


Counting CARING

A photograph of four hands, two from the top and two from the bottom, with fingers pointing towards the center to form a heart shape. The hands are light-skinned and are set against a white background.

Attending to
the Human
in an Age
of Public
Management

Margo Hittleman

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

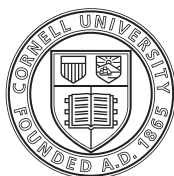
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A more extensive report on this study and its implications can be found in Margo J. Hittleman, *Counting Caring: Accountability, Performance and Learning at the Greater Ithaca Activities Center*, an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, January 2007.

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executive summary

Community-based organizations face ever-increasing demands to improve performance, increase accountability and document impact – and to do so in specific ways. Most administrators and staff want to improve their work and demonstrate responsible stewardship of community funds and community trust. They want to show that their efforts are “efficient” and “cost-effective.” At the same time, many find that important parts of their work – work often described as “relational,” “caring,” or “developmental” – isn’t easy to account for in the expected ways. And they want to help their funders and the public better understand the full nature, value and impact of the work that they do. Finally, in talking about the challenges they face, many people allude to a fundamental dilemma plaguing contemporary society as a whole: people want deeper connection and meaning in their public lives; they also are increasingly faced with demands for greater social planning and technical control. Often, these two searches seem at odds.

This document was written in response to these concerns. It draws upon a three-year action research project with a multicultural community center in central New York State. This project highlighted the challenges faced by the center’s staff as they responded to external demands for enhanced accountability and internal desires for improved programming. We hoped to use improved outcome measurement (“logic”) models to simultaneously meet both demands. But while the staff created new models that delighted their funders, we found that much of the work that they deemed “central” to who they were and what they did remained invisible in these models – and thus, outside systematic processes to account for, evaluate, or improve it.

Through this work, I found that the challenges the staff faced arose not from a lack of competency or commitment, but rather, from two competing – but typically unarticulated – frameworks for understanding what the work of our community service organizations is and ought to be. These conceptual frames have differing histories, assumptions, values and meaning-making logics, and they lead us to define the essence of “good community work” in very different ways. One, which I call the “professional public management” frame, centralizes rational, management-based operational processes, expert-driven programming and discrete “outcomes” as the foundation for a well-run organization. The second, the “personal relations” frame, centralizes long-term, caring, developmentally oriented relationships as valued ends in themselves, an essential component of human and community flourishing.

In this document, I intersperse a discussion of these frameworks with a description of the case study that illustrates them. I show how these differing frameworks have important implications not only for people think about and do community-based work, but also for how they seek to improve, evaluate, and account for it. Each frame highlights or shadows different kinds of “work,” leading us to ask very different questions to determine “good work”; each gives rise to very different standards for assessing that quality. I show how outcome measurement models – now the predominant approach to public and nonprofit accountability – are firmly rooted in the values, assumptions and meaning-making logic of the “professional public management” frame and do a poor job accounting for work valued within the “personal relations” frame. The result: vital aspects of community work remain invisible and, thus, difficult to account for, evaluate or improve. Further, organizations and communities that are most likely to work from a “personal relations perspective” (e.g., low-income people, women, people of color) are more likely to have their work discounted, deemed “unprofessional,” and found less worthy of funding and respect.

Drawing upon these insights, I argue that the community service system would benefit from becoming “multilingual” – better able to talk about and account for their work through multiple frames. In the final section, I focus specifically on the more marginalized of these two frames. I argue that according the “personal relations” perspective greater respect could help us better capture the human (“caring”) elements of community work; develop approaches and tools that would enable people to more fully describe, account for, evaluate and improve these aspects of their work; and build a community-service system that more fully fosters solidarity, diversity and inclusion. I offer three sets of discussion questions to assist readers to consider how these ideas relate to their own organizations and work, and I close with recommendations for moving forward.

READING SUGGESTION

The shaded boxes throughout the text provide an overview of the main ideas. You may want to read them first to quickly gain a sense of the overall argument.

contents

- 6 • I. Introduction
 - Two Stories
 - Reflecting on these Stories
 - Community Work at the Beginning of the 21st Century

- 9 • II. The Greater Ithaca Activities Center (A Case Study)
 - “A Place To Be Me”
 - The Project
 - “What’s Your Work All About?” – Take 1
 - “What’s Your Work All About?” – Take 2
 - “The Stuff that Doesn’t Get Talked About”

- 12 • III. Two Contesting Frameworks
 - A Note About Conceptual Frameworks
 - Framework #1: Professional Public Management
 - Framework #2: Personal Relations

- 16 • IV. Re-examining GIAC Through the Two Frames
 - The “Professional Public Management” Lens
 - The “Personal Relations: Lens
 - Examining “Parenting” in These Frames
 - Returning to Organizational Work

- 20 • V. Becoming Multilingual: Implications for the Community Service System
 - Recapturing the “Shadows” of Community Work
 - Counting Caring: Beyond Outcome Measurement
 - Fostering Diversity and Inclusion
 - Recommendations for Moving Forward

I. INTRODUCTION

Two Stories

Story #1: In October 2003, sixty members of the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) staff, Board, participants, parents of participants, and other community members gathered for a Search Conference, a two-day participatory strategic planning process. The facilitators began with introductions, asking: “Who are you and what’s your connection to GIAC?” The first person stood and said:

“I’m Audrey Cooper. I’ve been part of GIAC for thirty years. I worked here. I’m on the Board. My kids were raised at GIAC. Now my grandkids are being raised at GIAC. And Michael Thomas, over there, I raised him.”

A few minutes later, Michael stood:

“I’m Michael Thomas. I work at GIAC. Audrey Cooper may have raised me, but I raised *her* kids.

And so it went on...

“I’m Diane Thomas, and I’m here because Marcia Fort [GIAC’s director] s my hero.”¹

“I’m Nancy Lee. GIAC gave me my first ‘adult job.’ And Marcia is my hero too.”

“I’m T. J. Fields, and Audrey Cooper is my ‘shero.’ When I was an undergraduate, she came to talk to my class. I literally chased her down the hill and begged her to let me come work here. That was thirty years ago. And now my sons are at GIAC.”

For almost an hour, each person took the microphone and answered the introductory question in similar ways. They talked about who had raised them, their children and their grandchildren. They talked about the important life transitions they had made at GIAC. And they looked around the room and pointed to people they called their “heroes.”

These introductions echoed in my head for months. Although people were asked to identify their connection *to an organization*, they instead pointed to their connections *to each other*. In doing so, they used language that emphasized long-term, developmental, care-taking relationships. They talked about the raising of children, being raised up oneself, and sharing important life transitions. Further, the relationships they pointed to spanned generations, crossed families, and were fluid.

Soon after the conference, I wrote, “There’s something important to be understood about the meaning of this kind of ‘community center’ in a world of service provision, a center defined not by its programs but by its relationships.”

Story #1: In describing their connection to the center, people talked about personal relationships, not “programs.” They focused on who had raised them, their children and their grandchildren; important life transitions they made together; and people they called their “heroes.”

Story #2: Seven months later, I attended another meeting, this time with only four people: GIAC director Marcia Fort, a staff member and an allocations committee volunteer from one of GIAC’s largest funders, and me. We crowded around the small conference table in Marcia’s office. GIAC had recently received a review letter from the funder expressing concern about the “inconsistent quality” of the agency’s “logic” or outcome measurement models. Marcia was concerned that the funder wasn’t taking into account the “big picture of GIAC’s work and its value,” and she wanted to know what the “real issues” and dissatisfactions were.

In this meeting, the visitors talked about “substantial progress” in GIAC’s logic models the previous year, but a “step back” in the most recent year, and about missed distinctions between “outputs” and “outcomes” in those models. They expressed concern that “all non-profits are doing more and more with less and less” and stressed that agencies “may need to prioritize, focus and narrow,” “to contract and constrain.” They talked about the reluctance they saw among some agencies’ Board of Directors to “make choices,” to “de-emphasize” some of what they were doing and pay more attention to “those areas with the greatest impact,” and they noted that those agencies who did not make such choices were “doing mediocre across the board.” Their suggestion: GIAC focus on its largest program – youth services – and cut other initiatives such as the significantly smaller program for senior citizens.

The language and focus in this meeting was dramatically different from the first. Although I knew that the visitors cared deeply about the well-being of people, the language in this meeting was mechanistic. Abstract operational processes (inputs, outputs, prioritizing, contracting, measurement, impact) and programs took center stage; the relationship between *people* was nowhere to be found.

Story #2: In considering the work of the center, people talked about abstract operational processes (e.g., inputs, outputs, measurement, impact) and programs; the relationship between people was never mentioned.

Reflecting on These Stories

To some, the differences in language and focus between these two meetings might be seen as an expected difference between an inclusive community-wide gathering for envisioning a desired future and a small meeting with funders who have a public responsibility to ensure accountability. Others might interpret it as a difference between those envisioning broad community services within a single agency and those seeking focus and specialization. Still others might disregard it as accidental or irrelevant.

I find those explanations inadequate. Instead, I believe that the different language and focus in these two stories illustrate two different ways not only of talking, but of thinking about community-based work (whether that work is “community education,” “community development” or “human services”). That is, they represent two different *conceptual frameworks* that direct our attention toward different things and have important implications for how we carry out, improve, evaluate and account for this work.

These two stories portray two very different ways of understanding – or “framing” – community-based work that direct our attention differently. But without a way to talk about these conceptual frameworks, it is hard to decide what to evaluate and account for, and how.

This discussion of these differing conceptual frameworks and their implications comes from a multi-year action research study conducted with the GIAC staff. In this project, we sought to define, account for, evaluate and improve their work. In doing so, we found ourselves continually bumping up against these different ways of thinking about just what that “work” was. Without a way to talk about these contesting frameworks, it was hard to decide *what* to evaluate and account for, and *how*.

This is because conceptual frameworks are more than an intellectual concern; they are also *practical* and *moral*. They reflect and shape how people *think* about community work, but they also affect how people *do* that work. Every framework has its own internal meaning-making logic that guides behavior and makes people’s choice of one set of actions (as opposed to other possible actions) make sense. These frameworks are shaped by particular assumptions and values, and they, in turn, shape what kinds of “work” are valued and attended to. The assumptions and meaning-making logics of these frameworks also shape the tools we use to evaluate, account for, learn about and improve that work.

Our conceptual frameworks :

- ❖ **draw our attention to some kinds of work rather than others**
- ❖ **determine what and how we define “success” and even, what counts as “work” and what is seen as “extraneous.”**
- ❖ **influence what people expect from community organizations and how we think they should operate**
- ❖ **affect how we go about building the capacities of these organizations and their staff to meet those expectations**
- ❖ **shape the processes and tools we use to evaluate, account for, learn about and improve that work.**

In this document, I will talk about two different frameworks for understanding community service work. These are not the only possible frameworks, but they are two important frameworks that widely shape how people understand community-based work. One framework, the one I saw operating in the meeting between GIAC and its funder, directs our attention to rational, technically sophisticated, management-based operational processes and expert-driven programming as the foundation for a well-run organization. I call this the “*professional public management*” frame.

A second framework, the one reflected in the Search Conference introductions, directs attention differently, placing personal and developmentally oriented relationships – the raising up of people and communities – at the center of this work. I call this the “*personal relations*” frame.

Of course, in practice, these two frameworks are not mutually exclusive; nor do they exist separately from each other. The desire to promote human flourishing exists throughout the community service system. So, too, does the desire to manage public resources and public organizations wisely and effectively. Further, one framework is not *right*, and the other *wrong*. But understanding these two frameworks and examining how they exist in an uneasy tension has important implications not just for how we think about community service work, but for how that work is done, evaluated, improved and accounted for.

TWO FRAMEWORKS for conceptualizing community-based work



Draws attention to: rational, technically sophisticated, management-based operational processes and expert-driven programming as the foundation for a well-run organization.



Draws attention to: care-taking relationships — the raising up of people and communities — as the foundation for community-based work.

Community Work Today: How Do We Count Caring?

There is much more to say about these contesting frameworks — and about where they come from and how they affect our thinking. I discuss them in greater depth in Section III. But these frameworks are not unique to GIAC. When I talk with people working in many different community-based organizations, they often say something like the following:

So much of our work is about caring for people and communities. It is long-term and relational. At the same time, we do want to demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funds and public trust. We want to show that our work is “efficient” and “cost-effective.” And we want to be able to improve the work we do.

But how do we measure impact so that both our funders and we can assess our work? How can we help our funders (and the public) understand the nature of the work we do? In short, how do we count caring?

Finally, I believe that exploring these frameworks can help us address a fundamental dilemma plaguing not only those who work in communities, but contemporary society as a whole. People — across many sectors of American society — are engaged in a profound search for meaning in their work, family life, political processes, civic associations and so on. This search is pulled in one direction by a yearning for human connection and fulfillment, for public, as well as private, relationships that are meaningful in human, personal ways. It is pulled in a second direction by a long-standing Western attachment to a technical, highly rational world view that promises that well-executed social planning and control will give rise to a better world.

A contemporary tension: people yearn for both deeper connection and meaning and for social planning and technical control.

Understanding these two searches and the tension between them has important implications for how community-based work is done, evaluated, improved and accounted for. But before I turn to these larger questions of “frameworks” and implications, let me return to the case study — the work with the GIAC staff — that gave rise to the conclusions I have drawn.

II. THE GREATER ITHACA ACTIVITIES CENTER (A CASE STUDY)

“A Place To Be Me”

Founded in 1972 by a coalition of public and private partners, the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) is a multicultural community center in a small city in central New York State.

Like many community centers, GIAC’s mission is to provide “social, educational and recreational programs” for people of all ages, but especially for children and teens. But their mission includes several other components as well: to “improve the quality of life” of their participants, to advocate for those who are disenfranchised, and “to fight against oppression and intimidation in our community.”

To meet its mission GIAC runs After-School and Summer Camp programs for youth, pre-teens and teens, offers an active Seniors program and adult recreational programs, operates a municipal swimming pool, and organizes a variety of community celebrations throughout the year (including a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day breakfast, Black History month talent show, Halloween Party and Harvest Dinner). The GIAC staff also regularly provide community members with information, advocacy and assistance with schooling, housing, employment, the criminal justice system, parent-child relationships and so on.

In addition to their own programs, the GIAC staff are frequently called upon to consult with the school district and other organizations about diversity and inclusion, racial conflict, and youth violence. Finally, GIAC also houses a variety of other community services. BOCES’ English for Speakers of Other Languages & Refugee Assistance Program and the city’s Community Police Board have office space there; one of Ithaca’s Jewish synagogues holds their Sunday School classes there. Diverse community organizations hold their own events in GIAC’s meeting room and gym.

The GIAC staff and Board of Directors pride themselves on the multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic, inclusive focus reflected in GIAC’s programming, participants, staff and Board. GIAC’s motto is “*a place to be me*,” and the banner above the front door proclaims “*Thirty years of unity through diversity*.” The center practices what it preaches: GIAC is a place where you will find the full spectrum of the Ithaca community – people from diverse racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds – coming together. At the same time, low- and moderate-income people, people of color, and others typically marginalized in the wider society are at the center of GIAC’s staff, Board and activities.

The Project

Like all public and nonprofit agencies, GIAC faces external demands from funders to “improve” their outcome measurement (“logic”) models and better document their “impact.” Their

continued funding is contingent on their doing so. And as with many agencies, GIAC’s director, Marcia Fort also wants to help her staff continuously improve their programming so as to more fully meet their mission.

This project evolved in response to both these needs. The most pressing issue was the request from one of GIAC’s largest funders for new, “better” outcome measurement (“logic”) models. But Marcia and I wondered whether we could use those models internally to help staff reflect on and enhance their program planning, rather than merely as an annual exercise in reporting. We also hoped that improved models would help outsiders (particularly funders) better understand GIAC and its work.

Like most organizations, GIAC faces external demands for improved accountability and internal desires to improve programming. This project sought to use outcome measurement models to meet both needs simultaneously.

This seemed like a reasonable goal. Many proponents of outcome measurement models have argued that this tool has the potential to improve program effectiveness, increase efficiency and impact, and empower staff. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation’s “Logic Model Development Guide” provides a typical example of these promises:

The process of developing the model is an opportunity to chart the course. It is a conscious process that creates an explicit understanding of the challenges ahead, the resources available, and the timetable in which to hit the target. ... The ability to identify outcomes and anticipate ways to measure them provides all program participants with a clear map of the road ahead. Map in hand, [they] are more confident of their place in scheme of things, and hence, more likely to actively engage and less likely to stray from the course. ... Because it is particularly amenable to visual depictions, program logic modeling can be a strong tool in communicating with diverse audiences – those who have varying world views and different levels of experience with program development and evaluation.²

The challenge, some funders say, is that agencies are using the models solely as a once-a-year reporting exercise, rather than as a tool for internal evaluation and program improvement.³ So we set out to see if we could use these models to simultaneously meet external demands to improve accountability and internal desires to improve programming.

From 2004–2005, I facilitated a series of staff development

sessions, small group conversations and one-to-one consultations with GIAC's full-time, permanent staff members (twenty-one people in all, when staff turnover is taken into account). At the same time, I researched our work to learn to better help community organizations respond to these demands in meaningful ways.⁴

Before one can adequately account for or evaluate an agency's work, it is important to define what that "work" is. After all, it is important to account for that which matters most. So throughout this project, I asked, "What is GIAC and its work all about?" I listened to what people said, and I watched what they did.

"What's Your Work All About?" — Take 1

If you ask the GIAC staff and Board members what GIAC and its work is about, you are likely to hear first about their commitment to advocacy and justice for those who have been disenfranchised, their pride in the kinds of personal relationships they develop, and their sense of belonging to the community they serve. Here's a small sampling of what they said:

- GIAC [is] a place where we identify injustices in the community, and we speak about those injustices. ...
- We are family ... and family takes care of each other.
- We put people first; we make relationships a priority.
- We have a different kind of relationship with the kids [than other organizations], and that's what makes them successful.
- For a lot of parents, [GIAC] is a refuge.
- [Other agencies] may advocate for some people, but not for the people we advocate for... and they don't do it from beginning to end. It has to be within what they advocate for... [Here] if they come to you with an issue, regardless of what it is, you go to bat."
- We are role models for all of our participants and the community as a whole.... People can see more than one person of color employed in an organization. People can see that white people and Black people and Latino people can work together well.... We live that everyday...
- Our job is longer than 9 to 5. They come to our houses ... call us on the phone... find us at the store.
- Once you get under the umbrella at GIAC, you're there for life."

And when I asked the staff what "outsiders" didn't understand about GIAC, they responded in similar ways:

- This is a home away from home for so many people ... [a place] to watch children grow up, to see families develop, to know when someone has bought their first

house, or gotten an A on their report card, or been accepted into college.

- It's the [long-term] relationship... the bonds with the kids. ... That's the stuff that doesn't get talked about.

These kinds of understandings of GIAC's "work" pervades most conversations about who they are and what they do – from informal conversation among staff members in the GIAC office, to discussions about policy decisions at Board of Directors' meetings, to the executive director's report at GIAC's many community events. People talk of "family" and "a home away from home." And it is not just talk. My ongoing observations not just of what people said, but what they did, showed that a meaning-making logic that centralized long-term, caring, developmental relationships guided many of the agency's decisions, from who was hired and how money was allocated to how people were treated and how work was carried out.

"What's Your Work All About?" — Take 2

But this is not the only way that the GIAC staff talk about their work. Early in the project, I facilitated a session on program evaluation for the Teen Program's three staff members. I began by asking them what they were trying to do in their work. Their response came directly from the first part of GIAC's mission statement: "We provide social, educational and cultural programs for teens." I was particularly struck by this extremely narrow response because two of these staff members had just spent half an hour describing the challenges of helping teens who had been thrown out of their homes find a place to sleep at 5 pm on a Friday afternoon. The third staff member arrived late because he had been called to the high school to help deal with ongoing fights between a large group of white rural and Black urban teens. "It seems to me that your work is more complicated than that," I said. "Things just come up; they come up all the time" one of the staff members responded. The others nodded in agreement.

Of course, it is not unusual for an organization to have very different ways of talking about its work. In every organization, there are the "official" descriptions (mission statements, job descriptions) written in a formulaic, "institutional" language; there are the internal narratives about what an organization is and does, and there are the unofficial, often unspoken ideas held by each member of that organization. Often, when the context is framed as reporting to funders or administrators, evaluating programs (accountability) or enhancing program planning, the official, bureaucratic language dominates. This phenomenon is not unique to GIAC. Scott Peters, a faculty member in Cornell's Department of Education, and I found a similar pattern in work with Cornell Cooperative Extension educators in New York City and elsewhere.⁵

In this session, I continued to question the Teen staff about the

complexity of their work. As our conversation continued, they acknowledged that developmental goals extending far beyond offering “programs” were a central part of their work each day. These goals included not only helping teens develop life skills and see themselves and their life options differently, but building life-long relationships that the teens could and would return to in the future. “We care about those things, and we think about that” the staff countered, but [the logic models] are not geared to carry that info.”

Troubling Questions: “The Stuff That Doesn’t Get Mentioned”

Over several months, the GIAC staff and I worked to create new outcome measurement models that better reflected the full range of the agency’s work. We “translated” these models, with their abstract and alienating categories of “inputs,” “outputs,” and “outcomes” into “plain speak,” coming up with a user-friendly version tailored to the staff’s work. We held many conversations about just what that “work” was, identifying what the staff did and what happened as a result. And we fed that information back into the new models.

The staff worked hard to create the improved logic models their funder wanted. And in many ways, they succeeded. Through their efforts, they became more comfortable with the models. They also reported that the conversations connected with developing new outcome models helped them systematically think through what they needed to do and better realize the larger significance of their work. When the funder received the new models, they were delighted.

But a dilemma remained. Even though their funder was now happy, much of what the GIAC staff had told me was *central* to who they were and what they did could not be found in these new models. In particular, there was something about the value of certain kinds of long-term, caring relationships and about the values underlying decisions related to those relationships that was essential to the staff’s understanding of their work, but was not reflected in the models.

The GIAC staff worked hard to create new, improved outcome measurement models – and their funder believed that they succeeded.

But the long-term, personal, “family-like,” caring relationships that were central to GIAC’s “work” were still invisible and unaccounted for in the new models.

Was this a failure of the users...or of the models?

I began to ask whether this absence was a failure of the models, or the users. Had we simply not adequately described a full enough range of outcomes so as to capture these components in the models? Or were there important things about GIAC’s work that these models *couldn’t* capture. And if they couldn’t capture them, *why* couldn’t they?

These were troubling questions. For if accountability is to be meaningful, it must account for the things that matter. Further, I knew this dilemma was not unique to GIAC. Every agency director has stories about the “games” he or she must play to fit an organization’s work into the narrow framework of outcome measurement models, and about the practice of filing these models away each year, to be ignored until the next funding cycle requires they be updated. Many other organizations – especially those with broad, long-term “community development” goals – struggle to place what they most value about their work into an outcome model.

Some proponents of outcome measurement suggest that it is a “value-neutral” tool, a systematic approach to thinking through one’s work. This tool, they argue, can be applied regardless of what is most important about that work, for it is up to the user to determine what the desired “inputs,” “outputs” and “outcomes” are to be. These models, they say, are simply a tool to help people think systematically about their work. Whatever work is valued can be captured as an outcome.

This argument is appealing. But over time, I was forced to conclude that the difficulties didn’t arise because the GIAC staff omitted important outcomes. Rather, they arose because the models (like all models) are based in the assumptions and values of a certain world view. They lead people to pay attention to certain kinds of “work” and certain ways of working. And they leave out other kinds of “work” and ways of working.

Some people suggest that outcome measurement is a value-neutral tool to help people think systematically about their work.

But we came to see that the disconnect between the outcome measurement models and the staff’s day-to-day work arose from the tension between two different conceptual frameworks for understanding that work.

This argument asks people to reconsider many commonly held assumptions – assumptions about the nature of community-based work and about the tools that we use to evaluate and account for that work. It challenges some commonly held ways of seeing of the world. Seeing the world in new ways is a difficult, but sometimes rewarding, task. So I invite readers to temporarily withhold judgment and join me as this argument unfolds.

III. TWO CONTESTING FRAMEWORKS

In this section, I turn to an expanded discussion of these two contesting conceptual frameworks and the assumptions, values and meaning-making logics that drive them. First, however, I make some observations about “conceptual frameworks” in general.

A Note About Conceptual Frameworks

Organizations are complex, multi-faceted, and diverse. Conceptual frameworks, on the other hand, are simplifications, necessary mental structures that help us make meaning in a complex world. These mental structures have certain characteristics:

1. Conceptual frames are always partial, drawing our attention to some aspects of reality and throwing other aspects into the shadows. Like a window frame, they filter what part of “the world” we see centralizing some things, placing some things in the “shadows,” and bounding other parts “out of view” entirely. Thus, when we look out an east window, we see a different picture of the world than when we look out a west window, even if we stay in the same room. So, too, when we look at the world through different conceptual frames.

2. Conceptual frames typically operate at an unconscious level. As with window frames, we often look through our conceptual frameworks, rather than at them. Just as we have to step back from a window to see that it’s there, so too do we have to “step back” from our frame to see that it shows us only one particular angle on the world.

3. Conceptual frames do not exist in a vacuum. Every conceptual framework has particular historical and cultural roots and is based on a particular assumptions, values and ways of making meaning (“logics”). They are embedded in ideas that are intimately tied to wider social movements and competing conceptions, assumptions and value judgments about the society in which we live.

4. Conceptual frames are powerful. The way we frame a situation or problem – even if this process is unconscious – exerts enormous control over what we see, the options we recognize and the solutions we choose. Continually looking at the world through the same window can cause problems by narrowing what we see and think about, and by making other important aspects of “the world” invisible. It can also lead to conflicts between people who are looking at the world through different windows, without them realizing why they are having such a hard time communicating about what they “see.”

5. Conceptual frames can be extremely hard to change, especially without conscious effort. We come to our favored

frames through our upbringing, through our education and professional training, and through the preferences of the cultures in which we were raised. They seem “normal” and “right,” and suggesting that people adopt – even temporarily – another frame can seem threatening.

Thus, in introducing these frameworks for thinking about community-based work, I am not arguing that either one offers the “correct” perspective on this – or any other – organization. And I am not arguing that either framework is “wrong” or ought to be abandoned. Rather, I suggest that it is worth the effort to try to see “invisible” frames. People do not usually consider a variety of frameworks through which to view the world. Instead, the most widely used frameworks can seem the “only way” or the “right way” to see the world, as though they were a neutral, “objective” description of reality. Contesting frameworks, on the other hand, can be so muted and marginalized that they are essentially invisible to anyone who does not use them regularly.

Conceptual frameworks are necessary. They help us make meaning in a complex world.

But, they:

- ❖ **Are partial pictures of “reality”**
- ❖ **Filter what we see and what we ignore**
- ❖ **Have particular cultural and historical roots, and promote particular logics, assumptions & values**
- ❖ **Can be “invisible” — we often look *through*, rather than *at* them.**
- ❖ **Exert a powerful influence on what we “see” and can be hard to change without conscious effort.**

But a well-chosen contesting frame can enable us to challenge received wisdoms and taken-for-granted assumptions about the status quo and to find new ways to see, understand and shape situations we want to manage. (This phenomenon is what people are referring to when they suggest that we “think outside the box.”). For this reason, researchers suggest that learning to understand, consciously select and manage multiple frames can lead to greater organizational creativity, impact and success.⁶

The importance of doing this goes beyond how people think. Conceptual frames are not just an *intellectual* concern (shaping how people see themselves and their work). They are also *practical* (drawing attention to some kinds of works – activities, outcomes, etc.) – rather than others, shaping the ways in which

organizations operate) and *moral* (shaping how we define “success,” the values we are prioritizing, the kinds of relationships and communities we are building, the ends we are committed to).

In presenting these two frameworks, I propose that examining both a dominant *and* a contesting framework can help community practitioners better explain, evaluate, account for, and improve the rich complexity of their work.

Commonly used frameworks can seem the “only way” or the “right way” to see the world.

But learning to look through well-chosen, alternative frames can help people:

- ❖ **Challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and “received wisdoms”**
- ❖ **See new ways to understand situations they want to manage**
- ❖ **Find new possibilities for solving old problems (e.g., “think outside the box.”)**
- ❖ **Achieve greater creativity, impact and success.**

The Two Frameworks

In this section I introduce two frameworks for understanding community-based work and point to the assumptions and values underlying each.⁷

Framework #1: “Professional Public Management”

In today’s community-service sector, organizations operate within widely shared norms of “professionalism,” with clearly defined expectations for training, program planning, reporting and accountability. Good performance is seen as efficient, cost-effective service delivery that conforms to scientifically documented best practices. Those providing services are expected to be well-trained professionals, bringing particular kinds of expertise to their work. Their relationships with those they serve are shaped by these professional-client roles. And “well-run” organizations are those that can account for their “performance” and “impact” using “objective” models that can measure well-defined “inputs,” “outputs” and “outcomes.”

As the dominant framework guiding community work today, this is typically taken for granted as *the* description of what a community-service agency *is* and *ought to be*.⁸ But this particular understanding – and the assumptions and values on which it is based – is not the only way to understand community work. Rather, it is *one* perspective, rooted in a specific historical, cultural and social context.

To understand this view of community service work, we need

to look back to the early twentieth century, with the rise of the “modernization” movement and notions of “scientific management.” These ideas didn’t start then; they have a long cultural history in the West, going back to the European Age of Enlightenment when science increasingly replaced religion as the dominant viewpoint for understanding the world. As a certain kind of “objective rationality” became prized, people began to look toward the technological control of both nature and society.

Fast forward to the early years of the 20th century.⁹ These were the years of “modernization,” and a great popular love affair with “science” was spreading throughout American society. In this newly industrialized environment, Frederick Winslow Taylor, an engineer-turned-management consultant, began to promote what he called “scientific management.” Stressing the efficient management of time and matter, he promised adherents more productivity, at less cost, with greater profits, if they would eliminate “rule-of-thumb” methods. Instead, he proposed highly trained “experts” should scientifically determine the “one best method” that could efficiently organize each work process and then managers could train workers to carry out the predetermined tasks, step-by-step.

But Taylor and his adherents went even further, arguing that “efficiency” was as much a moral as an economic goal; such discipline, they insisted, would lead to better character, better health and greater happiness. Armed with great faith in these ideas, new “managers” set out to commandeer and control every aspect of American life, from the workplace to public life, and from there, to the family.¹⁰

Taylor’s ideas were quickly adopted by Henry Ford and other industrialists and applied to the production lines that characterized the early part of that century. But his ideas also appealed to many of the Progressive Era’s social reformers. Seeking to build a “new and better world,” these reformers were captivated by a rational orientation toward social planning and the promise that expert knowledge would provide the blueprint for solving every social ill. They liked the logic of a framework that suggested that social and individual change was a (relatively) linear process of “inputs,” “outputs,” and “outcomes” that could be planned for, controlled, measured and audited. And they believed they could gain greater credibility and status by adopting a “scientific” approach.

By the late 1920s, then, many of these reformers had transformed themselves from volunteer “do-gooders” and “neighbors” to credentialed “professionals,” academically trained experts with specialized knowledge, tools and techniques. They transformed their community-based organizations from broad, informal, primarily voluntary, neighborhood-based initiatives to specialized, focused, bureaucratically structured agencies. They divided their work into specialized fields we now know as adult education, social work, public administration, community plan-

ning and development, and so on. And for the most part, they separated their new “professional” careers from their “personal lives,” no longer living in the communities they now “served.”

In making this changes, these new professionalized community workers changed not only *how* they worked, but how they thought their work, what counted as “work,” what was valued and attended to, and what was marginalized or ignored.

The “Professional Public Management” Frame

- ❖ **Meaning-making logic: Technical-rational**
- ❖ **Central values: Efficiency, cost-effectiveness, impact**
- ❖ **Assumption: The “one best way” (or “best practice”) should be discovered scientifically, taught to practitioners, implemented and replicated**
- ❖ **Orients attention to: professional service delivery; programs and activities**
- ❖ **Performance standards: objective measures of “efficiency” and “cost effectiveness”**
- ❖ **Relationships: uni-directional; professionals “deliver services” to “clients & consumers”**
- ❖ **Elevates: the short-term, readily visible, easily measured**
- ❖ **Change = linear process that can be planned for and controlled**
- ❖ **Language: primarily economic, with social overtones**

Fast forward again to the present. In spite of great expectations for the “new society” that would arise from the scientifically directed and professionally managed expenditure of public funds, vexing social problems refused to disappear. By the 1980s, disillusionment had set in. The public and nonprofit programs that were supposed to have solved these problems were criticized as inefficient, ineffective and unresponsive.

Increasingly insistent calls came for “new” public management and the “reinvention” of government. In this newly reinvented world, the Taylor-inspired following of bureaucratic rules (“the one best way”) and measures of services provided were to be replaced by attention to concrete performance and demonstrated results (“outcomes”).¹¹ It was not long before these same ideas found their way to the community service sector. One result was the near dominance of one particular approach to accountability: outcome measurement.¹² Now, almost every organization receiving public or private com-

munity funds had to produce outcome measurement models -- with their focus on “activities” and “programs” and their measurable, linearly formulated “inputs,” “outputs” and outcomes – to demonstrate their impact and to justify the money they received. But in spite of new language and tools, the guiding logic for recognizing a “productive, efficient” organization remained remarkably the same as that proposed by Taylor: Good management = expert-guided, scientifically based control and rational, linear, planned change.¹³

In spite of new language and tools, “good management” still followed Taylor’s ideal of expert-guided, scientifically based control and rational, linear, planned change.

Of course, this is an extremely simplified history of complex social transformations. Further, I do not mean to imply that this dominant conceptual framework was ever uniformly accepted. Throughout the past century, there have always been those who argued for a different understanding of community-based work. But as the “professional public management” framework took hold, their voices became increasingly muted and then ignored. With few exceptions (occurring most notably in the late 1960s and early 1970s), these notions of “scientific management” have had decided staying power as the dominant frame shaping community service ever since.

Framework #2: “Personal Relations”

In the early years of the twentieth century, before the “professional public management” frame took hold, a very different perspective shaped people’s understanding about what a community organization was and how it should operate. This perspective is captured in the following description of what a Progressive Era community center was:

A community center was not defined as a building or as a set of activities, but rather as an organizing center for the life of the neighborhood. ... the community center worker was regarded as a neighborhood leader; he was on the job continuously.¹⁴

Many (although certainly not all) of those working in community organizations saw their work in these terms. They described themselves as “neighbors” and “friendly visitors” who lived in the community, rather than as “professionals” coming in to “serve” the community. And they argued for understanding community work as an extension of private care-giving, an effort to promote the development of a “human family,” especially the development of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised members of that family.

Thus, Jane Addams, a leader in the early 20th century

Settlement House movement, suggested that community work be understood as “public housekeeping.” In the same period, Edward Ward, a leader in the national Community Center movement, described the “institutions of the common life” as “home-like institutions” that would expand the “home-spirit . . . to humanize our relationship to other members of [the wider community].¹⁵ Similar language can be found in some of the early writings about Cooperative Extension.

These Progressive Era community leaders did not reject “science” and “expertise” as a basis for improving their work, but they argued for a more democratic understanding of these terms. For example, as Mary Follett Parker, a leader in community education wrote, we ought to see the word “expert” as “expressing an attitude of mind which we can all acquire, rather than the collecting of information by a special caste.”¹⁶ Educator John Dewey made similar arguments throughout his writings.

While this way of understanding community work is less widespread today, it has not disappeared. Scholars who study grassroots women community leaders – particular women leaders of color – have found that this way of thinking shapes their work and their organizations.¹⁷

As one team of researchers wrote,

Most of homeplace women we studied avoided the language of the social services and the helping professions. To them people were neither “patients” to be “treated” or “cured” nor “clients” to be “serviced” or “helped.” Instead the homeplace women see themselves more like mothers who create nurturing families that support the growth and development of people and communities . . . [Women who work within this framework have created] public spaces that are the moral equivalent of an inclusive, egalitarian, nurturing family.”¹⁸

In their studies, researchers found that these women thought about their work in terms of a communal ethic of care (e.g., the “raising up” of people and communities and an “extended human family.” They saw relationships as long-term (often life-long), rather than in terms of program cycles or units of service. Disavowing a stark separation between the “public” and “private” spheres, and between building “individual” and “communal” capacities, they saw their work as creating of public “homeplaces” where people could nourish a sense of belonging, affirm themselves and each other, develop their capacities to think and act, and join together to nurture the development of people and communities.¹⁹

Researchers also note the difficulties that funders (and others working from the dominant framework) can have in understanding people and organizations that operate from this contesting frame, noting that such organizations can seem “vague and uncertain to anyone who does not appreciate a developmental perspective.”²⁰

I call this framework the “personal relations” frame because its assumptions and ideas are most frequently expressed in the language of personal – and specifically familial – relations.²¹ It’s important to note that this frame does not just centralize “relationships” in general. Rather, it points attention to a particular kind of relationship – one that is personal, developmentally oriented and an end in itself, rather than merely a means to another, more instrumental end. I return to this essential element shortly.

The “Personal Relations” Frame

- ❖ **Meaning-making logic: Personal, relational**
- ❖ **Central values: communal ethic of care, solidarity; “the human family,” the development of people**
- ❖ **Assumption: community work is an extension of private care-giving, carried out through “public homeplaces” that raise up individuals and communities**
- ❖ **Standards: Quality of relationships, sense of “community” – elusive & not easily measured.**
- ❖ **Relationships: reciprocal, egalitarian, “neighborly,” personal**
- ❖ **Elevates: long-term processes (rather than static events)**
- ❖ **Focus: developmental**
- ❖ **Change: non-linear, unpredictable, “messy”**
- ❖ **Language: primarily personal, familial relationships**

Again, a warning: in practice, conceptual frames are neither mutually exclusive nor separate. Nor is any one frame the sole domain of any particular group of people. Rather, many people use elements of both these frameworks to make meaning about their lives and work. But different frameworks dominate in different situations and in different groups, and they influence what we do in important – if often, unconscious – ways.

If we are to better understand, account for, evaluate, and improve community-based work, we need to understand the ways each of these frames – and other frames I do not name here – direct our attention differently, causing us to see and judge community work in different ways. To demonstrate this, I look in the next section at what happens when we examine GIAC’s work through these two different frames.

IV. RE-EXAMINING GIAC THROUGH THE TWO FRAMES

When I presented an outline of these two frameworks to GIAC director Marcia Fort, she responded:

“That shone a light on what I’ve been thinking and feeling without really understanding why we have such a hard time communicating what we do to other people ... It’s validating. We are judged by a standard we don’t fit into. ... It’s not that we’re doing it wrong and they’re right; it’s a different approach. But until the revolution occurs, [the GIAC staff] need to learn to be multilingual.”

As Marcia’s response suggests, the frame one uses to examine GIAC and its work affects not only what is seen, but the standards used to judge that “work”

The two frameworks “shone a light on what I’ve been thinking and feeling without really understanding why we have such a hard time communicating what we do to other people. ... We are judged by a standard we don’t fit into.”
– *GIAC director, Marcia Fort*

As we will see, changing frames causes us to see the “same” things in different ways, changing how we judge it. In other cases, it shows us entirely new aspects of the work that were invisible before. It also changes the kinds of questions we are drawn to ask as we attempt to evaluate and account for that work.

The “Professional Public Management” Lens

Let’s look first through the prism of the dominant “professional public management” frame. As in the second story at the beginning of this report (the meeting between GIAC and its funders), this frame draws our attention to GIAC’s programs and activities as central to what they do and why they exist. And when we consider “relationships,” it is based on understanding the kinds of professional relationships and practices needed to successful delivery those programs.

Within the meaning-making value and logic of this frame, it makes sense to ask the evaluative questions familiar to all who work with community programs. These are questions like:

- How well are the GIAC staff “delivering” these programs?
- How much “service” is being provided for each dollar spent?
- How “efficient” and “cost-effective” are these services?

- Are tested “best practices” being used? How well do the staff’s implementation of programs conform to these practices?
- What is the staff’s educational training and other “professional” qualifications, skills and behaviors?

The kinds of judgments made by the funders sitting in Marcia’s office (the second story at the beginning) also make sense. Of course organizations should “focus and prioritize” so as to use resources most efficiently. They should emphasize “areas with the greatest impact” and “de-emphasize, or cut, other work.

Within the “programmatic” focus of this frame it also makes sense to divide the GIAC staff into “program staff” (those who directly deliver organized programs for youth, teens or seniors) and “administrative support” staff (those who work in the main office, but do not directly provide programs). Further, we can see why the Teen Staff would describe their work as “providing social, educational and cultural programs” and refer to other kinds of work as “things that just come up.”

From this perspective, the GIAC staff’s talk of “family” and “home” could reasonably be described as merely metaphorical (as some observers did), and their use of this “metaphor” to guide decision making as “unprofessional” and lacking “objectivity.”

Within the meaning-making logic of this frame, outcome measurement models are an extremely useful tool. They can help people to focus systematically on their delivery of programs and activities, and to look at the links between their “inputs” (what they start with), their “outputs” (what they do) and their “outcomes” (the impact that results from what they do.) In fact, it makes sense to believe that taking such an approach should help people do their work “better” – that is, to more efficiently and effectively reach their desired outcomes.

Within the meaning-making logic of this frame, the most highly valued “work” is a linear process that can be expertly planned for and controlled.

From this perspective, it makes sense to ask questions about whether programs are being conducted in a way that will attain the desired outcomes most efficiently and effectively.

The “Personal Relations” Lens

When we shift, however, to the prism of the “personal relations” frame, we get a different perspective on the language

of “family,” “home” and “community” that dominates the GIAC staff’s narratives about their work. Where the “professional public management” frame directed our attention to particular *activities, programs* and *services*, this frame directs our attention to the *relationships themselves*. In particular, it directs our attention to specific kinds of long-term, *personal* relationships. The underlying assumption is that these kind of long-term, personal, nurturing (“caring”) relationships, along with the creation of “public homeplaces” where people can be and become themselves, are central to the work of “raising up” people and communities. Further, this developmentally oriented frame values the building of these relationships and the project of human development as a valued end in itself, rather than as merely a means to another, more instrumental (and more easily measured) end.

From this perspective, GIAC’s motto: “A Place To Be Me” suddenly takes on new meaning and importance. So, too, do the Search Conference introductions (the first story in the Introduction), and the staff characterizations of GIAC as a “refuge,” “safe space,” “home away from home” and “umbrella for life.” All sorts of norms, decisions and behavior also take on a different meaning – they are all ways that, as Marcia often explained, “family takes care of each other.”

Within the meaning-making logic and values of this framework, it makes sense to ask some different types of evaluative questions, for example:

- What are the depth, breadth and quality of the relationships that are being developed?
- Are staff “raising up” not only individuals, but communities?
- How well do staff and sustain those relationships, and how might they do that even better?
- Are they building “public homeplaces” where people can nourish a sense of belonging and create a sense of solidarity?
- Are the staff members of this community or “outsiders” coming in to “serve”?

Within the meaning-making logic of this frame, the most highly valued “work” is relational, nurturing, long-term and personal.

From this perspective, it makes sense to ask questions about the depth, breadth, quality and nature of the relationships created, and about how individuals and communities were being nurtured and “raised.”

Within the logic of this perspective, we would understand – and expect – introductions like those at the Search Conference. We would also understand and expect staffing decisions that elevate a prospective staff member’s abilities to understand and develop long-term, respectful relationships with those who come to the center over formal educational training.

This frame also provides a different view of staff roles. Once a “personal relations” perspective was named, it became apparent that GIAC’s “administrative support” staff – who spend much of their day in the front office welcoming community members, listening to their needs, providing information, responding to community crises, and informally advocating for people – were doing more than “supporting” the “program” staff to do the “real” work of delivering programs. They were, in fact, as engaged in the raising up of people and communities as any other staff member.

Finally, as I began writing about the work we did together, many of the GIAC staff questioned my labeling GIAC as part of the “community-service system.” When I asked what they would call themselves, they said a “community center.” I asked them to explain further. As they talked, I came to see that from the “professional public management frame,” their “center” – a building that provides activities and programs – should most certainly be part of the larger community-service system. But if we take the “personal relations” perspective seriously, “a community center” comes to mean not a building or set of activities or programs, but *the center of a community*. It was this important distinction they feared would be lost.

This “center of a community” perspective is the understanding that underlies the notions of a “public homeplace,” community care-taking and solidarity that researchers have found in many communities of color. It is also the understanding that underlies the Progressive era ideal of the community center “as an organizing center for the life of the neighborhood” that I cited earlier.

When I mentioned this distinction to another youth center’s staff – staff who were used to thinking in terms of a building providing activities and programs – they were surprised at the ways it led them to think about how they might approach their work in different, but interesting, ways.

From a “personal relations” perspective, a “community center” comes to mean not a building or set of programs, but the center of a community.

Considering this perspective led staff at another youth center to think about how they might approach their work in different, but interesting, ways.

Unfortunately, the meaning-making logic of outcome measurement models – with its focus on the linear links between the delivery of activities or programs and expected, concrete outcomes – does not do a good job of capturing the meaning-making logic of a “personal relations” frame or accounting for the work that is most valued and attended to within it. Why it *inevitably* must fall short is a difficult point for many who are not used to looking at the world through a “personal relations” perspective,” so let me turn to another kind of example: the work of parenting.

Examining “Parenting” Through the Two Frames

A good way to understand the differences between these frameworks is to consider the work of parenting. In raising a young human to adulthood, most parents engage in a wide variety of activities – from feeding and bathing, to listening to the ups and downs of children’s days, to offering bedtime stories and trips to the park. These could even be considered “services” that parents provide to their children. And many parents, if pushed, could name a complex set of “outcomes” that they might hope arise from those activities and services. These outcomes would likely include the hope that their children will learn important life skills and become successful citizens and productive workers. Many might also agree that looking at the particular activities of parenting in this unusual way could be useful in helping to think about how we as a society might educate and support new parents.

But most parents would also argue that this “activities-based” or “service” perspective misses something essential about the work of parenting. Parenting is not merely about a set of activities, they would say. It is about a special life-long relationship that nurtures children into becoming themselves. The activities of parenting are not the *point* of a parent’s job, they merely *stem from* the relationship. It is the *relationship*, not the *activities*, that is central to understanding – and accounting for – the work of parenting. Focusing *primarily* on activities (on “inputs” and “outputs”), rather than centralizing a holistic view of the parent-child relationship, distorts how we understand that work.

Further, they might say, this perspective confuses *means* and *ends*. A focus on activities and outcomes structures the parent-child relationship as primarily a *means* to raise a well-functioning, well-adjusted adult. This is obviously a worthy outcome, and one few parents would argue against. But most parents know that their relationship with their children is also its own valued end. And while they hope their children will be successful citizens and workers, they also hope to raise children whose flourishing exists as a worthy end in itself. They want to raise children who can “be” and “become” themselves.

Consider the work of parenting: most parents could name a set of inputs, activities and outcomes that reflects what they do with their children. But most would also argue that focusing on “activities” rather than on the relationship itself misses something essential about the work of parenting. It confuses “means” and “ends.”

Returning to Organizational Work

How can understanding parenting help us think about a “personal relations” perspective on organizational work? Like the parent-child relationship it approximates, a “personal relations” framework directs attention to relationships constituted around a project of human “being and becoming,” of the “raising up” of people and communities. It recognizes that this work is far more complex than producing a discrete set of outcomes, and that the relationship between inputs and outcomes is often fuzzy and unpredictable. But most significantly, the personal, “semi-public,” caring relationships this framework centralizes are not *solely* a means directed toward specific, utilitarian purposes or “outcomes.” Rather, they exist as a valued *end* in themselves, an essential component of building flourishing communities.

Let me be very clear: It is not that programs and activities are irrelevant in a “personal relations” framework, any more than a parent’s activities are irrelevant to raising a child. But these activities occupy a different place and serve a different function in each framework.

From a “professional public management” perspective, the activities and programs are the core of what we are seeking to evaluate, account for and improve. Relationships serve to support the delivery of programs and activities that will lead to practical, measurable outcomes. “Community” is built to achieve instrumental ends. In the logic of the “personal relations” frame, on the other hand, programs and activities matter. But they do not *define* the relationships; they are *expressive* of it. But they reflect and support the growth of relationships and the long-term development (the “raising up”) of people and communities as their own valued ends. This kind of developmental work is done not only *through* programs, but in the spaces *between* programs.

The work of raising up people and communities occurs not only through programs, but in the spaces between programs.

As we saw in the example of parenting, the linear, activity-based logic of an outcome measurement model does not easily capture the essence of these kinds of personal relationships. While this may be an unexpected conclusion for some people, it follows from an understanding that frameworks rest upon particular world views. As Michael Fielding, a scholar who has written about these differing perspectives in the context of educational institutions observes:

Frameworks are not neutral either in their construction, their operation or their impact on those who are required to submit to their requirements ... [If we conceive different purposes for an activity] then the frameworks designed to audit their effectiveness will also differ in their intentions, their language, their processes and their approaches to the making of meaning and the commitment to subsequent action.²²

This does not mean that we should abandon efforts to evaluate, account for or improve this work. Quite the contrary. "Effectiveness" still matters. But now we must ask: effective toward what end? And once we have answered that question, we may find that we need different tools, tools that can focus on relationships and that can incorporate fuzzy, complex, and often unpredictable links between what is done and its impact. I return to this idea in the next section.

Evaluating, accounting for and improving this "personal relations" work requires tools that can:

- (a) incorporate fuzzy, complex and often unpredictable links between what is done and its impact ,and**
- (b) help people focus on relationships as an end in themselves.**

V. BECOMING “MULTI-LINGUAL”: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY SERVICE SYSTEM

In considering these two frameworks, Marcia Fort suggested that her staff needed to become “multilingual” – able to talk about and account for their work both through the dominant “professional public management” frame and through their preferred, but marginalized “personal relations” frame. I take her suggestion one step further, arguing that the entire community service system would benefit from this kind of “multilingualism.”

As I have noted throughout, a dominant frame can seem to be the “best” or “right” way to understand the world. But like every frame, it draws our attention to some aspects of the world while marginalizing or ignoring others. In doing so, it limits our perspective. A well-chosen alternative frame, on the other hand, can shed light on these “shadowed” aspects, helping us find new ways to see, understand and solve old problems.

In this section, I discuss three broad implications of becoming more fluent with a “personal relations” perspective (see box that follows).

Developing the ability to examine community work from a “personal relations” perspective can help us:

- ❖ **Recapture the human elements of community-based work that get distorted or omitted when that work is considered primarily in production-based terms;**
- ❖ **Develop approaches and tools that will enable people to more fully describe, account for, evaluate and improve these developmental or “caring” aspects of their work;**
- ❖ **Build a community-service system that more fully fosters solidarity, diversity and inclusion.**

Caveat: In proposing that a “personal relations” perspective be taken more seriously, I am *not* suggesting that we abandon completely the insights of the “professional public management” frame – or the tools, such as outcome measurement – that arise from it. First, as I have been emphasizing, all frames are partial, organizing our attention to some aspects of reality and away from others. But taking marginalized frameworks seriously can help us consider the shape and boundaries of taken-for-granted

frames. It can help us talk about the assumptions, values and logics that shape and are shaped by those frames. In doing so, it can re-orient our attention, creating opportunities to re-imagine alternatives and find fresh ways to understand and solve persistent problem.

Ultimately, these differing frameworks need to be melded into a more robust frame, one that enables people to attend to notions of “efficiency,” “effectiveness,” and “service” while *also* attending to the building of personal relationships centered around public care-taking, nurturance, solidarity and human flourishing. At present, however, the “personal relations” frame has been virtually eclipsed by the dominant “professional public management” perspective. It has been ignored, devalued and explicitly derided. It is to correct this imbalance that I focus on it so intently here.

Recapturing the “Shadows” of Community Work

Nearly one hundred years ago, John Collier, then president of the National Community Center Association, warned his colleagues that

Human beings are not to be dealt with as if they were passive material, like iron ore or cotton thread, which can be taken and put in a machine and hammered or woven and put through specialized processes and turned out at the end a finished product. Unconsciously, we have modeled our governmental efficiency on the efficiency which has characterized the nineteenth century, which is the efficient production of wealth, of goods; and of course goods have no memories, no hopes, no rights, no soul.²³

But as everyone who works in a community organization knows, the use of “marketplace” language and logic in the public sphere has continued – and in fact, accelerated – throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. Although the language has changed somewhat over the years, the ideals of a production-based “efficiency” still shape expectations not only for the public sector, but for the nonprofit sector as well. Administrators know that their organizations will be judged by a narrow set of standards and that their funding depends on their abilities to demonstrate particular kinds of outcome and impact. Staff members know they are expected to provide documentation to support those outcomes and impacts. Academic researchers know that their funding research papers, and future appointments will be judged with similar standards.

This reality can not be ignored. Nor should it. At the same time, however, people yearn for greater human connection and more meaningful public relationships. And many feel that they and their work are devalued by a rigid focus on instrumental outcomes. Multiple frames could enable them to better understand, talk about, improve, evaluate and account for community-based work.

These multiple frames already exist in many organizations, even if they are not discussed explicitly. The developmental focus of the “personal relations” perspective has strong roots in the early years of Cooperative Extension’s history. And it can still be found guiding the work of some practitioners and it still influences the work of others. But the tension between these contesting frameworks (and others) has existed throughout extension’s history. In recent years, the “personal relations” perspective has been relegated increasingly to the “shadows” as the demand to focus on the “professional public management” of our work increases. The implications of adopting one or the other frame is rarely talked about openly. Unfortunately, the kinds of “work” we talk about become stronger; that which we don’t weakens.

I suggest that talking explicitly about these two frameworks can help us to recapture these important aspects of our work with communities. It can:

- help us ensure that community-service work remains more than just another commodity in a nonprofit or public-sector marketplace;
- remind us (and others) that the work of developing people and communities is different – in important ways – from creating products on a production line;
- draw our attention to aspects of this work that get distorted or omitted when we understand, evaluate and account for this work solely (or even primarily) in technically oriented economic or production terms;
- Enable us to consider whether we are attending to “relationships” as means to other ends, or as a valued end in itself;
- enhance practitioners’ ability to more fully improve their work as they attend to broader perspectives on just what that work is;
- stimulate researchers to study (and thus, help improve) these aspects of community work;
- encourage some funders to value – and thus, support – this work as “work,” without practitioners needing to twist and distort what they do to fit within a limited set of understandings and standards;

- improve the ability of educators and experienced practitioners to train new community workers and community educators, as we are able to offer them a richer portrayal of this “work” than a focus on “activities” and “services” allows;
- provide a language for conversations about differing assumptions and values, enabling people to talk with various constituencies and stakeholders about what “ends” we ought to be striving for in our community work and why.

Discussion questions:

- ❖ **What aspects of your work does the “professional public management” framework draw attention to? What “ends” (outcomes) does it emphasize? What aspects of your work does it marginalize or make invisible?**
- ❖ **What aspects of your work does the “personal relations” frame draw attention to? What “ends” (outcomes) does it emphasize? What aspects does it marginalize or make invisible?**
- ❖ **Which of these frameworks do you – and your organization – use most? Which do your stakeholders use? If you use both frameworks, which one do you use when? Why?**
- ❖ **If you believe relationship-building is important to your work, do you see it as a “means” (something you need to do to achieve more valued outcomes) or as an “end” in itself? Why?**
- ❖ **What other frameworks – besides those described here – do you think would provide a useful “window” on your work? What new aspects of your work do those frameworks capture? What aspects do they marginalize or make invisible?**
- ❖ **How might you and your colleagues incorporate the use of multiple frames to guide your work (e.g., decision making, practice, funding allocations, etc.)?**
- ❖ **What practice would you need to become “multi-lingual,” moving fluently from one frame to another?**

Counting Caring: Beyond Outcome Measurement

As this research showed, outcome measurement (“logic”) models have been rightly praised for sometimes helping practitioners think more systematically (more “logically”) about their work. But the assumptions and values underlying this logic direct people’s attention in particular ways, highlighting some aspects of people’s “work,” but marginalizing other vitally important aspects of what they do.

The result: accountability processes often leave people feeling as though they haven’t captured what is really important about their work or its “impact.” These processes become seen as a time-consuming “burden,” leaving community workers to develop outcome measurement models for their funders, place them in a drawer, and then go about their “real” work. Of course, most practitioners have developed many informal mechanisms for learning about and improving the work that they most value, but when asked to describe to that work, they are left insisting (as did the GIAC staff), that “we just do what we do.”

At the same time, these practitioners worry that funders and others “don’t really understand what we do.” It is small wonder, then, that in spite of promises from outcome measurement proponents, practitioners and researchers alike find that accountability, performance improvement and organizational learning all too often have little to do with each other.²⁴ These leaves the community-service system with a practical problem. For accountability matters. Helping people learn about, evaluate and improve their work matters. But it only matters if we can evaluate and account for the things that matter.

There is, however, a second problem, one that is not practical, but moral. Conceptual frameworks shape not only how we think and what we do, but who we are. As the Pragmatist philosopher and psychologist William James observed more than a century ago, what we do creates the world we live in. He said:

We need only in cold blood ACT as if the thing in question were real, and keep acting as if it were real, and it will infallibly end by growing in such connection with our life that it will become real.²⁵

When we allow a logic that casts people as “passive material to be acted on” (e.g., as “inputs” subjected to activities or “outputs”) to dominate our thinking about community-based work, we invariably distort our perception, turning people into commodities and stripping them of that which makes them human. And when we elevate “efficiency” and “cost effectiveness” (the nonprofit and public sector version of “profitability”) as the dominant standards of judgment for community-service work, we marginalize or make “irrelevant” other standards, such as caring, community-building, solidarity, and human being and becoming.

But questioning the practice of judging community work by lim-

ited standards and a limited logic doesn’t mean that community practitioners get to “just do what they do.” It doesn’t mean we must resort to judging by no standards at all. Planning, responsible stewardship of public funds, accountability, improvement all matter. If we are to avoid a sentimental “anything goes” mentality, people need processes that enable them to account for, enhance and learn about and from their work. But if we are to avoid homogenizing that work into a narrow definition of value, they also need processes that enable them to account for, learn about and enhance a wider range of what matters. And if we are to hold onto the notion that human beings differ in fundamental ways from “passive material like iron ore or cotton thread,” then we need processes that maintain, account for, enhance and learn about that which is essentially human.

Here, too, taking a “personal relations” frame seriously can help. Personal relationships, after all, are not without accountability. At least not those relationships that work well over time. Consider well-functioning personal relationships in the private sphere. In these cases, people operate from a different notion of “accountability” than the contractual, unidirectional, highly rational orientation that characterizes accountability in the public and nonprofit sectors. Recognizing that the *relationship* matters, people typically turn to processes that are dialogic, reciprocal and evolving. They involve all participants in the relationship in the discussion. And, as relationship counselors advise, they do not “audit” past practice, assign blame or measure “outcomes.” Rather, they attempt to *learn* about themselves and each other, *centralize* questions of value and values, and *inquire* into how to make things go better in the future.

Such dynamic, dialogic, inquiry-based approaches to accountability and evaluation already exist. Although they are less well known than outcome measurement, a number of scholars and practitioners have developed and written about these kinds of approaches. Some general approaches go by names like “action research,” “participatory” evaluation, “empowerment evaluation,” “appreciative inquiry.” Specific techniques like the “Most Significant Change Technique” have attempted to systematize a value-explicit, dialogic inquiry.²⁶

Bringing a “personal relations” perspective to these processes and techniques could help practitioners learn about themselves and their work in the context of conversations not just about “what was done,” but about “what matters.” Because they are dialogic and inquiry-based, they are more suited to help people explore work that is complex, “messy” and unpredictable.

Further, because they are based on collective, critical conversations, they can engage not only community-based practitioners, but other stakeholders as well, helping broaden what is learned by incorporating diverse perspectives and world

views. Using these approaches to complement outcome measurement could help us add the reigning standards of “effectiveness” and “efficiency” other standards such as the quality of relationships fostered, the extent to which work builds community that values and includes all its members as active subjects, not objects, and the promotion of human flourishing as an end in itself. It would enable people to ask, “What for and for whom are efficiency, effectiveness and the responsible stewardship of our financial resources for?”

After the efforts to create better outcome measurement models, the GIAC staff and I turned one of these dialogic, inquiry-based approaches to try to capture, account for and learn about their “missing” work. Several external limitations meant we weren’t able to carry this work to the completion. But our work showed there were also real possibilities. Although limited to only four sessions, the GIAC initiatives demonstrated that people across an organization can find great excitement in opportunities to learn about, and account for, and improve their work in this way.²⁷

Discussion questions

- ❖ **What tools do you currently use to account for, evaluate and improve your work?**
- ❖ **What assumptions and values do your current accountability and evaluation processes centralize? What kinds of “work” or “impact” do they highlight?**
- ❖ **If you were to use these processes to improve your work, what aspects of your work would be attended to? What aspects of your work would be marginalized or ignored?**
- ❖ **What other values would you like to centralize in your accountability or evaluation processes? What other kinds of “work” or “impact” do you value and want to account for?**
- ❖ **What do you wish those outside your organization understood about your work and its impact (e.g., its value) that is not well captured by your current accountability and evaluation processes?**
- ❖ **What kind of support exists within your organization to incorporate “alternative” approaches to evaluation, accountability and program improvement? What barriers exist? What additional support would you need to overcome these barriers?**

Fostering Diversity and Inclusion

Finally, taking a “personal relations” frame seriously has important implications for the community service system’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. The term I have been using – “contesting frameworks” -- suggests that these are merely “different,” but equal, ways that people might make meaning. But in fact, these differing frameworks are imbedded within the social and political power dynamics of the larger society. The dominant “professional public management” frame and its assumptions, values and logic are privileged as an “objective” description of “the way things are.” Other frameworks are denigrated as “deficient” or simply ignored.

This differential privileging has many practical implications. The “professional” work that is centralized in the dominant frame is rewarded with funding and status; other kinds of work are marginalized and discounted (e.g., as “things just come up.”) Organizations operating primarily from the dominant perspective are rewarded for being “professional” and “efficient.” Those that do not are judged “unprofessional” and have a harder time obtaining funds. Those making the judgments believe they do so based on “objective” and “neutral” criteria. But Stephanie Wildman, a scholar who writes about race, offers an example of how this seeming “neutral” process privileges one framework over others. Discussing conceptualizations of “work,” she notes:

... although “workplace” is an apparently neutral term, descriptive of a place of work, it has a male tilt to it. The notion of “workplace” divides the earth into loci of work and nonwork, defining only what occurs in a workplace as work. This idea of workplace as a neutral ideal permeates our culture’s thinking and obscures the male point of view it embodies.”²⁸

Thus, women who care for their children and homes full-time are asked if they “work,” meaning, of course, whether they have paid employment outside the home and implying that raising children or creating a home is something other than “work.” There are many legal, economic, social and political implications arising from this conceptualization that privilege those who “work” in “workplaces” (traditionally, more often men). They are paid for their labor and receive a wealth of other social and economic benefits from paid vacation, health care, and retirement contributions to enhanced social status. And yet, as the feminist retort insists, “Every mother is a working mother.” That perspective reminds us that there are other ways to conceptualize “work” that would lead to different understandings and different legal, economic and social policies.

Similarly, community-service “work” is broadly defined as expertly planned, professionally delivered programs and activities. This “neutral ideal” permeates the dominant culture’s thinking and obscures the historical, social and political roots

of this framing of reality. Thus, as in the early sessions with the GIAC Teen staff, providing “social, educational and recreational” activities becomes defined as “work.” The myriad aspects of raising up children and communities are “things [that] just come up” – trivialized, devalued, or ignored. Rarely are they centralized when funders make decisions about how to allocate material resources or create processes to evaluate and improve programs. The result, as Marcia Fort observed, is to judge people and organizations by a standard that doesn’t fit.

The “superiority” of the dominant model is shored up by entrenched, if sometimes unintentional, racism and classism, that supports the view that the dominant framework is “best.” Frameworks that have traditionally been more prevalent among socially less powerful groups – in this case, women and people of color – are ignored, enforcing a homogeneous understanding of “community service” and thwarting any real “multiculturalism” or “diversity.”

If, on the other hand, we are to truly foster diversity in community-based work, we must use approaches to account for, evaluate and improve that work that *centralizes* diverse logics, perspectives and values in how we understand what that “work” is about. This requires that those in the dominant community constantly, consciously “pivot the center,” as scholar Elsa Barkley Brown has proposed. Doing so, she points out, does not mean “decentering” other people or other perspectives. Rather, it means “coming to believe in the possibility of a variety of experiences, a variety of ways of understanding the world, a variety of frameworks of operation, without imposing consciously or unconsciously a notion of the norm.”²⁹

Discussion questions:

- ❖ **In what ways do you see one framework as “better,” more “professional,” or more “appropriate” than the other? Why? What assumptions and experiences lead you to that conclusion?**
- ❖ **If you are most comfortable with the “professional public management” framework, what is it like looking at your work through the prism of the “personal relations” frame? What do you notice that you don’t normally pay attention to?**
- ❖ **If you are most comfortable with the “personal relations” framework, what is it like looking view your work through the prism of the “professional public management” frame? What do you notice that you don’t normally pay attention to?**
- ❖ **What is it like trying to “pivot the center,” to view your work through the prism of a framework you don’t regularly use?**
- ❖ **What would it mean for you or your organization to become “multilingual”? What would be challenging about that? What potential benefits can you see?**
- ❖ **What ideas do you have about how to construct a new, more robust frame that incorporates important elements from both these frames (and perhaps others that you identified as useful)?**

Recommendations for Moving Forward

This report has been written as a discussion document to help foster conversations about the difficult dilemmas that community practitioners and their organizations currently face. These are dilemmas about how to evaluate, account for and improve community-based work in ways that honor its rich complexity, more honestly embrace multiculturalism and diversity, and keep alive a public commitment to nurturing human potential.

Consciously viewing the world from multiple frames is both an art and a challenge. And when one frame dominates, as the “professional public relations” frame currently does, changing frames requires a conscious effort. The questions in the previous section were designed to assist people to develop a multi-frame perspective.

But it would be naive to suggest that individual understanding alone will promote “multilingualism” in the community service sector. In fact, there are immense social, political and economic pressures to promoting the “professional public management” frame and its particular set of values and interests. As those who do community work know, funders demand that impact be measured, reported and justified in ways consistent with the values and logic of the “professional public management” frame. Funds are available for certain kinds of activities and not for others. Certain outcomes (ends), and certain ways of presenting those outcomes, are rewarded with continued funding, status and access to other resources. Other outcomes (ends) and ways of presenting those ends are not. The ability to offer what people in positions of power value is often a question of survival – for both the individual and the organization. People adopt dominant values and interests, sometimes intentionally, sometimes merely complicitly.

But at the same time that people face immense pressures to commodify every facet of our social life, there is also an increasing urgent and widespread desire to reclaim the human meaning and human connectedness of our work and lives. That desire provides the opening for change, and it is possible to build upon it. The box, at right, suggests some ways to do so.

Openings for change:

- **Create opportunities for collective, critically reflective conversations about the discussion questions in this report.**
- **Devote time and resources to pilot approaches to accountability, evaluation and program improvement that can incorporate a “personal relations” perspective.**
- **Help novice staff members gain a “personal relations” as well as a “programmatic” perspective on their jobs.**
- **Provide opportunities for people to systematically document and report the impacts of their work as viewed from the “personal relations,” as well as “professional public management” perspectives.**
- **Create experiments to consider how the “professional public management” and “personal relations” frames can complement each other – in accounting for community-based work and in the ways that practitioners can learn about and improve that work.**
- **When possible, challenge unquestioned acceptance of the “professional public management” frame as the only or the best way to understand and account for community work.**
- **Hold dialogues with local funders and other stakeholders about what could be gained from adopting multiple frameworks for assessing the impact of community work.**
- **Contribute your ideas about how to create a more robust frame that could capture a wider range of “what matters.”**

endnotes

- 1 The speakers in this and the following two quotes have been given pseudonyms.
- 2 W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2001). *Logic Model Development Guide: Using logic models to bring together planning, evaluation and action*. Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation. P. III.
- 3 For one example, see Lehn Benjamin (2004). *Redefining Accountability: Implications of Outcome Measurement for the Practice of Nonprofit Community Development Organizations*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.
- 4 This research project used an action research strategy, which promotes collaboration between a professional researcher and “local” participants to study issues of pressing concern through a process of seeking and testing practical solutions. A more extensive discussion of that strategy can be found in Margo Hittleman (2007), *Counting Caring: Accountability, Performance and Learning at the Greater Ithaca Activities Center*, an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, January 2007. See Chapter 2, Constructing Knowledge: Inquiry Paradigm, Methods, Agendas and Standards.
- 5 The story of this work with extension educators can be found in Margo Hittleman and Scott J. Peters (2003), “It’s Not About The Rice”: Naming the Work of Extension Education, an initial essay published in S. J. Peters and M. Hittleman (eds). *We Grow People: Profiles of Extension Educators, Cornell University Cooperative Extension – New York City*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University. The ubiquity of this phenomenon speaks to the need to help people reflect on and find language to talk about the richness, complexity and “heart” of their work, whether for purposes of staff development, accountability or program evaluation.
- 6 For a fuller description of frames and their use in organizational life, see Chapters 2 (“The Power of Frames” and 3 (“Creating Winning Frames”) in J. Edward Russo and Paul J. H. Schoemaker, with Margo Hittleman (2002), *Winning Decisions: Getting It Right the First Time*. New York: Doubleday, and Gareth Morgan (1997), *Images of Organization, 2nd edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 7 A more fully argued presentation of both these frames can be found in Margo Hittleman (2007) above. See Chapter 4, More Than “Do-Gooders” : Professionalizing Community Service ,and Chapter 5, We Are Family: A Personal-Relations Perspective.
- 8 Arthur L. Wilson and Ronald M. Cervero (1997), for example, offer a detailed analysis for dominance of this frame in adult education. See “The Song Remains the Same: The Selective Tradition of Technical Rationality in Adult Education Program Planning Theory,” *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 16 (2): 84-108. Similar trends can be traced in social work, planning and other fields.

- 9 For a more extensive discussion of this history, see John Ehrenreich (1985), *The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press and Don S. Kirschner (1986), *The Paradox of Professionalism: Reform and Public Service in Urban America, 1900–1940*, New York: Greenwood Press. For a parallel history in public administration, see Robert D. Behn (2001), *Rethinking Democratic Accountability*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- 10 These arguments about the broad social application of Taylorism are made more extensively by Martha Banta (1993), *Taylorized Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 11 For a more extensive discussion of the rise of the “public management,” see Robert Behn, above.
- 12 Lehn Benjamin (above) offers an extensive analysis of the rise of outcome measurement and its dominance in the nonprofit sector.
- 13 In addition to the scholars cited above, the basis for this claim also comes from my own analysis of best selling books on nonprofit management and from technical assistance materials developed by the largest foundations funding this sector.
- 14 Sidney Dillick (1953), *Community Organization for Neighborhood Development, Past and Present*. New York: Women’s Press and W. Morrow, p. 61.
- 15 Edward Ward (1914), *The Social Center*, New York: Appleton and Co., p. 1, 106.
- 16 Mary Parker Follett, (1924/1930), “Vicarious Experience: Are Experts the Revealers of Truth?,” *Creative Experience*, New York: Longmans, Green and Co., p. 29.
- 17 Reviews of a wide range of this research can be found in Mary F. Belenky, Lynne A. Bond, and Jacqueline S. Weinstock (1997), *A Tradition That Has No Name: Nurturing the Development of People, Families and Communities*, New York: Basic Books; and Mechthild Hart (2002), *The Poverty of Life-Affirming Work: Motherwork, Education and Social Change*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- 18 Belenky et. al. (above); pp. 261, 265.
- 19 The term “public homeplaces” is used by Mary F. Belenky et. al. (above).
- 20 Belenky, et. al., p. 160.
- 21 I borrow the term “personal relations” from the mid-twentieth century Scottish philosopher John Macmurray, whose work greatly contributed to my understanding of this framework. See, in particular, John Macmurray (1961), *Persons in Relation*. Vol. 2, 1954 Gifford Lectures, London: Faber and Faber. My understanding of Macmurray’s ideas was heavily influenced by Michael Fielding who extends Macmurray’s ideas to contemporary educational institutions. See, for example, Fielding (2007), “The Human Cost and Intellectual Poverty of High Performance Schooling: Radical Philosophy, John Macmurray and the Remaking of Person-centred Education,” *Journal of Education Policy* (in press).
- 22 The arguments in this section draw heavily upon Macmurray’s and Fielding’s ideas. The quote comes from Michael Fielding (2001), “OFSTED, Inspection and the Betrayal of Democracy,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35(4): 695-709
- 23 Ida Clyde Clarke (1918), *Little Democracy: A Text-Book on Community Organization*. New York: D. Appleton & Co., p. 14.
- 24 As Alnoor Ebrahim, for example, writes: “It appears, at least in theory, that outcome measurement is a means of linking evaluation to learning. Evidence from practice, however, reveals a much more ambiguous relationship.” His research (and that of others) finds that the dominant use of an outcome measurement orientation encourages a focus on short-term results rather than long-term change and promotes the need to exaggerate “success” (and “quick success” at that), while ignoring failure, chilling learning and innovation, and distracting from longer-term and less certain processes of social and political change. The quote is from Alnoor Ebrahim (2003). *Accountability Myopia: Losing Sight of Organizational Learning. Proceedings of the Academy of Management, Best Conference Papers, PNP: B1–B6*. For his research, see also A. Ebrahim (2005). *NGOs and Organizational Change: Discourse, Reporting, and Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 25 William James (1890). *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. II*. New York: Holt.
- 26 While none of these approaches specifically takes a “personal relations” perspective, they are more amenable to it: Yoland Wadsworth (1997), *Everyday Evaluation on the Run, 2nd Edition*, St. Leonards, New South Wales, Allen & Unwin; David Getterman and Abraham Wandersman, eds. (2005), *Empowerment Evaluation Principles in Practice*, New York: The Guilford Press; and Rick Davies and Jess Dart (2005), *The Most Significant Change Technique*, www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm. For an overview of various approaches to action research, see Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin (2007), *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change, 2nd edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 27 Although I do not discuss this aspect of our work here, it can be found Margo Hittleman (2007), *Counting Caring: Accountability, Performance and Learning at the Greater Ithaca Activities Center*, an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, January 2007.
- 28 Stephanie M. Wildman (1996), *Privilege Revealed: How Invisible Preference Undermines America*. New York: New York University Press, p. 27.
- 29 Elsa Barkley Brown (1989). African-American Women’s Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women’s History. *Signs* 14, p. 921.