping Models to Meaning of the Problem

Regardless of the source of the problem, its meaning to the client system must be considered. Thus when a client system is experiencing distress as a result of a problem, even though the source of the problem may be eliminated through indirect methods, the client system may require emotional support as well. Most models of direct social work practice incorporate provision of such support.
Furthermore, when the meanings of the problem differ for various members of the client system, or for members of the various systems involved in the change effort, the use of an interactional model may be necessary to aid in communication and empathy among the various participants.

Finally, when cultural meanings of the problem are important because the client belongs to an ethnic minority, a culturally specific model may be used. Lutz (1968) grouped such models under the category of deprived client models, although some may object to the assumption of deficit implied by such categorization.

Relationship of Helping Models to Anticipatory Image

In order to be consistent with the present conceptual framework, a helping model must include, at the very least, some provision for goal-setting. The goals of the helping effort then must be elaborated into a "picture" (image) of the hoped-for result. Thus, helping models that regard the results of the intervention process as emergent rather than planned are not consistent with the present framework.

Relationship of Helping Models to Analysis of the Problem Situation

Selection of a helping model follows logically from the analysis of the problem. For example, the presence of other systems that affect or are affected by the problem and that can also be engaged in the change effort prescribes a change model that addresses system work. On the other hand, if other systems are contributing to the problem but cannot be engaged, an environmental approach that targets that system for change may be considered.
Since the environmental-active conceptual framework precludes helping people adjust to unhealthy or oppressive situations, then when other systems or environments are significant to the problem situation, individual therapy is seldom the primary or only helping model of choice. Therefore, depending on the systems involved, a family model, group model, community organization model, or social action model may be in order. Or, a phase model such as that of Pincus and Minahan (1973) can provide a plan for intervention. On the other hand, individual therapy models, especially cognitive models, may be appropriate when individual clients are having trouble getting needs met because distorted images interfere with functioning.

To summarize, when using an eclectic approach to social work practice, there are specific considerations to use in selecting helping models, including the assumptions inherent in the models as well as the purposes one is trying to achieve in terms of the basic needs that must be met. When specific helping models are incorporated within this framework, they should be consistent with the framework's view of social work's purposes and values as well as with the objectives of the specific change effort and hypotheses about the factors that precipitated and perpetuate the problem situation.

Implementation of the Plan

Since the present conceptual framework is unique in its definition of problems and the resulting choice of intervention strategies rather than in proposing new strategies or in novel application of traditional strategies, there are few guidelines for implementation that are unique to this particular framework.
Activities of the worker related to implementing the plan include getting others on board in the change effort; locating and accessing resources; forming, maintaining, and coordinating action systems (Pincus & Minahan, 1973); facilitating, coordinating, monitoring, and participating in task accomplishment; evaluating progress and goal achievement, stabilizing the change effort; and terminating the effort. Social work literature on carrying out these activities is abundant. Specific considerations related to the present conceptual framework follow.

Getting Others on Board

To the extent possible with attention to confidentiality issues and the wishes of the client system, others who may have an effect on or who are affected by the change effort should be engaged at least on an informational basis. This activity is different from forming action systems, since those who are to be so engaged may play no further active role in the change effort.

To accomplish this activity, the worker contacts and may meet with key persons who may have an influence on or who are influenced by the intervention. The worker informs these persons of the process that is underway and of changes or effects that might be expected as a result. Depending upon the relationship of the recipient of the information to the focal system, the worker may remain in touch with these individuals or systems throughout the change effort.

When working directly with individuals and families as client systems, the worker must use discretion in implementing this principle. A written release from the client system must be obtained in
order to share information, and this release must be specific as to the content that may be divulged. The worker must then use sound professional judgment as to what information is relevant to the person or system to be engaged. (Including the client system in meetings with others helps reduce the risk of confidentiality breaches.) Finally, the worker must carefully weigh the possible benefits of engaging others against the damage that could result from the stigma of seeking help or from negative labeling. On the other hand, when the client system is an organization or community, there are few if any risks involved in this information sharing.

This information sharing—bringing others on board—is primarily image work, and the worker should be careful to communicate the intended image. The activity imbues significant others with an image of the process and intended results and thus increases the likelihood that the change will be supported.

Locating and Accessing Resources

Locating and accessing resources is an activity that may be engaged in by the worker, client system, or others. The resources may be tangible, such as food or money, or may be intangible, such as skills or strengths possessed by individuals. They may reside within the client system, within the change agent system, or outside of either system. Accessing resources may include or result in formation of action systems.
According to Pincus and Minahan:

The action system is composed of the social worker and the people he works with to accomplish tasks and achieve method and outcome goals . . . . The action system is the medium through which the worker influences the targets of change. Its effectiveness can be enhanced by careful planning in its formation and operation. (p. 194)

In forming action systems, the social worker may work with existing systems, or may form new ones. The action system for a particular task can be comprised of only the social worker, or it may be comprised of a group. For a complex helping effort, the social worker may work with more than one action system either concurrently or sequentially.

Pincus and Minahan offer a detailed discussion on the formation of action systems, including composition in terms of size and the attributes of members. They also discuss how the worker shapes the system's functioning through the use of time, the choice of physical setting, and establishment of norms and procedures. Because of the assumptions and values of the environmental-active conceptual framework, the focal system or client system should form part of the action system whenever possible. This enhances effectance needs and gives the client system "ownership" of the change effort, making it more likely that the effort will be successful. Furthermore the emphasis of the framework on normative need-meeting dictates that the worker should try to involve normal response systems in the change effort.
whenever this does not violate the rights or wishes of either the client system or response system.

Formation of action systems is, of course, primarily system work—forming new systems—and may involve such social work roles as advocate and case manager.

Maintenance of action systems involves using knowledge of interpersonal and group dynamics and invoking skills in leading and facilitating groups, evaluation, problem solution, and mobilization to keep the action system running smoothly. The worker may function with the action system as teacher or consultant, group leader, or manager. Again, Pincus and Minahan (1973) provide specific guidelines for maintaining action systems.

Coordination of action systems requires the case manager role and is necessary when the change effort involves more than one action system. The social worker facilitates coordination by moving among the action systems as well as by bringing them together to share information, pool efforts, and solve problems.

In forming, maintaining, and coordinating action systems, the social worker will use all types of image work so that as far as possible the client system, change agent system, and action systems will come to relate to shared reproductive images of the problem situation and to shared anticipatory images of the desired change.

Task Accomplishment

The social worker facilitates, coordinates, monitors, and participates in task accomplishment in order to achieve the objectives of the social work contract. The tasks may include examples of the full
range of environmental, image, and system work in order to remove environmental, image, and system constraints to normal need-meeting. Task accomplishment may require any combination of social work roles, skills, and techniques.

Evaluating Progress and Goal Achievement

The nature of social work is such that the change effort seldom moves directly and without obstacles from problem definition to accomplishment of objectives. Therefore, evaluation of progress is ongoing.

As previously discussed, evaluation is image work. It involves matching a reproductive image of the change process and/or results to a prototypical image of where the effort should be and what it should look like at any point in time. Essentially, evaluation compares the present state of affairs with the ideal in terms of the previously negotiated anticipatory images of change.

When anticipatory and reproductive images are discrepant, the worker and client system must determine what is causing the discrepancies. Depending upon what is discovered, the action system may have to deal with the conditions that are interfering with task accomplishment, renegotiate tasks, or reevaluate objectives.

Summative, or final evaluation is facilitated by having set forth outcome measures in the planning process. Worker and client system match the end results of the change effort with these outcome measures to determine whether or not the objectives of the intervention have been accomplished. If they have, the process can move toward termination or toward work on a new set of objectives. If not, reasons for
failure to accomplish objectives must be determined. The change effort may then return to the planning stage to renegotiate the contract, may return to the task accomplishment stage to attempt to overcome the barriers to task accomplishment, or may move toward termination with objectives not fully accomplished.

Stabilizing the Change Effort

We know from general systems theory that systems try to arrive at a state of stability and resistance to change. This state may be described as equilibrium, homeostasis, or steady state, depending on the system's degree of openness and vulnerability to the environment (Anderson & Carter, 1974). Systems also must accomplish some degree of adaptation to their environments, which may be constantly changing, in order to survive. The tension between the tendency toward stability and the need for change results from this fact: systems must be able to adapt to survive, and yet if system resources must be used to produce adaptation or change, then fewer resources will be available to accomplish system maintenance and objectives. Thus systems tend to adapt by periods of rapid change followed by longer periods of stability.

When change is introduced artificially through social work intervention rather than as normal adaptation to the system's environment, then the change agent must pay attention to stabilizing the change effort, or the system is likely to slip back into previous modes of functioning. In other words, when a change has been accomplished, then a change agent must become a stabilization agent.
As discussed earlier in this paper, Schein (1979) noted that interpersonal change is accomplished by unfreezing, adaptation through modeling or scanning, and finally by refreezing. However, these processes occur within an environment that constantly exerts pressure upon the system for accommodation. So in order for refreezing or stability to occur, either the environment must support the change, or secondarily, the system must be able to resist environmental pressures to revert to previous modes of functioning. "Thus the worker must assess what factors may counteract the change effort and take steps to prevent such an occurrence. To stabilize the change, the worker looks for the kind of continuing support the client system needs and arranges for it" (Pincus & Minahan, 1973).

According to Broskowski et al. (1975), stabilization activities fall into four categories: "building and maintaining systemic boundaries, building internal networks between subsystems, collecting and maintaining new resources, and insuring feedback on output and growth" (p. 176). These activities will be different depending on whether the intervention has created a new system or has brought about change in an existing system.

The present conceptual framework is constructed in such a way that the knowledge base supports stabilization efforts toward the environment, toward the focal system, and toward imagery. One must remember that image systems form their own environments toward which the behavior of individuals is directed. Thus, establishing positive images and working on anticipatory images of change are necessary components of stabilization.
Termination

Much has been written about the termination process in social work practice. The environmental-active conceptual framework supports time-limited contracts, evaluation of the intervention, and stabilization of the change effort. When these three factors are built into the change process, the worker and client system tend to move naturally toward termination.

The purpose of termination is to disassemble action systems, disengage the client system and change agent system, consolidate and generalize gains, and free the client system to support its own normal need-meeting with minimal interference from the social welfare system. It must be acknowledged, however, that because of intractable problems and the nature of the economic and social system, termination will be unrealistic and undesirable for some client populations. It is for the benefit of these populations that social workers should use image work to ease Type B social welfare into the Type A realm (Wolins, 1967).

As Levy (1978) has pointed out, a conceptual framework should have potential usefulness for guiding practice by providing a set of practice principles. Chapters 9 and 10, while not constituting a full-fledged practice model, have discussed the practice implications of working within an environmental-active conceptual framework. These implications have included guidelines for assessment, problem definition, contracting, planning, and intervention. Chapter 11 will evaluate the conceptual framework presented here and discuss its potential usefulness to the profession.
CHAPTER 11

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The 1977 and 1981 conceptual frameworks issues of Social Work pointed up the continuing lack of a clear definition of social work practice that fits the criteria set forth by a number of scholars as to the nature of a conceptual framework. This lack has been exacerbated not only by the wide range of activities social workers engage in, but also by the illusion that all social workers share a set of common ideals called social work values.

Shimshon Neikrug (1976) in a research study showed that in fact a social worker subscribes to one of several extant social work value orientations, and that his or her practice will reflect this orientation. One of the value orientations he described was the environmental-active orientation. This value orientation is the one subscribed to by the present author, and thus she set out to develop a social work conceptual framework consistent with this orientation.

The environmental-active orientation views humans as healthy, rational, and growth-oriented by nature. Problems are viewed largely as environmental constraints and thus the orientation favors using targets other than the focal system for direct intervention. Therefore a conceptual framework based on this orientation should avoid blaming the victim or defining problems in terms of individual
pathology. Furthermore, interventions should target environmental constraints when the choice is between changing the environment or helping the client system to adjust to an oppressive environment.

Unfortunately, developing such a conceptual framework to describe and guide social work practice posed some difficulties. This is because the environmental-active orientation did not seem to adequately account for the range of activities social workers engage in or the problems with which they deal. For example, the behavior of individuals does not always seem to make sense or be growth oriented even in the context of the impinging environment. Moreover, the value orientation discounted the value of individual counseling approaches to social work practice, even though social workers frequently engage in this type of change effort.

Environmental perception theory or image theory (Boulding, 1956) was found to be an overarching construct that could resolve these problems. Image theory postulates that we represent our various environments cognitively by an internalized environment (or series of environments) of images that may correspond with the objective environments to a greater or lesser degree. It is toward these internalized environments or images, rather than toward the "real world," that our behavior is directed.

The idea of the image, therefore, offers a possible explanation why behavior of individuals sometimes seems irrational or counterproductive. This explanation is that the behavior may be directed toward internalized environments that are distorted in relation to "reality" or no longer functional for the individual. It follows,
then, that these internalized environments of images may be appropriate targets for change in some cases, and that in these instances, counseling may be viewed as an environmental approach.

If humans are viewed as healthy and self-actualizing by nature, then for a conceptual framework of social work practice to focus on improving social functioning seems contradictory. Therefore, unlike some frameworks, the present conceptual framework instead described social work's purpose as alleviating suffering and helping people to get their basic needs met in as normal a manner as possible. This emphasized the rights of citizens to have their needs met and at the same time did not suggest that failure of this process is the fault of the individual. It also assumed that it is good for people to meet their needs through normative means, and that part of social work's mission is to expand society's definition of what constitutes normal need-meeting.

This definition of social work's purpose as related to basic needs suggested that Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of basic needs might be an additional useful construct for guiding practice, since Maslow's research showed that when lower needs are unmet, higher needs recede or disappear. Therefore, the hierarchy offered a way to prioritize objectives within the present framework.

Investigation of the hierarchy for use in the present framework resulted in this author's identifying a gap or discrepancy in the hierarchy. That gap was related to the individual's need to affect the environment--the need for effectance--a need which was unaccounted for in Maslow's model. Therefore, in addition to the use of image
theory as an overarching construct, the recasting of Maslow's hierarchy of needs into a form more relevant to social workers and possibly more logically consistent than Maslow's original construction, was a second innovative feature of the present framework.

Since the facilitation of normative need-meeting requires social workers to work among and between clients and various response systems, and since failure to meet basic needs is seen as multidetermined, the systems approach was chosen as a third overarching construct of usefulness within the environmental-active conceptual framework. These three constructs—image theory, the hierarchy of needs, and the systems approach—are to be used in conjunction with other related knowledge of human behavior to describe and then define social welfare problems and guide strategy selection.

Selection of points for intervention is also to be guided by a "map" that describes the domain of social work as a taxonomy of environments and a range of significant effect for social welfare problems, from the unique through the universal. The values of the present conceptual framework dictate that the worker is obligated to entertain the idea that a problem identified at the level of the individual or family might also be a public issue, and to plan his or her change effort accordingly.

The use of the taxonomy of environments, image theory, and the systems approach in problem definition enabled barriers to normative need-meeting to be defined as environmental, systemic, or imaginal. Then social work methods were classified as environmental work, system
work, or image work. What followed from recasting social welfare problems and social work practice into the terminology of the present conceptual framework was a discussion of the implications of such a conceptual framework for social work intervention, or, more specifically, for the various stages of the change effort.

Critique of the Framework

The author has attempted to develop an environmental-active conceptual framework for social work practice that meets the criteria set forth in Chapter 1 for conceptual frameworks in general and social work conceptual frameworks in particular. The extent to which she has succeeded will be discussed below.

Logical Internal Consistency

Care has been taken to assure that the framework is logically consistent, especially with regard to the value assumptions on which the framework is based. For the most part, the framework appears to be logically consistent. However, there are two value dilemmas that may pose a threat to logical consistency.

The first of these value dilemmas relates to the principle of normative need-meeting. This principle encourages inducing normal response systems such as the family and the social network to meet the needs of client systems who seek help through a social agency. This principle therefore, has the potential to threaten the self-determination of these target systems or to tax their resources, if not carefully applied. It is important when applying this principle to assure the necessary emotional or material support to response systems who
are being placed in this position. The principle also has the potential to further stigmatize client systems, since realistically the objective of normative need-meeting or its alternative, normalizing social welfare, will be unachievable in many cases.

The second value dilemma relates to targeting the client system for change within an environmental-active value orientation. In other words, when the orientation assumes that problems are largely environmental, does identifying the client system as a target for change violate that orientation and risk victim-blaming?

The present framework has attempted to avoid this risk by defining strategies that target the client system in terms of empowerment, and improving coping abilities. It further deals with the contradiction by identifying an internalized environment of images as a potential target for change. The author recognizes that these definitions may appear contrived. However, they still have less potential for victim blaming than defining such strategies in terms of individual deficit.

Parsimoniousness

The conceptual framework appears to be relatively parsimonious. For example, image theory is a much more straightforward and economical theory for explaining and approaching behavior than is, say, ego psychology. The same is true for the hierarchy of needs and the systems approach.
Generalizations through Abstraction

Particularly through generalizing environmental perception concepts to environments other than the physical environment, and the use of image theory and the systems approach as overarching constructs, the framework has reduced the concepts used to explain problems and classify interventions. Thus both the causes of social welfare problems and the strategies to alleviate these problems are classified as environmental, systemic, or imaginal.

Agreement with Known Facts

The concepts and constructs within the framework are supported by research into environmental perception, motivation, and human development. Furthermore, the environmental-active orientation is supported by sociological explanations of social problems. The innovative features of the framework, including the generalization of environmental perception concepts and adaptation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs are conceptually sound but subject to further empirical testing.

Operationality

The operationality of the environmental-active conceptual framework is to a large extent dependent upon societal and programmatic sanction. In other words, whereas environmental intervention including organizational and social change strategies are mandated by the framework, the actual implementation of these strategies depends on the support of donors and employing agencies. This problem of the real versus the ideal is, however, inherent in most contemporary definitions of social work practice and reaches its extreme in the
"Working Statement on the Purpose of Social Work" (p.26). The discrepancy argues for continuing efforts to define the profession in order to afford social work more autonomy in defining and promoting its own objectives.

Organizing Power

The organizing power of the framework lies in its ability to define causes of problems and also interventions as environmental, systemic, or imaginal. However, perhaps its greatest value in terms of organizing power lies in its description or statement of problems as failure to meet basic needs. This approach to stating problems forces a fresh approach to planning solutions and therefore has more potential usefulness than the traditional approach of stating problems by labelling the victim.

Potential for Generating Research

Since the framework uses an eclectic approach to practice rather than proposing new methods, and proposes new ways of looking at problems and interventions, experimental or single-subject approaches to testing the framework as a whole would likely have difficulty separating out the variables that contribute to success or lack of success in applying the framework.

However, the overarching constructs of the framework are certainly capable of generating research. This is particularly true of the hierarchy of needs as redefined within the framework and image theory which generalizes concepts from environmental perception theory to environments other than the physical environment.
Breadth and Focus

By using image theory, the hierarchy of needs, and the systems approach as overarching constructs rather than approaching social work practice by way of specific social problems, the present conceptual framework affords enough breadth to admit new knowledge about human behavior, social problems, and new social work methods. On the other hand, focus is provided by the articulation of specific purposes, values, and sources of sanction. These latter elements require the elimination of some traditional social work approaches. They also require that other approaches be shaped by and applied in the specific service of these purposes and values.

Linkage with Historical Thrust of the Profession

This framework definitely continues beyond such frameworks as those of Minahan and Pinous (1977) and Germain & Gitterman (1980), the trends identified by Briar and Brieland (1981) as characterizing current definitions of practice. These trends include emphasis on case management; increasing reliance on systems analysis and systems theory; and increasing use of the network concept. In fact, the present framework promotes all of these trends while refining rather than breaking from present day practice. Unlike the Morris and Reid frameworks (1977), the framework does not require drastic changes in the social welfare system.

Principles for Social Work Practice in General

This conceptual framework is designed to describe and guide social work practice in all settings and at all levels of society,
micro through macro. Although further elaboration is a task for future papers, the principles derived from the value assumptions and overarching constructs used in the present framework are surely translatable for such areas of practice as planning, policy development, and community organization, as well as direct practice.

Usefulness for Guiding Practice

The knowledge base and assumptions used in this framework have a number of implications for social work practice. These implications are potentially useful for guiding practice and are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

Explication of Behavioral and Value Assumptions

This framework is based upon the environmental-active value orientation (Neikrug, 1978). The value assumptions of this orientation are discussed in Chapter 4.

Image theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and the systems approach provide the basic behavioral assumptions of the framework. In addition, specific and general human behavior knowledge is to be used eclectically within the framework to further refine problem definition.

Integration of Knowledge from Other Disciplines

The integration of knowledge from other disciplines in a way that has relevance to social work is one of the strengths of this conceptual framework. While systems theory is already well integrated into the social work knowledge base, the present author believes that the systematic integration of image theory as well as an adaptation of
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has potential for greatly enriching the profession.

Explication of the Relationship Between Various Components of the Framework

This conceptual framework has been designed to logically interrelate the various components. For example, the overarching constructs were chosen for their potential to operationalize the values and purposes set forth in the framework. The narrative explains how each component was developed in relation to other parts of the framework.

Practice Diversity and Common Elements

Diversity in practice is accounted for by the range of basic needs that social work addresses and by the fact that failure to meet these basic needs is multidetermined. The common elements of practice are brought together under the rubrics of environmental work, system work, and image work.

Goals and Concerns for Social Work Practice

The goals and concerns for practice according to this framework relate to alleviating suffering and enabling people to get their basic needs met through normal response systems. This seems an accurate way to define social work's purpose and seems to the present author more appropriate than NASW's definition of social work's purpose as "improving the quality of life for everyone."

In conclusion, a comparison of this environmental-active conceptual framework for social work practice with the criteria for a conceptual framework that were gleaned from the literature and described
in Chapter 1 appears to demonstrate that the criteria have been successfully met. The framework operationalizes its value and behavioral assumptions by providing a set of principles for practice, and organizes concepts in a way that facilitates the categorization of social welfare problems and social work methods.


.... Toward clarification and improvement of social work practice. Social Work, 1958, 3(7), 3-5.


_____. To make chicken soup, start with a chicken . . .


Cadwallader, M. Problems in cognitive distance: Implications for cognitive mapping. Environment and Behavior, 1979, 11(4), 559-76.


Churchman, C. W. When does a model represent reality? In R. M. Stagdill (Ed.), The process of model-building in the behavioral


Goldstein, H. Theory development and the unitary approach to social work. The Social Worker/LeTravailleur Social, Fall/Winter 1974, 42 154-85.


Goldstein, H. Theory development and the unitary approach to social work. The Social Worker/LeTravailleur Social, Fall/Winter 1974, 42 154-85.


Heft, H. *The relevance of J. J. Gibson's ecological approach to perception for environmental psychology (draft)*. Granville, OH: Denison University, 1978.


McMillan, M. Social problems and the social worker's direct practice role. Mimeo (n.d.), Columbus: The Ohio State University.


NASW begins program to stop declassification trend. NASW News, 1976, 21(10).


Specialization in the social work profession. NASW News 1979, 24(4), 20, 31.


Pumphrey, M. W. The social work curriculum study, the teaching of values and ethics in social work education. New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1959.


Social Work: Special Issue on Conceptual Frameworks, 1977, 22(5).


Teicher, M. I. The concept of culture. Social Casework, 1958, 39(8), 450-5.


