
Topics in Social Administration

In this final section are four chapters dealing with additional topics of considerable importance to the contemporary practice of social administration and to the entire profession of social work. In chapter 24, we treat the important topic of service contracting and purchases of service by state and other government bodies. Contracting is a topic that dates at least to colonial times. Service contracting in the nineteenth century was conditioned by, among other things, the social differences between grand, aristocratic households for which charity was an obligation and common households, who were more likely to be the beneficiaries of local government contracts in conjunction with apprenticeship arrangements. Service contracting fell into disuse with the expanded federal public role in the mid-twentieth century. There has been a dramatic resurgence in the use of service contracting in recent decades. In this latest round, contracting is much more widely associated with state governments than with localities.

In chapter 25, we approach the demanding topic of social work ethics and its application in the area of social administration. Ethics and politics are shown to be two related facets of normative decision making. Detailed ethical codes in general, and the National Association of Social Workers

(NASW) *Code of Ethics* in particular, are shown to be of important, but limited, usefulness in social administration decision making. Also examined are aspects of John Rawls's theory of justice and other more universal ethical/political theories. Chapter 25 concludes with reconsideration of a favorite concept of economists, Paretoan optimality, and suggestions for its possible uses as a normative criterion in administrative decision making.

Chapter 26 deals with the vitally important topic of human diversity. Human diversity is shown to be a major concern of the contemporary social work profession. This concern is often most evident in social administration in regard to equal opportunity and affirmative action in employment. Chapter 26 introduces the important concept of *employment respectful of difference* and concludes with a discussion of sexual harassment in social agencies, considering both employees and clients.

In chapter 27, we examine issues of governance of social agencies through the use of boards. Three types of boards—advisory, governing, and regulatory—are said to be most important in contemporary practice contexts. This chapter outlines five principal functions for boards: governance, policy making, leadership, legitimation, and fund-raising.

The book concludes with a brief afterword.