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## Empowerment

**O**ne of the most fascinating and enduring elements in social work knowledge is the ongoing dialectic between the rational and irrational elements of human behavior. Humans, in the social work view, are neither wholly rational creatures as portrayed in classic economics, nor wholly irrational as in some erroneous interpretations. In clinical practice, this is most evident in the interplay between reason and emotion. In social administration this is evident in the interplay between a wished-for rational choice in planning and decision making and the seemingly mundane realities of authority, power, influence, and image. In this section, we devote three chapters to unraveling some of the dimensions of this broad set of concerns.

In the wake of Weberian and neo-Weberian models of bureaucratic organization like those considered in chapter 3, and classic models of management like those considered in chapter 6, the topic of authority always looms large in social administrative thought. In chapter 16 we examine this interesting phenomenon from several vantage points, including the view of Max Weber, the somewhat eccentric but insightful view of Chester Barnard, and the powerful view of Mary Parker Follett. This latter has had an en-

during, if largely unrecognized, impact in social work approaches to authority even during the years when the subject was completely out of fashion in general management.

In chapter 17, we look a step further beyond the purely rational and the more sophisticated psycho-social bases of authority, at the associated dimensions of power and influence. There is a widespread perception today among members of the profession that social work is becoming more political (Haynes & Mickelson, 2000). In an age as ideological as the present such a development is perhaps unavoidable. The concern in this chapter is with several narrowly constrained approaches to the vast topic of empowerment. We begin by differentiating administrative concern with empowerment and influence by a broad range of organizational and political theorists.

Perhaps most challenging of all are the views of Goffman and Banfield regarding social influence, which open the possibility that sometimes decisions get made that cannot easily be ascribed to the motives of particular individual or group decision making. As Follett suggested decades earlier, sometimes, the situation did it!

Chapter 18 may at first appear out of place in a section with authority, power, and influence. Marketing, public relations, and advertising may, on the surface, appear more properly placed with discussions of other management techniques, like those in the sections that follow. Or, given their underlying communications theory basis, they might alternatively be placed along with chapter 14. In many respects, the discussion of the dialectics of authority and power in chapters 16 and 17 makes the placement of this topic at the end of this section and immediately before the next quite appropriate. If social administration were approached on a purely rational basis, the topics of marketing, public relations, and advertising would best be omitted entirely, dealing as they do with image, positioning, and other seemingly irrational appeals and persuasion techniques. However, as the prior discussions of authority, power, and influence and the long and fascinating record of emotional appeals on behalf of needy clients show, social administration is never a purely rational activity. We show in chapter 18 how these approaches are appropriate for use by social administrators to shore up legitimacy and improve the accountability of controversial or unpopular social services.