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**THE SUPERVISOR AS MANAGER:
HOLISTIC ADMINISTRATION IN A BUREAUCRATIC WORLD**

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The Supervisor as Manager: Holistic Administration in a Bureaucratic World

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Introduction

An old joke states: When two or three are gathered...there are at least three opinions represented. In human service agencies this can be especially true: services are provided by people trained in a variety of disciplines who hold different, sometimes contrasting views about the clients that are being served. Not only are there diverse opinions within the agency, the larger public living in those communities in which the agency is found and the legislatures or foundations that govern the budgets of the agencies may voice differing concerns about the nature and scope of service provision.

All these voices demand both accountability and measureable outcomes for dollars spent and services provided. As a result, agencies have, over time become both more regimented and bureaucratic. An often heard complaint from line workers is that the bureaucratic needs of the agency threaten to take precedence over actual service provision to clients. In turn, bureaucratic "red tape" can be one of the most daunting realities of appropriate implementation of services. (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984)

At such times, agency personnel complain, "How did this system develop? Why does it have to be this way? What might be done to make it better?" This paper will examine a

history of management theories and the goals of bureaucratic structures as they apply to a social service agency setting. Classic management theory will be compared to the basic concepts found within the ecosystems perspective; a perspective widely taught in social work education and embraced by many social workers. Finally, the paper will outline ways in which social work supervisors might consciously utilize an ecosystems perspective while fulfilling the bureaucratic goals and objectives of the agency.

Classic Management Theory

Agencies staffed by social workers and counselors in the United States provide many services. These agencies utilize some form of the bureaucratic administrative model to create an institution in which policy and uniformity assist in the provision of service. The social context in which the models developed assists us to examine the assumptions and limitations associated with organizing people.

Although people have been thinking about how organizations most researchers agree modern management theory first developed in response to the industrial revolution (Shafritz & Ott, 1987, Shriver, 2011). As with the exploration of other aspects of social science in the mid 19th century, early management theorists created their understanding of organizations by observed the existing industrial structures. They focused on the place of power within positions, the authority conferred on particular positions by executives and the tasks to be accomplished within the organization. Early writers believed that if an appropriate balance between power, authority and tasks were created and maintained, the organization would operate with maximum efficiency. To

the early industrial theorists, efficiency was critical: efficient organizations produced more profit at a lower cost: clearly *sine qua non* goal in a capitalist economy.

Theorists then turned their thinking toward the place of human beings within those structures. (Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2005). The emphasis was often on discerning the division of formal responsibilities, understanding what level of power might be needed for responsibilities to be carried out, and understanding the reporting system by which the goals of the organization could be completed. For example, in a report to the President of the New York and Erie Railroad in 1856, efficiency expert Daniel McCallum discussed concerns about the relative costs transporting goods over both long routes and short routes. He concluded that a “proper division of responsibilities” plus “sufficient power conferred to supervisors to carry out such oversight” would provide most efficient. McCallum noted that it was critical that supervisors develop a reporting system to identify workers who were “faithfully executing their duties and those who were delinquent subordinates” Because greater efficiency meant greater profit, Mr. McCallum expected that his ideas would be implemented. (McCallum, 1856, in Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2005 p.42)

Early efficiency experts reflected the society times in which they observed and in which they wrote. The essays take for granted a hierarchical, male dominated workforce with rigid and assumed privilege for those with more authority. Henri Foyol, in his essay “General Principles of Management” (1916) noted, “Specialization belongs to the natural order...it is observable in the animal world where the more highly developed the

creature the more highly differentiated its organs ;it is {also} observable in human societies.....As society grows so new organs develop destined to replace the single one performing all functions in the primitive state”(Foyol, in Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2005 p.48)

Just prior to the beginning of WW I, writing regarding efficiency began to broaden into what became know as the field of “Scientific management”. Perhaps in response to pressure from the labor movement and those concerned for child welfare, authors writing about scientific management acknowledged the need to take the concerns of workers under consideration. This was not done for completely selfless reasons but instead was made in service to an overriding desire to maximize profit: scientific managers argued that when workers are satisfied, they will be more efficient, loyal and productive. Frederick W. Taylor, an early champion of scientific management wrote “The first object of any good system must be that of developing first-class men ; and under systematic management the best man rises to the top more certainly and more rapidly than ever before” (Taylor, 1985, p.7). He advocated for developing organizations which created a management structure which secured maximum prosperity for the employers, but profit was obtained through efficiency and the correct connection between worker skill and worker tasks. This efficiency would lead to greater production and relatively higher wages and for the workers (Taylor, 1985).These, in turn would lead to workplace harmony and further efficiency (Taylor, 1916).

Principles of scientific management included: (1) Gathering “traditional” knowledge about the operation of an organization and breaking this knowledge down into

manageable rules that all can follow;(2) selecting the best people to do each task and watch their progress,(3) care for employees and (4) cooperation between management and workers (Taylor, 1916). One can imagine given the deep and abiding labor unrest of that period that Taylor's writings provided a mediating voice amidst the strident and often violent confrontations between labor and management that marked the period.

Some executives were willing to listen to such evolutionary management concepts.

Some were willing to acknowledge that both the *treatment of workers* and the workers themselves effected whether the organization met its goals. As a young management specialist wrote in a report arguing for the use of budgeting as a part of determining production, noted that "... the intellectual capacity and temperament of the minor executive play an important part in determining implementation of the budget, but the real determining factor is the personality of the management (Hoyt, 1937).

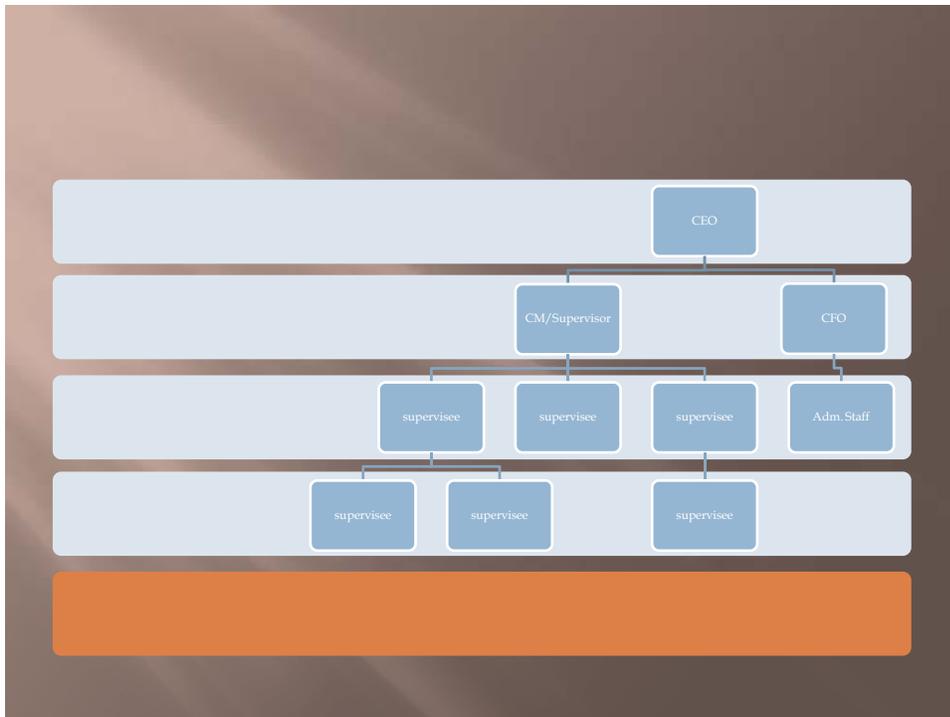
The evolution of the bureaucratic model

The sociologist Max Weber, writing at about the same time as Taylor (Shriver, 2011) built on models management theory and scientific management. He developed an organizational concept of bureaucracy. Bureaucracies were designed to assist groups of individuals to accomplish a large task by breaking down that task into manageable components which can be completed efficiently. Weber believed that those with more authority (higher levels of management and executives) should be afforded more social esteem by the community and that those in middle management should assume that executives had more power and influence both inside the organization and within the

larger community. The bureaucratic model discourages the addressing personal concerns as a "private" matter (Weber, trans. Gerth & Mills, 1946).

This model has been an essential component of modern business and some might contend, one of the most important structures in a complex society. Characteristics of a bureaucracy include: (1) A stable and official structure of authority, (which often includes components such as a mission statement, a set of goals and objectives of the institution, etc.), (2) a clear hierarchy of authority, (outlined by a chart of authority), (3) written records kept over time, (4) specialized training and expertise at various levels of authority, (5) The belief that "official" institutional duties come first, (6) a stable and comprehensive set of rules, (7) a process for career employment within the system, (8) the concepts that the managers are separate from the "owners" of the organization, and (9) Managers are free to allocate and reallocate resources within the organization (Shriver, 2001)

Many of us work within traditional bureaucratic hierarchies. Such agencies and institutions honor bureaucratic goals of organizational loyalty, efficiency and measurable outcomes over goals such as individual growth, self-actualization or community enhancement. We know where the chart outlining the flow of authority is displayed.[See chart #1]



We have job descriptions that (more or less) define what we do and upon which we are evaluated. In this way, our agencies reflect the larger culture and the stated desires of those paying the bills: insurance companies, state and Federal governments. Measurable results are critical to assessment of any endeavor undertaken.

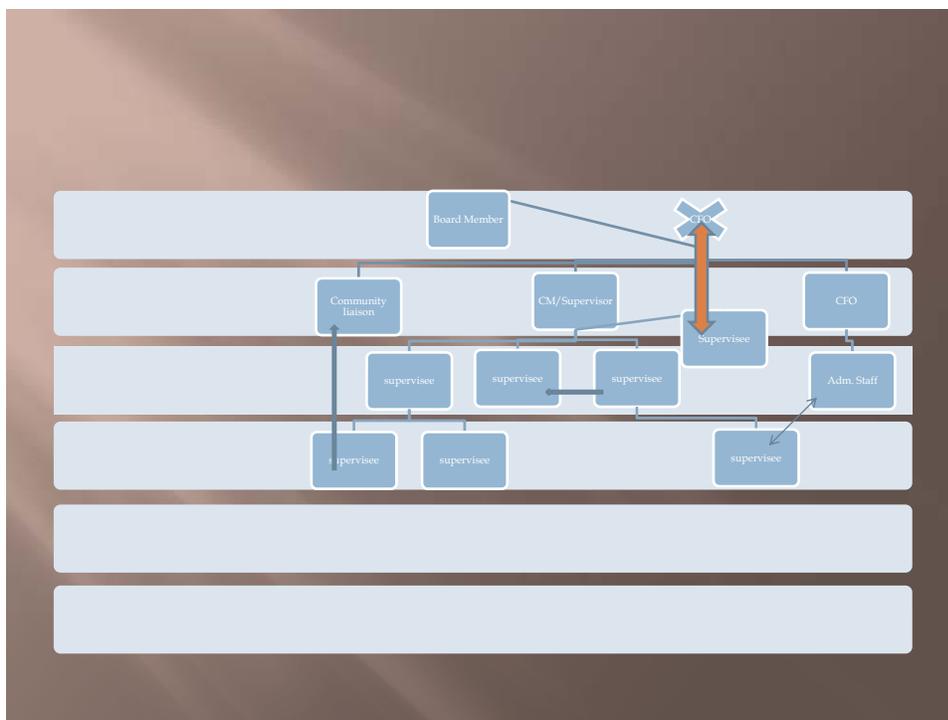
Bureaucracies are good at providing information about lines of authority, and assessing whether particular jobs suit the needs of the agencies. They are not designed, and are therefore less well equipped, to assist employees to meet personal or spiritual goals. Models of scientific management and efficient bureaucratic structures were developed during a period of history when workers were seen as more or less expendable: and the job at hand was seen as paramount. If an unskilled or semi skilled laborer resisted fulfilling the task assigned, he or she could be replaced, retrained or fired. Personal growth or family needs were not the concern of the organization unless executives

believed the issues would provide more stability for workers and thus stronger profits. In such cases, executives built community centers housing and sometimes complete communities in which workers were both citizens and employees.

Utilizing a bureaucratic model worked well for many executives through the 1970's. This was due in part to those who worked within the bureaucracies: Many of the adults working between WWII and the early 1970s had grown up in an era of great uncertainty. Between the Great Depression and the chaos of WWII most workers were both glad to have a job and complied with a corporate culture that separated the world of work from home life. Workers were expected to place a top priority on their professions. Family life was what one "had" after work.

But during the 1970's a social revolution was occurring. Social Service agencies, like many other institutions were beset by worker dissatisfaction. Many of these agencies expanded during the War on Poverty. Other found themselves in greater demand in some cases because new drugs and new therapeutic modalities provided a wider range of therapeutic options. In addition, social work as a profession was being transformed both by the introduction of the BA –level worker (who often took on tasks that had been inconsistently overseen by volunteers in previous generations) and by the increase in Masters' trained professionals. Although social work was a female dominated profession, many of the administrators were men. The growing feminist movement both recognized this reality and found it to be a source of tension in agencies.

The pressures noted above seemed to highlight some of the deficits of the bureaucratic framework. Some questioned whether the model itself was either efficient or even workable. Others claimed that such a model was at odds with the way we “are” as human beings. Line workers began to express dissatisfaction with the rigid structure of bureaucratic environments. Other, noting the reality of both formal and informal power structures, noted that even the “flow” chart wasn’t an actual depiction of the what went on in an office. [Note chart #2]



During this time, social workers were exploring a new way of viewing the world. First developed as part of the systems theory, ecosystems drew from both the hard sciences and social science models (Germain, 1991). The ecological model depicts human interaction as part of a dynamic, entity which is constantly influencing and being

influenced by systems of all sizes (Germain, 1979). It provides many rich opportunities to discuss the realities and complexity of life. The model places positive value not only on the immediate physical concerns of the social unit being studied, but the larger emotional and spiritual issues with which the unit is concerned. The ecological model contends that any transaction in a person's life will affect and re-order all other aspects of that life. It helps to explain transactions at multiple levels of relationship.

Bronfenbrenner was one of the first to describe this model. He utilized four factors (individual, family, social structure and socio-cultural (social structural/environmental) to understand the dynamics of human interactions (Morales and Shaefor, 1998).

At the individual level, the focus is on the personality, emotional development, thinking, understanding, strengths and problem solving skills within the person. The individual level also takes into consideration the life chances, lifestyle choices and coping abilities of an individual. The second level , that which reflects the family and small groups to which individuals relate on an intimate basis, connects to both the individual's within the family and to the larger world. Each family or small group has unique strengths, resilience, vulnerabilities, as well as levels of connectedness and distance. (Morales & Sheafor, 1998)

The third level is culture. It is at this level that society declares what are acceptable beliefs and practices. Culture shapes our convictions about what is real, what is acceptable and what is normative. Culture is defined as a "complex of skills

that...depends on an ability to organize exchange relationships”, (Kuper, 1994 in Monaghan & Just, 2000, p. 50), In other words, culture assists us to know who we are in our world, and how we are connected to one another. As an entity, the culture assigns positive or negative worth to traits and aspects of the individuals and groups contained within it. Individuals and groups influence these assignments of worth. Even though many often talk about culture as if it was a monolithic force within society, most of us understands that in the modern world we are often over in and out of a variety of subcultures which contribute to, and in turn are influenced by, the larger culture. The norms and boundaries of one’s professional culture are not always required outside work. In the past, a social worker may have a set of professional standards by which he or she provides professional service, but may act differently among friends or at home. In the era of social networking, however professionals are being increasingly held to professional standards even away from the job.

The first three levels, individuals, families/small groups and culture, influence the fourth level, that of structures and institutions. Institutions and structures Connection, both through relationship, and through shared past and present culture, will gradually influence those who are within the structure, (Morales & Sheafor, 1998), even as the policies and practices of the institutions influence and bound those who live and work within the institution.

Although we make reference to the idea that an ecological perspective is critical to an understanding of “truth”, we often are *operating* within administrations that *cannot*, or *do not* honor such a philosophy. The tension between the needs of a bureaucratic organizational structure and the more holistic ecological model can cause difficulties between staff and administrator and/or between the administrator and the hierarchy under which he or she is employed. However, it make sense that the model, which

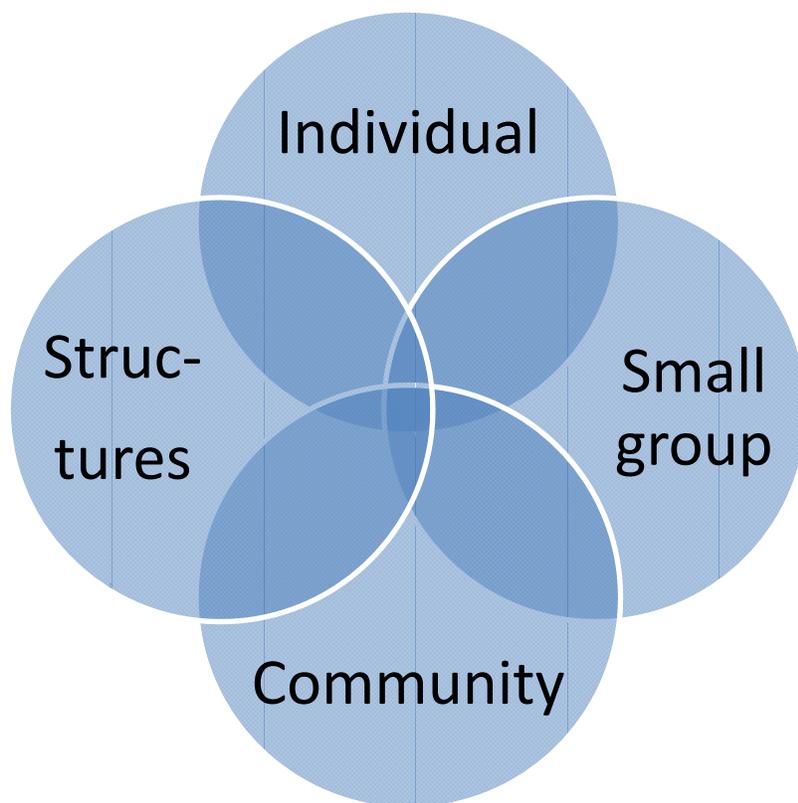
many in our profession believe so well reflects reality should be utilized to set the administrative policy within our programs as well

The Director of social work agency sets the administrative tone for his or her program. . As reflected by the bureaucratic model of management, an effective administrator sets goals for the staff, accomplishes tasks set by the higher administration, works to minimize interpersonal and intra professional friction within the department as well as acting as a buffer between the desires of the executive administration and the staff. These duties are designated within a job description and measured yearly through various progress reports required by accrediting and funding entities

In the 21st century, however effective administrators may need to address an additional concern: how to *create community* between members of the department. The bureaucratic model does not address this issue at all: when the models were developed it was assumed that workers would place their personal needs behind the needs of the organization. Utilization of the ecological model, with its emphasis on person-in-environment more comprehensively frames the work of the mid-level administrator (Grossner, 1979).

The ecological model contends that every aspect of a person's life affects all other aspects of that life. It allows an administrator to holistically consider the needs of clients, agency and staff. Thus, utilizing the ecological model provides a richer context for effective work.

When discussing the worker's role in effecting change within institutions, it is often said often say that an individual has three options. She can (1) change herself, (2)change the institution or (3)leave. These are the choices when one is operating solely within a bureaucratic model. However, when an administrator accepts the possibility of utilizing the ecological perspective, there is having a fourth option. This is to manage one's employees within an ecological perspective while providing the institution with all the hierarchical outcomes needed to demonstrate success. This approach does require that the administrator become administratively bi-cultural, (Shriver, 2011); understanding and operating well within both the needs of the host institution, and



the needs of the department. (see chart #3)

How might an administrator develop a holistic style while still meeting the needs of the bureaucratic structure in which she works? In the past several years, this author has used the concepts of body mind and spirit to provide an ecological context for discussing human interaction. We will briefly speak about the concepts of body, mind and spirit and then discuss how those ideas relate to the effective administration of a social work agency.

Body: The concept of “body-ness” represents the physical part of relationship. When one leaves a room, one’s physical body leaves. If the person never enters the room again, one might say that they “never came back”. In a strictly bureaucratic agency, the person would be perceived as gone. When a new hire is made, the new hire “takes the place” of the one who left. But, realistically, is the relationship “over”? If someone dies, or loses his job are all the connections that person had with his world forgotten? Are the small gestures of goodbye the last time this person’s life will affect the workers?

Ecological framework contends that we continue to be connected, to remember, and to value/devalue what has been lost. Bodies are not the only connection in relationship. The agency has changed through the influence of that person. Not to acknowledge that contribution, to underestimate the influence on clients, other staff or the organization is to block a richer understanding of the interplay of human dynamics. To ignore the realities of body-ness by adhering to a strict bureaucratic reality may mean that the administrator is ignoring important dynamics that are part of agency culture. To ignore these dynamics may mean very turbulent times later on. Some people simply do not get over” the loss of another so quickly.

Mind: Dealing with the dynamics of the mind can be equally important. Minds are the part of our personality that quantify and qualify relationships. Our minds work overtime to order and to prioritize information about the world. People mobilize their minds to use their numerous gifts to work toward personal and institutional goals.

The mind puts into order what has been learned. Informal measures, such as a discussion in the faculty lounge, conversation around the water fountain or in offices, formal mechanisms, such as full staff meetings and individual evaluation. This assists the community to utilize knowledge to understand change.

In a strictly bureaucratic model, the mind-ness of workers is utilized solely for the ability to carry out assigned tasks. But in the more holistic world, staff will use their minds to quantify both formal and informal relationships. They will compare notes with others both inside and outside the agency. If workers are upset about changes, the time it takes for them to place the changes in context may take significant time from their assigned tasks and may, in very difficult situations, lead to gossip and discussion both inside and outside the agency. Indeed in very dysfunctional situations, the dynamics of informal relationships may take as much time as the time spent on service provision.

As much as we have understood that bodies leave, and as good as we have gotten about understanding the reordering our world when others impact our lives, a middle manager interested in ecological administration must pay attention to the third part of the department's identity.

Spirit: The spirit is the part of our being that seeks to place the mind's experiences in with the totality of being, and then attempts to reconcile new knowledge and understandings with fundamental questions of the place of humanity in history and our place in this world. "Where do I fit?" "What does belonging mean?" "How might I be connected with the universe?" In the strictly bureaucratic agency, spirit questions have little or no formal place. From an ecosystems perspective, however, they are critical: for if workers cannot find a place for themselves within the agency they will not feel they "belong". Without a sense of bonding and community, workers will not sacrifice for their co workers or their clients in difficult times. The overall provision of service to the community will suffer in the long run.

Spirit questions are metaphysical questions about meaning. They rarely are answered in a linear fashion. It is as if we address about spirit questions without resorting to the way the human story was first told, handed down from person to person. On a micro level, employees their stories discuss the impact of the story and then analyze discuss how we are changed In some cases, talking is all that's needed. But listening to the life stories of our employees may lead us to action. This, in itself, reflects the ecological framework at emphasizes both intellectual learning and intellectual growth through practice. If we are to teach that Social Workers belong in the community, then, we should provide a model for such realities within our programs.

Spirit questions can also include philosophical concerns. What matters most to the workers in an agency? Is it attendance at department meetings and productivity? Is it the needs for continuing education and in-services about appropriate intervention techniques? Or perhaps, it is Is it attending to the needs of a dying parent orflex time to care for children. Is Spirit questions compel us toward a richer understanding of what is important and what will matter and what will provide workers with a sense that the agency culture cares for them as well as for clients and funders.

Implementation: Can Holistic Administration be Done?

Many social work administrators understand that simply meeting the needs of the bureaucratic structure will may not meet the needs of their workers. If those needs are not acknowledged care for the client may well suffer. When administrators can care of the needs of the institution AND address/ make room for conversations regarding the physical, mental and spirit needs of . Implementation of a framework of administration

from an ecosystems perspective will be different than from implementation from the hierarchical perspective. The agency may not, and most likely, cannot, implement a new administrative structure to please the middle managers philosophical change of heart, this means we must expand out definition of effective management.

Practically speaking, one must most often satisfy institutional demands first. Once institutional needs are met administrative executives are often more open to new suggestions. It is then that one can create the space by which an ecological approach can be added. When a department is meeting the bureaucratic goals set for its staff, flexibility can be provided inn implement more holistic approaches to the needs of ones faculty. It is critical to note that as an administrator one must work within both systems and to understand that the goals of the administration may not be the same as your goals.

Application of Holistic Administration: using the Body-Mind-Spirit continuum:

Middle managers wanting to administrate holistically acknowledge the department in which they work are living entities. The department is more than the sum of its parts. It is made up of staff and administrators, who are relating to one another and to others at multiple levels. Each influences the department in presence (body) intellectually (mind) and metaphysically (spirit). All have friends in other departments or in other places within the community. They have families and most have children. Those families and children relate to schools, churches, political structures and informal networks. Each member is sometimes under stress and sometimes full of joy. Each is confident in some

areas, and fearful in others. And each one plays his or her part both within the department and within the agency. Administrators can be open to hearing the needs and questions at any level of questioning and acting when I can to meet the need.

First Level: At the individual level, the focus is on the personality, emotional development, thinking, understanding, strengths and problem solving skills. A holistic administrator makes time to meet staff not only to assist them to be better at their job, to inquire about their life goals. The goals may match the goals of the agency but they might go beyond institutional goals as well. Case review and openness to discussions about a worker's desires and dreams is important. Questions that might be examined include: Does this person have a comfortable place to work (body?) How can a supervisor assist the worker to feel connected with the agency and its goals? Does each worker understand how their job fits into the overall plan for service provision within the agency? How about how it fits with community goals and objectives (mind?) Does the person feel "at home" in agency (spirit)? If not, does the person need to modify his position or may the agency need to modify how it treats workers. What can an administrator do to assist what needs to change and to strengthen what is already working well?

Second Level: The second (family/small group) level, dynamically connects the individual to family/small group and to the larger world. Each small group has strengths, resiliencies, vulnerabilities, as well as levels of connectedness and distance. A holistic administrator encourages healthy family functioning within the department. This may

mean realizing the impact of personal concerns on the work which must be accomplished. For example, a holistic administrator takes into account the impact of grief: not only in the short term but long term. She holds that knowledge for discussion with appropriate supervisees when needed and plans for the reality that the grieving worker may have a more difficult transition back to full engagement in agency business.

There may be times when the entire staff may need to examine patterns of communication. Sometimes, an eco-map of faculty communication can be used as a tool to observe the interactions between different units of the “family”. A holistic administrator needs to ask questions such as: How can we assist each other? (Body) “How can we improve cohesion and communication between agency staff? Between staff and administrative assistants?” (Mind) How can we help the larger community to better understand the philosophy by which we operate? How can we use worker strengths to strengthen their philosophy of community outreach or modify our services to meet community expectations (Spirit)?

An atmosphere of supportive ties should be deliberately developed and at least tangentially acknowledged as a part of department growth and development. Informal interactions assists full time workers to remain connected with case managers, part time workers outreach workers or others who are not always in the office. This can be accomplished both through formal meetings and informal gatherings. In addition to connections with the various groups that one oversees, connections with other community groups can solidify community connections., For example, one agency in

our community hosts a social work appreciation luncheon each year. They invite social workers in feed them well and provide CEUs on a topic for which all need hours (e.g. ethics).

The Third Level: The third level, that of culture, assists us to know who we are and how we are connected. It is at this level that we examine our beliefs and practices. In some institutions, this step is initially a step shared by the administration But some times, executives expect people to “catch the agency culture” as they move into a position within the agency. Assisting those who are new to feel included opens the way for an administrator to invite those who are serving lower administrative levels to feel more a part of the agency if not the community. Some ways to accomplish this include; (1) Meetings which provide opportunities for new and older staff members to meet and discuss cases or administrative to discuss issues that are of concern to all (2) Connections through “stuff” – mugs, T-shirts, etc.; (3) Listening to concerns of each worker. For example, one new case manager had found that her caseload had increased by 20%. . She was overwhelmed with the new development. Her administrator listened to her concerns and was able to think to assign an experienced social work assistant to help entry level tasks. (4) Administrative assistance: making sure that the handbook, shared e-mail addresses and technology was available and working well for each member of the staff.

Fourth Level: In the final level, that of institutions and structures, holistic administrators recognize that changes that affect clients will affect workers. Affected workers, in turn will affect the concerns of administrators. Administrators will interpret concerns to executives and the conversations that executives have between themselves affect service provision within the community. This is the connection and linked conversation of our collective understanding of who we are, and what we stand for as an institution. It is a dynamic force that is present in every decision that we make on the macro level and most probably many decisions we make as individuals.

As we quietly work to create community within the department, as we say “yes” to community requests for help, and as we utilize community experts to strengthen our program, structures that might be philosophically disinclined to find the goals of the program as valid, may begin to view the agency entity willing to work toward community wide change. When funders see agencies as hardworking and helpful to the community, they are more likely to provide the tools and resources which agency might need to accomplish its goals.

Let us consider together how we can administratively care for our bodies, minds and spirits. Let us consider how we can connect and influence workers, our executives, our clients and our community. Let us find ways to function holistically in a hierarchical world. If we can do this, I believe we have a good chance of improving worker’s morale and our services to the community.

Resources

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