

Implementing Child Welfare Reforms:
Roles, tools and value negotiations of
contracting nonprofit administrators

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

Implementing Child Welfare Reforms:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington State recently enacted policy to reform child welfare administration and improve service outcomes, 2SHB 2106. The implementation of this reform intentionally changed the way that public and nonprofit entities in the field provide services and relate to one another. This research asked to two exploratory questions: 1) How, in the implementation of 2SHB 2106, do contracting nonprofit administrators perceive and define their roles, and 2) How are these administrators negotiating the values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the context of these roles during implementation?

Contracting nonprofit administrators identified their primary roles as implementers of program practices, autonomous decision makers, and supporters of staff. Tools they use to negotiate the values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy include implementing program practices as they are defined in policy, staying true to their organizational mission, establishing and maintaining inter-organizational relationships and collaborations, and supporting staff. The analysis reflected on both the implications for Washington State as it moves forward with reforms and on the larger role of contracting nonprofits in service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Implementation of Part 1 of 2SHB 2106 will change how Children's Administration works with providers in this new public-private child welfare partnership. The partnership between public, private and tribal child welfare agencies encompasses a community-based coordinated service delivery system that applies wraparound principles to all aspects of service delivery. By working together, public, private and tribal entities each contribute to achieving the best outcomes for children and families (Robinson, D.R., public correspondence, February 18, 2011).

Introduction to Study

Across the country, states face pressure from national regulation and court mandates to reform child welfare service delivery. Many states already employ contracting as a mechanism for service provision and are now examining how such contracts can be re-designed to accomplish reform objectives. The new wave of reform focuses primarily on tangible improvement of outcomes with negligible costs in a time of severe economic recession, all in a unique environment of long-standing public-nonprofit relationships. While these relationships primarily function to improve the quality of service, cost savings and efficiency (Freunlich & Gerstenzag, 2003), non-profits also play a unique democratic role in this country. Such organizations often help to legitimize social service delivery, as well as to represent and advocate for their participants and clientele (Smith & Lipksy, 1989, Guo, 2007). Non-profit administrators will therefore be confronted by new challenges during the implementation of reform policy. Within the development of these new contracting relationships, they must negotiate the competing values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy.

Role definition and value negotiation become significant in this reform environment because they impact the way individuals experience change. Implementers of change will come to understand what a policy means to them through the interaction of

their attitudes, beliefs and knowledge (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002). Thus, social service non-profit administrators may be given information on their roles and responsibilities, but the process of internalization and value negotiation will influence how implementation is carried out. This aspect of implementation is part of undulating conditions and consequences of change that cannot necessarily be legislated, but is an important aspect of the process to understand and take into account during evaluation and program adaptation (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984).

This study explored how, during the early implementation of reform in Washington State, contracting non-profit administrators involved define their roles. For purposes of this study, contracting non-profit administrators were considered to be top level administrators, middle management and front line case management staff of 501 (c) 3 organizations with public service missions that are contracting for social service delivery. The role of the administrator referred to a set of responsibilities for governance, as well as relationships to citizens and the general public. The research followed a Glaserian grounded theory method of data collection, coding and analysis in an attempt to better understand the main concerns and processes of nonprofit administrators as they negotiate their responsibilities for governance and to citizens.

Rationale and Significance

The purpose of this study was to explore the dynamic governance responsibilities and citizen relations of non-profit administrators in the early implementation stages of new policy in Washington State. It also aimed to see how, during this process, these administrators negotiate the values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy.

Research on the improvement of child welfare outcomes and on contracting between public and private entities is abundant, addressing multiple aspects of partnerships. For example, a technical assistance paper for state reform developed for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Evolving Roles of Public and Private Agencies*, specifically discusses the changing roles of public and private agency employees in the context of case management responsibilities and decision making (McCullough, 2008). The researchers comment that each jurisdiction designed a slightly different process and designation of responsibilities. While policy in Washington State called for extensive collaboration in the initial design of implementation to determine the division of case management responsibilities and evaluation of the designation of such responsibilities, it did not reflect on broader roles of non-profits in social service delivery and governance.

The research presented here, however, connected literature on the theoretical and structural components of such partnerships with the cognitive aspects of change experienced by individual administrators. It attempted to fill a gap in existing literature by collecting the perceptions and exploring how they are woven into implementation of policy and social welfare programming in a democratic environment. The perspectives taken by contracting nonprofit administrators within the culture of Washington State in particular teach us about mechanisms for managing effectiveness, efficiency and democracy and impact reforms to better serve children and families.

This research offers practitioners a case study level of understanding of nonprofit actors and their perceptions, motivations and concerns in the emerging contracting environment. Although the research delivers only a small glimpse into the roles and

values of 10 contracting non-profit administrators, it helps articulate the shifting roles of administrators in nonprofit organizations during policy implementation. The research provides Washington State with a tempered insight into the current atmosphere of their reform agenda other than performance measure outcome data and analyses. Through examining how contracting nonprofit administrators negotiate different values in their role definition, it can also help theorists gain insight into the place of democratic values in contracting environments. This research is significant to theory development in how individual administrators affect policy implementation, how values are negotiated in public-nonprofit partnerships and the place of democratic values in contracting environments.

Guiding Questions

This research endeavors to respond to two guiding questions: 1) How, in the implementation of HB 2106, do contracting nonprofit public administrators perceive and define their roles, and 2) How are these administrators negotiating the values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the context of these roles during implementation?

Typically, Glaserian grounded theory research does not entail defining a specific research problem and question for the sake of avoiding preconceived notions. Therefore, the primary guiding question remains broad. The second question is bounded by the notion that administrators do in fact negotiate competing values, but its study is flexible in that it acknowledges such negotiation may not be of concern to administrators.

Definitions

Nonprofit public administrators include top level administrators, middle management and front line case management staff of 501 (c) 3 organizations with public service missions that are contracting for child welfare social service delivery.

Implementation occurs at the point after policy is crafted or, in this case, legislated. It is the act of forging a causal chain from the declared policy objectives to results (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). It assumes a potential for an ongoing process of definition and redefinition of these objectives, results, and methods, whether formally recognized or informally developed through decisions of administrators. As mentioned in the background of the policy, HB 2106 required administrators to work together to craft a collaborative strategy for contracting. The definition of implementation includes this collaborative work.

The role of a public administrator in this study generally refers to a set of responsibilities for governance and relationships to citizens and the general public. The role of administrators is widely debated, and a discussion of some theoretical perspectives can be found in the Review of Literature included later in this proposal.

Democracy as a value can be defined in a variety of ways. This study borrowed largely from Dahl's (1998) assertion that democracy is the provision of opportunity for effective participation, gaining of enlightened understanding, exercising of control over agendas, inclusion of adults, and equality of voting. In this way, democracy as a value then takes into account public legitimacy and accountability mentioned in the Review of Literature below.

While some may debate the place of efficiency as an ethical value, here it refers to the ongoing consideration of costs to the public and maximizing the production of services delivered given a set of relatively fixed, or currently decreasing, resources.

Effectiveness is defined strictly as the ability to meet expectations of national standards and court mandates placed on the state of Washington and, subsequently, the outcomes developed in HB 2106.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study incorporated the belief that public administrators are capable of either encouraging or discouraging democratic practices and effective policy implementation. A richer discussion of the development of this position, as well as a discussion of the assumption that non-profits play a democratizing role in American political culture, can be found in the Review of Literature. This study also assumed that, while a primary goal for child welfare reform is to improve outcomes, an equally important goal is for states is to contain or even reduce costs of service delivery. This assumption originates from the report completed by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy at the direction of the legislature, which outlines evidence based practices for improving child welfare outcomes and the cost savings generated through their application (Lee, et al., 2008). The original language of HB 2106 directly references this report as an impetus for introducing the legislation.

This study is limited by the fact that, while it aims to contribute to early grounded theory development, it is a single case study. It could offer a platform for future research and developmental theory building, but can't be generalized outside of the experiences of those included in the case at hand.

Study Delimitation

While both policy design and processes for policy development are extremely important to implementation studies, they were not considered here as initial concepts for inquiry. Officials often craft policy and then left to administrators for implementation, where other dynamics assume importance. These concepts were included only insofar as they were referenced by administrators in relation to their current roles in implementation. Otherwise, as per the grounded theory method of inquiry used, delimitation occurred through the process of comparative analysis of data described in the methodology.

Summary

Washington State recently enacted policy to reform child welfare and improve outcomes. The implementation of this reform changed the way that public and nonprofit entities in the field provide services and relate to one another. This research sought to better understand the shifting responsibilities of contracting non-profit administrators during policy implementation by asking how, in the implementation of 2SHB 2106, did they perceive and define their roles? It also inquired how these administrators negotiated the values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the context of these roles. Empirical research based on these two questions provided insight into actual administrator experiences to supplement theoretical and technical literature on nonprofit contracting and the process of public policy implementation. The grounded theory approach supported theory development in how individual administrators affect policy implementation, how values are negotiated in public-nonprofit partnerships and the place

of democratic values in contracting environments. This study is limited in that it is a single case study and cannot be generalized.

POLICY CONTEXT

This research endeavored to respond to two guiding questions: 1) How, in the implementation of 2SHB 2106, do contracting nonprofit administrators perceive and define their roles, and 2) How are these administrators negotiating the values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the context of these roles during implementation? In order to best explore this question, it was useful to understand the different forces influencing nonprofit organizations and their staff during implementation. The political activity during the inception and early implementation of 2SHB 2106 contributed to these larger dynamics. This legislation was the culmination of public expectations for child welfare as interpreted by lawmakers. Outcomes established in 2SHB 2106 and from national standards and court mandates defined the value of effectiveness as it was used in this study.

Politics of Child Welfare in Washington State

While state by state responses to demands for improvement have varied, the origin of general momentum for child welfare reform in Washington State was similar to that of most states around the country. Negative perceptions regarding the states' dwindling ability to manage child welfare programming prompted federal action in the late 1990's. New laws attempted to offer direction and outlined goals for states to improve performance and positive outcomes of safety and well-being for children and families. Two major mandates generating strong pressure on states to revamp child and welfare service provision included the Adoption and Safe Families Act and the implementation of Federal Child and Family Service Reviews (Armstrong & McCullough, 2010).

The Adoption and Safe Families Act helped remove barriers to adoptions, set documentation requirements, created timelines for placement permanency, established standards for quality service delivery and demanded that states undergo regular assessments. Subsequently, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau initiated Federal Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs) in every state between 2001 and 2004. Findings in Washington's 2003 CFSR indicate that Washington State did not meet standards in six of the seven outcome areas, which resulted in the withholding of some federal funding (USDHHS, 2004).

Meanwhile, a parallel story wreaking havoc on the legitimacy of child welfare within the State of Washington began with a 1998 lawsuit brought by a collective of individuals who had, as children, been placed in at least three or more foster care homes. One of these individuals, Jessica Braam, moved through over 30 placements while under the supervision of state social workers. After six years of litigation discussing the adequacy of the State's oversight of the foster care system, the Braam Settlement emerged. This agreement obligated the State to work with an independent panel of experts to establish "Professional Standards, Outcomes, Benchmarks and Action Steps to improve the treatment of and conditions for children in the custody of DCFS and to monitor the Department's performance under this Agreement" (Settlement Agreement, *Braam v. State of Washington*, 2003, p. 1). Washington's child welfare provision was obliged by both federal and court mandate to shape up.

The State's CFSR and the Braam Settlement brought controversy to the politics of child safety at the commencement of the 2004 gubernatorial elections. Then candidate, Christine Gregoire, forged an image as a strong advocate for child and family welfare

during her campaign thanks to her past as a child welfare staff in social services and subsequent legal support during her time with the attorney general's office. After a narrow victory, Gregoire produced significant financial increases for DSHS to reduce caseload size and established a new 24 hour response time for CPS investigations during her first term (O'Hagan, 2008).

Despite a significant decrease in caseloads, new leadership and a myriad of initiatives generated by agency executives, DSHS still fell short of reaching outcomes set by court mandated reforms, federal interventions and public expectations. In the months leading up to Gregoire's 2008 campaign, the Office of Children and Families Ombudsman released dramatic findings indicating a rise in child fatalities, unprecedented complaints and below-standard foster care homes. These revelations, combined with a re-opening of the Braam case due to lack of compliance with court orders, called into question the depth of reforms and the general governance of child welfare in the State of Washington and generated negative press for Gregoire's platform as a champion of child safety. Several prominent leaders of Children's Administration, the sub-agency of DSHS managing the state's child welfare services, resigned (O'Hagan, 2008).

With the end of the Governor's term and her second election came a wave of change for child welfare in Washington State. Momentum for change emerged from several streams, culminating in elaborate legislation. In her 2007 supplemental budget, Gregoire contributed \$1 million to help start up Partners for Our Children, a partnership between DSHS and the UW School of Social Work to advance change in foster care through private-public partnerships. Mark Courtney, recruited for the position of Executive Director, heralded from the University of Chicago and brought with him

expertise on evidence-based practices and research supporting performance-based contracting in foster care networks, two important concepts referred to frequently in this research area. In 2008, the Washington Institute for Public Policy released a report for the legislature on the improvements of outcomes and cost benefits of a variety of evidence-based practices (Lee, et al., 2008). Shortly thereafter, Courtney offered a presentation to legislators and agency executives on applying performance-based contracting as a strategy for successfully implementing evidence-based practices. Only weeks later, Gregoire assumed office for her second term and a set of companion bills appeared on the floor of the House and the Senate with the goal of reforming child welfare through evidence-based practices and performance-based contracts (O'Hagan & Sullivan, 2009).

Policy Design

The State of Washington has carried nearly 1800 fee-for-service contracts simultaneously with non-profit and private providers for child welfare services. These contracts made up about 30 percent of DSHS's service provision to clients and did not carry enforceable measurement of outcomes in service areas. House Bill 2106 and Senate Bill 5943 emerged simultaneously to offer a means for achieving previously unattainable outcomes for child welfare in Washington State. The original version of HB 2106 suggested that outcomes can be met through the application of evidence-based practices such as those outlined in the 2008 report of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. The report identifies evidence-based practices as field practices or methods that meet rigorous testing standards and demonstrate statistically significant

effectiveness. It also assesses the costs for implementation in Washington State and projects savings for different strategies (Lee, et al., 2008).

As per recommendation of Courtney and Partners for Our Children, the bill employed performance-based contracts between DSHS and private contractors as a mechanism for implementation and evaluation of evidence-based practices. It defined performance based contracts as, “the structuring of all aspects of the procurement of services around the purpose of the work to be performed and the desired results with the contract requirements set forth in clear, specific and objective terms with measureable outcomes” (2SHB 2106, Chapter 74, § 2 (4)). Senate Bill 5943, the more aggressive of the two in initiating widespread application of performance-based contracting, did not originally contain any of the language present in HB 2106 regarding the role of evidence-based practices in the reform initiative. The two bills were eventually combined to form 2SHB 2106.

Phase one of the original legislation required all current contracts to be converted and consolidated under supervising lead agencies by January 1, 2011. Phase two required the selection of two sites to test the privatization, or contracting out, of all child welfare services. A full shift in case management was scheduled to occur in these two sites by July 1, 2012 and be evaluated against service provision in the rest of the state after 3 years (2SHB 2106, Chapter 74 § 3).

The legislation mandated the development of a Transformational Design Committee to negotiate the transition to widespread performance-based contracting and full privatization in the two test sites. The Transformational Design Committee (TDC) was comprised of a variety of stakeholders, including state agency executives, national

experts on child welfare reform design, non-profits currently contracting for services, foster parents, representatives of union employees, and members of the Indian Policy Advisory Committee and the Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee. The responsibilities afforded to the TDC regarding implementation were extremely broad. The legislation covered an exhaustive list of coordination activities possible and charged them to the TDC, such as determining services provided, roles and responsibilities of public and non-profit employees, contract performance and outcomes, measurement techniques, licensing and training, and monitoring, just to name a few (2SHB 2106, Chapter 74 § 8).

Early Implementation Stages

The 25 member TDC and its four Advisory Committees set out to design an implementation process for phases one and two of 2SHB 2106. Because of the myriad of complicated issues on the table for the TDC to process, the legislature granted the Children's Administration an extra six months to convert existing contracts, requiring the firm establishment of performance based contracts by July of 2011. After announcing awards, Children's Administration had to provide a three month buffer for lead agencies to assume responsibility for all aspects of the service array to children and families.

A major piece of developing the new contracts included initial and ongoing delineation of specific roles and responsibilities for non-profit and private agencies and the Children's Administration, given both the legal guidelines of the state and the practical feasibility of the wide scale change in a relatively short time frame. Legally, as required by Title IV-E of the Federal Social Security Act, the state is ultimately responsible for the care and placement of children even when Children's Administration

has contracted with and referred a case to a private agency (Beusch, C., public correspondence, June 9, 2010).

The TDC looked to other states, such as Illinois, Florida and Missouri that had already begun re-negotiating their public-private partnerships in child welfare. Early reform efforts in many states have necessitated the re-configuring of contracts with regards to both responsibilities of different parties and outcome measures for contracted services (McCullough, 2008). The TDC and Children's Administration attempted to maintain an ongoing dialogue with current and potential partners in order to solicit ideas, concerns and questions. Partners brought forth concerns such as the impact of changes on children, families, and direct services. They also questioned if and how contracting agencies would independently determine details of service delivery to meet outcomes, as opposed to the state asserting full authority over what practices to use in any given case (Join Hands for Children, 2010). After extensive deliberation, Children's Administration released the Request for Proposals for contracting with lead agencies on February 18, 2011. In 152 pages, the RFP outlines in detail mechanisms for service delivery, roles of Children's Administration social workers and of lead agency service providers and outcomes for partnering agencies. The proposals were due on May 9, 2011 (WSDSHS, 2011).

Summary

The background and policy development of 2SHB 2106 contributed to our understanding of public expectations and of influences on contracting nonprofit administrators in Washington State during implementation. Outcomes established in 2SHB 2106 and the subsequent Request for Proposal directly resulted from national

standards set by Federal Child and Family Service Reviews and court mandated reforms established by the Braam Settlement in Washington State. Political pressures on the governor and congress brought about the initiation of reform. The subsequent legislation created the Transformational Design Committee and charged it with consolidating the state's 1800 contracts, coordinating the transition to performance-based contracts across the state and planning full privatization of child welfare case management in two test sites. Two years later, the Transformational Design Committee and Children's Administration released a thorough Request for Proposals for organizations interested in procuring a contract as a lead agency. These proposals were due May 9, 2011.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The underlying values that motivate individuals and bring them to public and non-profit social services will, consciously or not, direct administrative roles and perceptions of these roles. While some research has discussed specifically the technical delineation of responsibilities in public and non-profit partnerships, the efficacy of the delineation may depend on how administrators experience changes and relationships. This Review of Literature looks at how scholars portray administrative roles and the values that guide them. These works are a combination of direct research and theoretical reasoning and can help build a framework for responding to the two guiding questions: 1) How, in the implementation of HB 2106, do contracting nonprofit administrators perceive and define their roles, and 2) How are these administrators negotiating the values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the context of these roles during implementation?

The table below, Table 1: Taxonomy of Theoretical Literature, briefly outlines how various scholars speak to the research questions of this thesis. More in depth reviews follow the table in this section, which are organized by common research categories of the academic field of Public Administration, namely administrator values, public-nonprofit partnerships and policy implementation. The literature varies in its reference to public administrators in general and to nonprofit administrators in particular. Both appear because the research questions, while specific to nonprofit administrators, explore and build theory around the roles of individuals working on providing a compulsory public service with predominantly public funds.

Thus, I began my approach to the questions of how contracting non-profit administrators define their roles and how they negotiate competing values by looking at

literature in the areas of *Values, Partnerships and Implementation*. The authors included in the section of *Values: Effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the roles of administrators* introduce more generally several of the common principles and classic discussions situating public administrators in society. This introduction is useful to start thinking of the relationship of values to roles and see several alternate roles administrators may assume. It also briefly suggests the potential difference between public agency and non-profit administrators. Scholarly work in *Partnerships: Defining the public and non-profit roles* provides context for understanding the unique positions of non-profit administrators in particular and the additional influences on their role definition and value negotiation. *Implementation: Administrator perceptions of their roles during policy enactment* looks at governance in action. This section spans a variety of literature analyzing how administrators experience social service program management, public policy change and implementation challenges. Throughout the Review of Literature, main concepts are in bold print to identify more specifically how they relate to the research questions.

Taxonomy of Literature

The design of this framework provides a means for accessing and understanding the roles and values of administrators. The intention is not to create a box for each contracting nonprofit administrator's experience. It is to create a platform to begin exploring and deconstructing experiences and reflect on the process of implementation in Washington State.

Table 1: Taxonomy of Theoretical Literature		
Primary research questions	Sub-questions	Literature reviewed
How do social service non-profit administrators define their roles?	How could social service non-profit administrators define their responsibilities for governance and their relationship to citizens?	Policy making (Waldo, Soss) Decision making (Van Slyke) Program execution (Pressman/Wildavsky, Matland) Public education (Box, Alexander/Nank) Advocacy (Alexander/Nank) Democratic management (Smith/Lipsky) Quality of life maintenance (Smith/Lipsky) Social control (Garret) Customer service providers (Box, Matland) Citizen organizers (Soss, Box)
How do social service non-profit administrators negotiate values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy?	How could social service non-profit administrators manage ongoing consideration of cost to public, maximizing production of service value?	Grass roots fundraising (Smith/Lipsky) Identify community strengths (Smith/Lipsky) Voluntarism (Smith/Lipsky) Communicate effectively (Alexander/ Nank) Build trust, principal-agent relationship (Van Slyke) Inter-organizational relationships (Hjern) Realistic performance measures (Van Slyke) Continuous evaluation (Pressman/Wildavsky) Program development and analysis (Hjern)
	How could social service non-profit administrators manage the ability to meet expectations/standards?	Align mission with activities (Smith/Lipsky) Identify paths of accountability (Smith/Lipsky) Communicate effectively (Alexander/Nank) Identify needs (Alexander/Nank) Achieve organizational autonomy (Van Slyke) Influence policy making (Garret)
	How could social service non-profit administrators manage public legitimacy and accountability?	Client responsiveness (Smith/Lipsky) Role delineation (Smith/Lipsky) Community input (Alexander/Nank) Community relationships (Alexander/Nank) Involvement in public policy making (Garret) Execution of programs as designed (Matland) Continuous evaluation (Pressman/Wildavsky)

Values: Effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the roles of administrators

In *The Administrative State*, Waldo (1948) contemplates how public administrators balance the values of efficiency and democracy in the context of politics and administration. Many see his musings as the crux of a long standing discussion on the role of public administrators in the *polis*, a debate which considers the extent to

which administrators simply carry out the will of elected officials or actually practice politics in program and policy decision making. The politics administration dichotomy carries through many discussions legitimizing the activities of public administration, including policy design, implementation, and citizen representation. In Waldo's perspective, wherever administrators may fall on this spectrum in a given social era, service to the public and harmony of the people must be the dominating values directing decision making and define the major responsibility of public administrators. His voice stands out in the field of public administration identifying early on a question of driving values does indeed exist and will inform action.

Richard Box (2004) outlines three different roles that administrators may assume as practitioners in a simplified typology that mirrors Waldo's politics-administration dichotomy. One is that of the *implementer*, a neutral entity that simply carries out the work of representatives and avoids involvement in policy-making, maintaining that democracy lies in the electoral process. On the opposite end of the spectrum lies the *controller*, a bureaucrat who seeks to influence policy decisions, designs and outcomes. Somewhere in the middle lies the *helper*. The helper plays a more ambiguous role by "serving to interpret public wishes for representatives, presenting professional knowledge of organizational and technical practices to citizens and representatives, and monitoring decision making and implementation to ensure that citizens have an opportunity to participate" (Box 2004, p. 247). Box believes that, while an administrator may move through all of these roles at given points in time, the helper role will emerge as the most important as practitioners manage the task of serving their communities and the state. He comments on risks of the helper role, including the risk of taking an unpopular political

stance that representatives do not support and the potential for the public to act in ways other than that anticipated or supported by the administrator.

Box's typology demonstrates both how an administrator may perceive his or her role, as well as different ways for administrators to arrange their responsibilities in relation to their values. For example, in the case of the implementer, democratic values are situated in the electoral process, thus bringing efficiency and effectiveness into more dominant positions for the administrator's daily activity. This case is an embodiment of one method for an administrator to negotiate the values of democracy, efficiency and effectiveness. Identifying such arrangements in non-profit administrators in Washington State is one of the main goals of this research.

In her article reflecting on *The Administrative State* and its impact over 60 years, Camilla Stivers (2008) contends that the legacy of Waldo's writing does not rest in his construction of the politics administration dichotomy as an instrumental theory, but rather in its acknowledgement of the space created where the two come together. Stivers believes that Waldo reminds practitioners and theorists that public administration is comprised of both public and administrative activities. Those in the field must not try to reconcile or admonish the tensions created between democracy and efficiency in public administration, because that tension *is* public administration.

Although Stivers herself may not fundamentally support the privatization of public service provision or other activities often considered part of new scientific management, recognizing and preserving the tension allows for study of administrators during policy design and implementation in the context of both the values of democracy and effectiveness alike. One could potentially make the case that the demands of this

very tension drives public service provision into the non-profit sector, not for purposes of furthering scientific management, but because the public sector alone could not negotiate the tension. Perhaps the non-profit sector truly is the helping sector, acting as Box's intermediary, and in a position to take the risks associated with an administrator as a *helper*. Following this train of thought incentivizes the attempt to better understand how non-profit administrators in particular are perceiving their roles and negotiating different values.

Partnerships: Defining public and nonprofit roles

Examining scholarly work of public-nonprofit partnerships created in service providing environments provides context for understanding the unique positions of nonprofit administrators in particular and the additional influences on their role definition and value negotiation. In public administration literature, an extensive body of research exists covering many aspects of partnerships between public, private and non-profit sectors (Nightingale & Pindus, 1997, Brown, Potoski & Van Slyke, 2006). General reasons as to why public organizations seek to establish outside relationships for service provision primarily include quality of service, cost savings, and efficiency. Proponents of contracting as a particular form of partnership suggest that competition increases efficiency, management decisions are based on cost-benefit analyses, poor performance can be penalized and non-bureaucratic organizations can respond to consumers' needs more effectively. While public agencies have contracted to non-profit social service providers for decades, new outcome-based contracting methods have emerged and affected methods and relationships in social service delivery (Freundlich & Gerstenzag, 2003).

This section focuses explicitly on the organizational and individual relationships between public and non-profit organizations in the context of public service delivery. The goal of this discussion is not necessarily to extensively cover the literature on partnerships in this area, but rather to survey a few authors who are addressing the role of public administrators within these partnerships and seek to straddle the gap of positivist efficiency and democratic values. Review of these scholars provides practice in identifying influences on role definition and value negotiation of non-profit administrators that will prove useful in analyzing the responses of interviews from this thesis.

Michael Lipsky and Steven Smith (1990), seminal authors on the relationship of government and non-profits, analyze the increase and impact of public contracts with non-profit agencies. They distinguish how each sector perceives client responsibility, with the public sector focusing primarily on equity in service provision and the non-profits favoring client responsiveness and compatibility of services needed with the mission of the organization. In explaining the proliferation of non-profit contracting, the authors generate a list similar to that mentioned above and add that government agencies can also take advantage of the good reputation of the non-profit sector and transfer political risks onto contracting agencies. Lipsky and Smith warn that, while these benefits may exist, contracting to non-profits does not simply move the mode of service delivery from one sector to another, it transforms the politics of service delivery.

A primary aspect of such politicking is the inherent role of non-profits as community change agents. Because of their mission-driven activity and position as an advocate for less powerful voices, social service non-profits support diversity and quality

of life in communities. Infant organizations often emerge at a grass-roots level and acquire community buy-in through their responsiveness to needs and support of broader political visibility of social issues. As they grow and potentially garner support in the form of public dollars, which is where over 50% of their funding originates, non-profits run the risk of maintaining their programs at the expense of their visions for social welfare in the community. Lipsky and Smith aptly sum up this culture clash,

As government increasingly penetrates the non-profit sector it undermines the civic virtues of nonprofit organizations, such as citizen participation in services development, voluntarism, and community definitions of proper support for the needy. Those interested in establishing a balance between governmental and nonprofit organizational priorities must find within the contracting regime a way to secure the legitimate public interest in fairness and accountability, while minimizing the negative impact of government influence on community initiative, motivation, and identity (p. 648).

In this quote, the authors hone in on the different **democratic** considerations of fairness and accountability, notably the ability to meet national public expectations and standards, as well as the ability to maintain legitimacy in the local community and encourage **democracy** at an organizational level. Lipsky and Smith seem to believe that non-profit administrators may be able to create a mechanism within contracting relationships to help them more firmly define their **roles** and balance out the competing **values**. As part of managing **effectiveness**, for example, the authors suggest more clear definition of to whom non-profit organizations are accountable.

Jennifer Alexander and Renee Nank (2009) speak to the intricacies of such a balance in their case study of the partnership between a County Department of Children and Family Services and non-profit neighborhood centers. The authors comment on how partnerships between public agencies and community-based non-profits (CBNs) provide

a solution to governance failure, or the inability of government to maintain a relationship of accountability and trust with its citizens. They detail how, over years of collaboration, the apprehension and distrust between the public agency and non-profits eventually produced a rich relationship.

Through acknowledging tension as a reality of public administration the authors were able to analyze implementation from a new perspective and delve into how the staff of community-based non-profits established boundaries and prioritized values in order to continue providing the best services possible. One poignant example of analysis from this case is similar to the fairness and accountability of which Smith and Lipsky speak.

DCFS is accountable to the citizenry at large for achieving the mission of child protection, and in that capacity, had exercised the regulatory power of the state to protect children in opposition to families; CBNs are more narrowly accountable to the people of a community across an array of concerns that pertain to improving their lives and resolving community problems through education, social services, and advocacy (Alexander & Nank, 2009, p. 377).

Understanding the nuances in how administrators experienced accountability was particularly useful for successful implementation. The article describes other aspects of role definition for public and CBN administrators, noting in the conclusion the need for more research in this area to discern the influence of partnerships on governance. While Alexander and Nank address the same types of responsibilities discussed in technical papers, they also focus on how values of administrators drive their work. By investigating the roles and value negotiations of non-profit administrators in Washington

State, this study attempts to contribute to the body of knowledge on partnerships and role definition from the administrators' perspective.

In a similar vein as Alexander and Nank, David Van Slyke (2009) outlines the development of contract relationships and how trust and collaboration manifest in these relationships. Many professionals, academics and experts in contract management indicate that effective relationship building will increase the success of contracting outcomes (McCullough, 2008, Fernandez, 2005). Van Slyke finds that public agencies may initially construct contracts based on transaction costs and other rational economic purposes, but that as trust builds over time, these contracts become more relational and negotiable. In more traditional contracting terms, the shift that Van Slyke describes is a change from a principal-agent relationship to a principal-steward relationship.

Through relational contracting on the basis of trust, public and non-profit partnerships are able to adapt to contingencies more effectively by allowing for discretion on the part of the non-profit organization. Van Slyke is sure to note, however, that this trust and space for discretion does not function as a replacement for performance measurement, but in addition to it, setting the stage for mutual agreement of realistic measures of success. Interestingly, he observed through his interviews that public managers believed non-profit credibility with the public actually buffered scrutiny of performance standards, further encouraging them to work in collaboration to define successful outcomes. This perception relates to how administrators perceive their role in contracting environments.

Van Slyke's findings encourage contemplation on how administrators define their roles to achieve effective governance. For the non-profits in his research, effectiveness

directly relates to organizational autonomy and self-direction. While the non-profit is not solely or primarily responsible for goal setting, it is determining how to achieve such results. Also, the public managers had a vested interest in creating enough space for non-profits to maintain independent credibility with the community and continue their value driven work.

Each of the scholars mentioned so far present a way to investigate administrator roles that reflect more than just the technical delineation of responsibilities in partnerships. They suggest that individuals identify their place in program implementation through relationships and self-perception. In identifying how non-profit administrators relate to accountability and legitimacy, research can capture more fully the nuances that guide their work.

Implementation: Administrator perceptions of their roles during policy enactment

As evidenced above, the role of the administrator is directly related to policy, be it through neutral execution, integrated manipulation, or mutually beneficial interpretation. While higher level administrators are, on occasion, openly engaged in influencing policy during legislative decision making, bureaucrats are more often identified as influencing policy through their manipulation of policy implementation (McLaughlin, 1987). Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky (1984) identify implementation as the action of forging a causal chain from objectives to results. By describing policy as containing a condition, if X happens at Time 1, and a hopeful consequence, then Y will happen at Time 2, the authors deem implementation the creation of links. Once implementation begins, however, conditions and consequences can change, thus placing the implementer in the role of re-defining conditions,

consequences and activities. The responsibility for such adaptation creates what the authors call decision points, and adds even more complexity in implementation. With each decision point and layer, more room for interpretation and bureaucratic politicking arises.

On the success of programs or policies, Pressman and Wildavsky note, “Whether programs adapt well to their environments can be determined only by continuous evaluation. Whether the results of evaluation are used to improve implementation depends both on the ability of evaluators to learn from experience and of implementers to learn from evaluators” (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984, p. xviii). The combination of the rigidity of the policy design and the ability of the implementer to learn from the environment and process could contribute to greater success or failure of implementation. In this way, the authors believe implementation failure really is a failure to learn a more effective process emerging from less rigid policy design and collaborative process evaluation.

Benny Hjern (1982) dutifully observes how initial implementation research sought to problematize the classic politics-administration dichotomy. He chides scholars of public administration for forgetting a major strength of the field, “The analysis of how well the body politic links good representation of societal aspirations (‘politics’) with their efficient and effective realization (‘administration’)” (p. 302). In the spirit of the emerging behavioral public administration of the time and an abundance of public-private partnerships, Hjern describes how top-down implementation research can no longer offer a framework for analysis. When traditional models of linking politics and

administration fail, Hjern notes researchers must look to alternative methods, in his case, organizational relationships.

Richard Matland (1995) distills Hjern's approach well in his review of implementation researchers.

Hjern's strategy is to study a policy problem, asking microlevel actors about their goals, activities, problems, and contacts. This technique enables Hjern to map a network that identifies the relevant implementation structure for a specific policy...It also enables him to see strategic coalitions as well as unintended effects of policy and the dynamic nature of policy implementation (p. 149).

This excerpt illuminates Hjern's main point. Public administration scholars must review the links between **democracy**, or representation of societal aspirations, and **effectiveness and efficiency** to progress implementation studies. These links can be uncovered through the use of a more bottom-up strategy, focusing initially on local dynamics of implementors. From this perspective, administrators themselves can examine their goals, activities, problems and contacts to better manage organizational effectiveness. Such a perspective offers a way to analyze how administrators negotiate **democracy, efficiency and effectiveness**.

While Matland identifies merits of Hjern's approach, he also critiques Hjern for his intrinsic engagement of **democracy and administration**. As a solution, Matland develops interesting models relating conflict and ambiguity in an attempt to marry top-down and bottom-up implementation strategies. Throughout his argument he maintains the normative stance, however, that control over policy should remain with elected representatives. This perspective does not take into account the potential for other,

perhaps more non-traditional, forms of democratic participation via agencies and organizations as mentioned in this review of literature.

As an example, Joe Soss, author of *Unwanted Claims: The Politics of Participation in the U.S. Welfare System*, explicitly carries the role of administrators even further, stating that, “Because policy implementation unavoidably entails discretion in decisions regarding rules and resources, it is always a continuation of policy-making by other means” (2000, p. 7). The central tenant of Soss’ argument is that program design and implementation directly impact the perception and use of the welfare system by citizens as a means for political participation. Not only can administrator-implementers affect policy, but they can create a ripple effect for mobilization amongst those to whom they provide services, as does Box’s *helper*. Soss’ analysis is similar to Box, and differs from others within this review of implementation, in that his argument is framed in the normative idea that citizens should be engaged in policy making and implementation decisions and administrators carry some responsibility for this engagement.

While Soss strives to describe the relationship between policy implementation and citizens in a social service environment, James Garret (1993) follows Hjern’s approach and analyzes implementation from the perspective of the social worker. Garret observes that, in implementing policy, social workers in public agencies operate in a paradox as behavior change agents on one hand and social control agents on the other. He believes this paradox spawns from two places: the expectations generated by the public and policy makers on how behavior modification can fix a wicked problem of society, or one that cannot actually be eradicated; and the expectation that in order to

execute this behavior modification successfully, social workers must apply both traditional coercive and non-coercive implementation techniques in an increasingly non-traditional service environment.

Garret's primary characteristic of this non-traditional service environment is the use of intergovernmental and public/private partnerships. He asserts that, in order for the variety of coercive and non-coercive techniques to be effective, this changing service environment must be taken into account because of its influence on the role of social service public administrators as implementers. These public administrators must employ a greater skill set that now includes, but is not limited to, goal setting, advocacy, policy analysis, coalition building, and bargaining, while ensuring and retaining knowledge of precise policy by frontline staff. They also must be involved in policy design, so as to maintain buy-in for ongoing evaluation and effectuate positive performance by frontline staff, or street level bureaucrats. All of these different tools play into how administrators can negotiate values of democracy, efficiency and effectiveness in order to meet expectations.

It is to this individual cognition of front line social service staff and its effect on policy implementation that Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) turn. They argue that implementing agents come to understand what a policy means for them through the interaction of their personal cognitive structures (attitudes, beliefs and knowledge), individual situation, and general policy signals. Acknowledging this cognitive framework of agents becomes important when identifying what kind of change a policy demands and how that change is likely to be received. The authors cite three levels of change relating to how administrators perceive their role in change: the first level is

incremental, where, for example, a routine may be modified but little or no change occurs in the purpose of the acting agents; the second demands growth on the part of the agents, but like incremental change, does not discredit the fundamental purpose of these agents; and the third level involves a loss for agents implementing change because it requires the discrediting of purpose and understanding of function. If this breakdown of change is not attended to, then a complex policy requiring third level change is likely to remain superficial and lack the substantive change crafted in the policy's original intent.

The authors suggest that policy initiatives, particularly those of third level complex change, must include communication of the substantive rationale for reform. They note, "Incoherence arises when the reform is interpreted as consisting of specific practices essentially out of context" (Spillane, et al 2002, p. 417). They also point out that interpretation itself cannot be controlled by a policy's design. Therefore, this communication entails aligning the presentation of change with original cognition of agents, thus creating the opportunity for implementers to juxtapose internal original conditions with those of third level change. The authors note that such research on change and sense-making is imperative for successful creation of reform policies, but is also equally important for street level bureaucrats in their determination of the policy's substance and their decision to ultimately actively accept, reject, or revise the reform. Therefore, how administrators experience reform and understand their role in it is of certain importance to the success of implementation.

In her 2001 article "Friends or Foes? Nonprofits and the Puzzle of Welfare Reforms," Ann Withorn discusses the unenviable position of nonprofit administrators during the implementation of social service reforms. She begins by outlining changes in

funding for social service providing nonprofits, national expectations, and state and local management dynamics. Through her interviews with over 40 nonprofit staff members working through welfare changes of the late 90s and early 2000s, Withorn draws out seven major fears of administrators as they contemplate values, namely maintaining legitimacy from participants, accountability to the state, cost to the public and ability to meet expectations. Themes of these fears include competition, partnerships, participation, religious morality, service array, organizational self-determination, and qualified employees.

As her article progresses, Withorn also outlines several fears for the future of nonprofits and their administrators in the impending reform environment of the early 2000s and projects several possibilities for how the dynamics will play out. Withorn's findings support the assumption of this research: nonprofit administrators in social service organizations with public service missions are indeed confronted with a tenuous balancing act during welfare reform in negotiating democracy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The literature presented here, with its focus on creating substantive understanding, collaborative implementation and organizational learning, represents public administration grappling with the politics administration tensions, rather than subscribing to one end of the spectrum. While some authors may articulate top down implementation strategies and others bottom up, they largely acknowledge the combination of the two and strive to find ways to implement policy with integrity, embracing both democracy and efficiency. The study of policy as it is directed by

administrators in its early stages of implementation offers the opportunity to observe this theory in practice and learn if and how administrators experience the tension.

Summary

I began my approach to the questions of how contracting nonprofit administrators define their roles and how they negotiate competing values by looking at literature in the areas of *Values, Partnerships and Implementation*. The first section, *Values: Effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the roles of administrators*, described the long standing debate on the balance between efficiency and democracy in public administration literature. The second section, *Partnerships: Defining public and nonprofit roles*, introduced the notion of an administrator situated between the bureaucracy of public organizations and the culture of nonprofit contracting agencies and the complexities of the relationships. The third section, *Implementation: Administrator perceptions of their roles during policy enactment*, situated these debates and relationships in the dynamic environment of public policy implementation. The literature is organized into a taxonomy to make it more accessible for framing the research questions and analyzing findings.

METHODOLOGY

Grounded Theory Justification

Glaserian grounded theory as a general method of inquiry maintains extensive justification, from Glaser and Strauss' (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, to Glaser's (2003, 2005) more recent work on coding and methodology in the *Perspectives* series. This thesis does not walk through an intensive rationale for intended use of this method, but rather simply discusses its main components in the context of the research conducted. The setting of the research area, at the intersection of several different pre-existing theoretical concepts of public administration and in a newly emerging policy environment that was accessible for research, determined the decision to attempt the use of grounded theory method. Several main features of classic grounded theory discussed below were applied, and included initial attempts at theoretical sampling, coding and categorizing of data and memo writing.

While the initial intent of this research was to apply a rigorous grounded theory method, limitations in time and accessibility to administrators prevented the process of grounding and integrating the theory fully. Data was collected from administrators in organizations with a range of values and missions, as well as from a variety of levels of responsibility, which contribute to the comparative method. However, the categories emerging from the data did not drive further data collection. Therefore, while categories and some theory emerge, this research is more of a limited comparative analysis and not extensively grounded. Also, because data collection did not continue outside of the limited group of contracting nonprofit administrators, it is not fully integrated (Glaser 2008). This fact will become more apparent in the analysis and conclusion, particularly in the context of the emerging theme of staff support.

Theoretical Sampling and Theoretical Interviewing

Theoretical sampling is defined as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 45). In the context of this research, I defined initial participants by who had the most experience and knowledge to offer useful information for the topic of study. Participation consisted of nonprofit upper- and mid-level management, based on the need for elaboration on nonprofit public administrator governance in Washington State’s child welfare reform. Ideally, theoretical sampling ceases when theoretical saturation has occurred, or the point at which no new concepts emerge from categorical comparison and new data collection. Data was specifically collected from only those agencies pursuing lead agency contracts with Washington State during the transition, which limited possible numbers of nonprofit organizations significantly from hundreds to only several in each DSHS contracting region. The organizations selected also represented nonprofit organizations with variance in values present in their mission statements.

Stakeholder support began through existing professional relationships with contracting agencies and expanded through networks developed from these relationships and collaborations. While historically fairly collaborative, stakeholders are currently in a state of transition, ambiguity, and, to some extent, competition. Only very limited tensions existed at the thought of sharing agency perspectives during times of contract procurement. I attempted to assuage any existence of such tension through the presentation of this study as independent research and general, self-directed discussion

unrelated to official evaluations of policy implementation. Organizations and administrators appeared open and agreeable to discussing the transition.

Theoretical interviewing, like theoretical sampling, is open ended for theory emergence. It is loosely designed to inquire about the general topic within the setting of theory development driven by comparison of categories.

Interviews took place in person and over the telephone with administrators from social service non-profits anticipating to contract with Washington State as a lead agency for child welfare service provision under the new reforms. Interviews were open ended and lasted approximately one hour. They were informal and conversational in style, with respondents moving between questions during the discussions. They ended when interviewees no longer had comments to include.

Interview Questions

1. Are you familiar with House Bill 2106 and recent efforts to reform child welfare in Washington State?

Prompt: (To what extent?)

2. Is your organization currently involved in or affected by the implementation of HB 2106?

Prompt: (How?) (Are staff involved?)

3. How would you define your role during the current child welfare reforms?
4. What are your major responsibilities now?
5. Are your responsibilities changing in any way?

Prompt: (Do you anticipate they will in the future?)

6. Can you name several values that guide your work?

7. Do you see yourself as a public servant?

Prompt: (If so, in what ways?) (How does this perception drive your work?)

8. What do the current changes mean to you professionally?

Method for Analysis

After the interviewing process, I analyzed data using coding and comparison. I coded field notes generated from data collection, beginning in as many ways possible and narrowing over time as trends emerged. The main questions I asked to draw out trends from coding included, “‘What is this data a study of?’ ‘What category does this incident indicate?’ ‘What is actually happening in the data?’ ‘What is the main concern being faced by the participants?’ and ‘What accounts for the continual resolving of this concern?’” (Glaser, 2004, p. 9). Each time I assigned a code to a piece of data, which occasionally occurred multiple times for one single piece of data, I classified it as an incident. The comparative method began with comparing incidents to incidents. Concepts then emerged from such comparison of incidents. With this, I compared additional incidents to concepts. Eventually, I compared concepts to concepts in the final analysis (Glaser, 2004).

During the application of the constant comparative method, I wrote memos from ideas that surfaced. Memo writing was the process of developing theory as incidents and concepts are compared. As Glaser (2004) writes,

Memos help the analyst to raise the data to a conceptual level and develop the properties of each category that begin to define them operationally. Memos present hypotheses about connections between categories...to generate the theory. Memos also begin to locate the emerging theory with other theories with potentially more or less relevance” (p. 12).

These memos are typically part of the iterative process of theory development in the grounded theory method. In the case of this research the memos informed the analysis that emerged from categorization and limited comparison of data in the research. I constructed the analysis for this final thesis from these memos. An example of a data table is included in the appendix.

Summary

I attempted to follow a grounded theory methodology to answer the two guiding research questions concerning the roles and values of contracting nonprofit administrators. This qualitative research style involved theoretical sampling and theoretical interviewing. Participation consisted of upper and mid-level management from 501 (c) 3 organizations with public service missions that are contracting for child welfare social service delivery and anticipating on submitting a proposal to be a lead agency. A total of ten open ended, informal interviews took place in person and over the telephone. Analysis involved coding, constant comparison, memoing and theory building.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings presented here are in response to two exploratory questions: 1) How, in the implementation of HB 2106, do contracting nonprofit administrators perceive and define their roles, and 2) How are these administrators negotiating the values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the context of these roles during implementation? First, I described the major *Emerging Themes* from the comparative process of the grounded theory method and included small excerpts from interviews. *Analysis* follows, which offers analysis of the data and speaks directly to the research questions in the context of the current policy implementation. This section includes tables organizing the major themes and juxtaposing them with concepts presented in the taxonomy of literature developed in Table 1. The final section is *Theory Building*, in which I develop continuations based on the comparative analyses and begin to build developmental theory for practitioners and scholars to observe and investigate further.

Emerging Themes

The following themes emerged from the interviews of contracting nonprofit administrators as they defined their roles, values and organizations. Interviews were open ended. Participants were asked guiding questions and then given space to direct conversation towards topics or perspectives that were central to their experiences. Responses were coded by incidents. These incidents were compared to form subcategories, or what grounded theory considers concepts, which were then compared to form more broad themes, or topics. The most commonly appearing topics from the interviews appear below, which are *Staff Support*, *Inter-Organizational Relationships* and

Organizational Principals and Practices. The subcategories defining these more broad themes are included in the discussion.

Staff Support

When asked to define their roles during the implementation of 2SHB 2106, contracting nonprofit administrators most commonly described themselves as providers of staff support. Every administrator interviewed mentioned staff at least once as a function of their role and a piece of implementation, with the majority talking about it in multiple capacities. Support consisted of the subcategories of training, empowerment, relationships and emotional attentiveness.

Administrators commented on training and knowledge of staff in a collaborative way. They had a general interest in making sure case managers were informed and had the technical tools and information that they would need in order to be effective by both agency and state standards. Not only did they want to provide staff with tools for specific service delivery, but Respondent four wanted to “offer expertise to staff to help them make their own decisions.” Respondent six elaborated, “I am focused on training staff so they can work effectively with state social workers and accomplish more. That’s what I tell my folks here. I don’t want us all to agree on something. That is the critical thinking piece. You need to speak up. If you are not doing that, you are just not being effective in this field.”

Nine comments describing administrators’ role in staff support related training and knowledge to staff empowerment in this way. Respondents referred to employing a variety of practices that embody democratic values as defined in this thesis. These include opportunity for effective participation, gaining enlightened understanding, control

over agendas and inclusion of adults. Respondent two wanted to “get staff tools and information, mentor and empower them.” Respondent one described empowerment of staff a “responsibility as a public servant.”

In addition to staff training and empowerment, nine of the ten nonprofit administrators felt developing and maintaining relationships was a big piece of their role during the implementation of 2SHB 2106. They encouraged staff to communicate openly and described their goals of creating an atmosphere of staff support, trust-building and bonding. Respondent three explained, “I think it is important to make sure everyone feels heard, validated, supported, acknowledging each other, empathizing and having knowledge.” During the interviews, several of the administrators even commented directly that the cultivation of positive relationships with staff will increase retention and help the organization meet its outcomes.

Five comments referred specifically to emotional attentiveness as an administrative function during implementation. Administrators acknowledged the emotional aspects of the work in child welfare and the reforms currently impacting staff. They recognized the need for managing anxiety, distrust and fear amongst staff throughout the changes. Relating this attentiveness back to empowerment of staff, Respondent seven described one strategy, “I try to encourage people to talk about their anxieties and frustrations so we can get a team look. Its better when people feel honest and supported and can get solid feedback. They can do what they want and still feel supported.”

Inter-Organizational Relationships

When describing their roles and responsibilities during the implementation of HB 2106, every non-profit administrator interviewed also discussed inter-organizational relationships in the subcategories of either large coalition building or small team development.

Seven comments referred to coalition building as an administrative role. Several interviewees from different organizations even created new verbs – ‘partnershiping’ and ‘teaming’ – to define their responsibilities. The implementation decisions made by the Transformational Design Committee and the structure of the Request for Proposals from the Children’s Administration required organizations to demonstrate these partnerships. The organizations interested in becoming lead agencies already have at least cursory relationships with other service providers. Some of these partnerships are quite strong and well established, both formally and informally. Respondent seven reflected, “The organizations in our county are well connected and we are lucky. I have found it very supportive to work in a region where people are doing the same amount of work. This process is requiring us to partner with other agencies. We can’t just do it ourselves.”

Several interviewees noted that such ‘partnershiping’ offered more than just a range of necessary services amongst non-profit providers. They recognized other aspects of governance for which coalition building is beneficial, including both managing financial aspects of service provision and, as Respondent ten suggested, “identifying strengths and needs in the community” to identify niches and new services. Respondent one described relationship building with the state as a means for continuing to cultivate new approaches to providing services as well, stating, “Our services are innovative and

unique and you have to bring the social worker along otherwise bad things happen. It's just a matter of building effective partnerships. There needs to be checks and balances. Our vision is for better and more effective partnershiping.” For respondents in this study, the task of establishing inter-organizational relationships involved other nonprofits, as well as private service providers, state and local child welfare departments, and the community as a whole.

Half of those interviewed included small team building, or the gathering of multiple perspectives from small groups in determining service delivery, as a function of collaboration in governance. These small groups usually consisted of clinical experts, family members, service providers, and others who could advise the case. Administrators felt by bringing together involved parties with professionals, they would establish a system of checks and balances supporting case managers in meeting expectations and standards. Respondent four included, “We need to have teams to make sure multiple perspectives are represented when we make decisions about how to manage cases.” Administrators maintained hope that such small teams would inform effective practice and build trust. Respondent six commented, “I think it's the community experts who should be driving practice. It should be the folks within our communities, our universities, the folks who are really studying it.” Some of the interviewees did acknowledge, in order for such a design to be effective, organizations would benefit from autonomy in developing service plans independent of or in direct collaboration with the state social workers. Respondent two, “We need to have multi-systemic teams to determine services. If [lead agencies] have control over how to offer services, there is

more opportunity for collaboration.” This idea of autonomy in service delivery is discussed further in the next theme.

Organizational Principles and Practice

As administrators described the values guiding their work during the implementation of 2SHB 2106, the concept of organizational principles and practice emerged from responses. Three very distinct subcategories define this theme, including representation of organizational mission, implementation of program practice and organizational autonomy/decision making.

Eight of the ten respondents commented that their organizational missions embodied values guiding their work. All acknowledged the primary objectives of child and family safety, but also elaborated to include their organizations’ priorities. Respondent One noted their agency’s perspective, “Our organization focuses on not just child welfare, but youth development as a larger philosophy. We will try to keep our values and culture present in contracting and subcontracting.” Similarly, Respondent six remarked “We see 2106 as an opportunity to develop innovative practice. We have a different vision than what the department has. We see it as a possibility to change child welfare. Not just privatizing what we have already been doing.” Respondent three described maintaining organizational mission despite pressures from reform, “I will continue to stand up for values regardless of the monetary costs involved. I feel well supported in making that judgment call.”

The array of foci for organizations seeking lead agency contracts vary aside from their child welfare mission. Two pensive administrators expressed concern with this variance. Respondent four noted, “I don’t believe the strength of the non-profit mission

will ensure that kids will be safe. The state needs to develop a common language of service provision, professionalize and standardize.”

Most administrators interviewed referred to such standardization when discussing their role as implementers of program practices, including strengths-based, evidence-based, applied science and wraparound models. Seven of the ten commented specifically on strengths-based approaches to service provision. Four referred to applying evidence-based practices, or field practices or methods that meet rigorous testing standards and demonstrate statistically significant effectiveness.

As mentioned at the end of the previous discussion on team building during implementation, several administrators believed organizational autonomy would be necessary to fulfill their role as decision makers and effectively and economically implement program practices. They discussed how, in order for them best achieve the outcomes set forth under performance-based contracting, they would need to be able to control methods of service delivery. When asked about how the nonprofit would govern implementation, Respondent six comments “That’s what the RFP is – our proposal for how we can do that. The focus is on the outcomes and we will tell you how we can get there.” Similarly, Respondent five reflected on the need for the organization to manage service provision and make decisions, “For us as providers who have an idea of how to get kids out of care, get kids into homes, and that is a phase two step. They have not moved the decision making responsibility to the providers for Phase One.”

Analysis

In order to directly respond to the two exploratory questions of this research, this analysis juxtaposes the emerging themes from contracting nonprofit administrators’

responses with the information compiled in the Review of Literature. I also discuss some of the findings in the context of the expectations set forth by Washington State and the Children’s Administration in the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Lead Agencies.

Analysis of the responses and emerging themes here helps discern administrator role identification from tools for value negotiation and contributes to the building of theory in the next section.

How, in the implementation of 2SHB 2106, do contracting nonprofit administrators define their roles?

Based on the emerging themes described above, contracting nonprofit administrators have defined primary aspects of governance during the implementation of 2SHB 2106 as: supporters of staff, coalition builders, facilitators of service teams, representatives of agency values, and both implementers of and decision makers regarding program practices. This data is presented alongside the information collected in the Review of Literature below in Table 2: Comparing Literature and Data Collected of Administrators Defining their Roles. Aspects of governance emphasized in bold are discussed at greater length here, while the others are addressed more thoroughly in response to the second research question.

Table 2: Comparing Literature and Data Collected of Administrators Defining their Roles.		
	Literature reviewed	Data Collected
How do contracting nonprofit administrators define their roles?	Policy making Program execution Decision making Democratic management Providing customer service Citizen organizing Advocacy Public education Quality of life maintenance	Implementing program practices Decision making Training and empowering staff Maintaining staff relationships Emotionally supporting staff Building inter-agency coalitions Facilitating service teams Representing organization mission

One similarity suggested in literature and occurring in the data is that most contracting non-profit administrators identify part of their role as implementing program practices that have proven effective, in this case evidence-based, wraparound and strengths-based models. As noted in the RFP from the Children's Administration, these models are required practices for potential lead agencies (WSDSHS, 2011). There appears to be alignment of general support amongst administrators for the application of these models and the requisites for them within the current reform. As Spillane, Resier and Reimer (2002) describe, this alignment of personal cognitive structures of implementers with the intentions of policy change creates favorable conditions for the successful adoption of reforms. Thus, in this respect, the implementation of such program practices may progress akin to neutral program execution referred to in the review of literature, where administrators carry out services as designated by policy (Box, 2004, Matland, 1995).

In the same stroke, however, both the literature and the data collected discuss decision-making as a role of the administrator as well, referring particularly to the organizational autonomy and self-direction for nonprofits to determine how to achieve outcomes presented to them (Van Slyke, 2006, Withorn, 2001). In Washington State, members of the Transformational Design Committee noted their interest in lead agency creativity in service delivery (Join Hands for Children, 2010). The language of the RFP, however, does not appear to leave as much discretion for lead agencies. While they are designated participants in team meetings for determining service delivery, it is the role of the state social worker to ultimately specify the outcomes, design the service plan and decide what steps to take and when (WSDSHS, 2011, p. 31).

This variance in role perception is worth pointing out, as it may likely continue to be a point of tension in implementation. Some of the cases described in the literature suggest the trust needed to provide for this agency discretion will develop over time, as in the relationship building between Nank and Alexander's (2002) County Department of Children and Family Services and community-based nonprofits (see also Van Slyke, 2009). Acknowledging the nature of this tension and relationship building is important when evaluating the "success" of both nonprofit agencies and the model in general, particularly in the early stages of implementation. Several administrators interviewed suggested such discretion may be a feature of Phase two, but it remains significant to see its place in the current design, as well.

One notable difference between roles suggested in the Review of Literature and those perceived by contracting nonprofit administrators is that of **staff support**. This theme emerged as most prominent amongst those interviewed. While my Review of Literature specifically discusses inter-organizational relationship building and democratic organizational management, it did not go into detail about relationship building amongst staff and the impact of such relationship building on the implementation of child welfare reforms. Staff training, empowerment, relationships and emotional attentiveness preponderated in the role of the contracting nonprofit administrator during the reform efforts. Extensive studies exist by practitioners and scholars on effective staff support within the child welfare field, particularly with regards to recruitment and retention in public agencies (Landsman, 2007). New research on job satisfaction amongst public and private employees in child welfare performance-based contracting environments is also emerging (Washington, 2009).

The RFP addresses nonprofit organizational staff support in its section on Administrative Requirements. It necessitates a Quality Management Plan and a Utilization Management Plan. This section also outlines plans for monitoring, oversight and training (WSDSHS, 2011). While it is possible that the concept of effective management requested may imply employee empowerment and emotional attentiveness, the language does not give the impression that such a style of staff support is central to implementation. The relationship between implementation and staff support in social service non-profit agencies could be a future direction for implementation research, if it is not evolving already.

Inversely, the Review of Literature discusses at some length citizen relationships in the form of customer service, citizen organizing, public education and other types of engagement, concepts which are mostly absent in the interviews. These administrator roles related to citizens, such as Box's helper and Soss's mobilizer, did not emerge as primary functions of contracting nonprofit administrators. When prompted as to whether or not they saw themselves as public servants, eight of the ten agreed, with the majority acknowledging their relationship to citizens as one of mostly service provision and public safety. Only two administrators viewed public service as advocacy and empowerment in particular and none mentioned public education specifically. This study does not directly address how these particular administrators, defined as staff of 501 (c) 3 organizations with public service missions contracting for child welfare social service delivery, see their relationship to citizens. Understanding how these non-profit administrators perceive their role as it relates to citizens would be useful to further explore the questions asked in

this research and illuminate this aspect of the democratic function of nonprofits in society.

How, in the Implementation of 2SHB 2106 do Contracting Nonprofit Administrators Negotiate Efficiency, Effectiveness and Democracy?

In the Review of Literature, I state that identifying arrangements for how nonprofit administrators negotiate the values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy is one of the main goals of this research. I use the example of an administrator relying on the electoral process to support the democratic aspect of implementing policy, thus focusing daily activity on the tradeoffs between efficiency and effectiveness. Here, I discuss these negotiations in the context of the emerging themes of contracting nonprofit administrator governance: supporting staff, building coalitions, facilitating service teams, representing agency values, and both implementing and decision making regarding program practices. The following table, Table 3: Comparing literature and data collected of how administrators negotiate values, is very similar to Table 2 above. As in Table 2, the data in Table 3 is also presented alongside the information collected from the Review of Literature, with topics in bold included at greater length in response to this question. The analysis in this section is somewhat more speculative and combines the emerging themes, literature and current policy environment to suggest a few developmental, as opposed to concrete, theories for practitioners and scholars to investigate further.

Table 3: Comparing Literature and Data Collected of How Administrators Negotiate Values.		
	Literature reviewed	Data Collected
How do contracting nonprofit administrators negotiate efficiency, effectiveness and democracy?	Organizational autonomy Program execution Effective communication Organizational role delineation Policy setting Realistic performance measures Continuous evaluation Align mission with activities Identify paths of accountability Grass roots fundraising Agency collaboration Community input Community engagement	Decision making Implementing program practices Training and empowering staff Maintaining staff relationships Emotionally supporting staff Building inter-agency coalitions Facilitating service teams Representing organization mission

One platform for negotiating the values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy can be found in the implementation of program practices. As mentioned in the analysis of administrator roles, most of the administrators described the application of models that were strengths-based, solution-focused, wraparound or evidence-based. These practices are referred to in the Washington State Institute for Public Policy’s 2008 report, which identifies field practices that demonstrate statistically significant effectiveness and assesses costs for implementation (Lee, et al., 2008). The text of 2SHB 2106 and the RFP from Children’s Administration require the use of such practices, which contributes democratic legitimacy and structures of accountability (2SHB 2106, WSDSHS, 2011).

Most contracting nonprofit administrators stressed the importance of incorporating their organizational values and missions into these models to maintain legitimacy, as well. At the time of this research, contracting nonprofit administrators generally anticipated that the preservation of their organization’s mission would play a key role in negotiating values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy. This tool for

achieving balance will be interesting to observe as implementation continues. Both Alexander and Nank (2009), recently, and Lipsky and Smith (1990), in the past, speak to the pressures put on such values and missions in an outcome driven environment. They discuss the need for effective boundaries to preserve the community-based legitimacy of social service nonprofits, one of their primary democratizing aspects. The RFP calls for the development of a Community Engagement, Collaboration and Communication Plan with details on how the organization will maintain community involvement and buy-in. The language in the RFP seems to focus more on this buy-in for legitimacy and does not directly acknowledge organizational identity as a component (WSDSHS, 2011). The proposals from organizations would have to include such boundaries, a proposal which may or may not be well received by Children's Administration.

While partnerships specifically between public and contracting nonprofit entities are discussed at great length in the literature presented here, other collaborative, inter-organizational relationships are not. Such relationships provide another method for contracting nonprofit administrators to negotiate the values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy. Contracting non-profit administrators saw "partnershiping" as imperative for thriving in this reform environment. Children's Administration also requires inter-agency subcontracts and the development of a "Community Engagement, Collaboration and Communication Plan" (WSDSHS , 2011). Withorn (2001) anticipates this role of organizational collaboration amongst service providers in her article referenced in the Review of Literature of this thesis. She suggests that one way for nonprofits to avoid becoming a part of the larger bureaucratic network that oppresses those in need or receiving services is through collaboration. Based on this perspective,

the contracting nonprofits can maintain community legitimacy through partnerships with a variety of organizations.

The formal and informal relationships that many of these contracting nonprofits hold will also contribute to their effectiveness and ability to provide an uninterrupted continuum of services for youth and families. This assessment is noted by more than half of the administrators interviewed. Inter-agency collaboration also provides organizations alternative resources to balance the value of efficiency as it is defined here - the ongoing consideration of costs to the public. For example, instead of identifying and training staff to accomplish particular objectives or establishing start-up services in particular areas, both of which come at relatively higher cost, organizations can employ formal and informal relationships to accomplish such objectives.

Half of the contracting nonprofit administrators interviewed included the facilitation of small service teams as a mechanism for establishing checks and balances and meeting expectations, thus negotiating effectiveness, efficiency and democracy. Based on the language in the RFP, state social workers will maintain responsibility for coordinating Family Team Decision Making and Family Group Meetings. While this type of collaboration amongst the family and a team of professionals will still be employed in the process of service delivery and can support value negotiations, nonprofit organizations and staff themselves do not have primary responsibility for this tool.

Contracting nonprofit administrators' role of staff support is also connected to the value negotiation of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy. Administrators sought to train and empower their staff, build trusting relationships and attend to emotional tribulations of the service environment. In the interviews, eight of the ten administrators

also referred to communication or transparency with staff in order to facilitate this support. Through staff engagement, communication, training and empowerment, administrators can infuse democratic values into the organization. These values permeate through leadership and frontline staff all the way down to families. A comment from Respondent 3 aptly captures this, “I want to relate to staff and role model good relationships. I want to create a specific culture and informal relationships that are about the people, kids, having fun and laughing. This creates success in work and builds trust. This trust trickles down to kids and families.” The trust built through these relationships enhances the legitimacy of the organization in the community and amongst those receiving services, as opposed to gaining legitimacy from simply implementing policy conceived by elected officials.

This quote also mentions success in work as a product of relationships. By creating a positive culture of communication and support within the organization and keeping staff trained and empowered, administrators feel that they are more likely to meet established outcomes through increased retention. Well supported, retained staff may also enhance the effectiveness of both program practices and informal and formal partnerships for service delivery and reduces organizational costs. Although administrators interviewed here perceive staff support as directly related to positive outcomes, in their article on job satisfaction amongst public and private child welfare employees in performance based contracting environments, Washington et al (2009) suggest the need for further research and model development in the area of public-private partnerships, job satisfaction, and increased positive outcomes for children and families.

Theory Building

The intent of 2SHB 2106 in Washington State is to change the partnerships between public, nonprofit and tribal entities to achieve the best outcomes for children. As mentioned in the introduction to my Review of Literature, the efficacy of the technical delineation of responsibilities in such a partnership may depend on how administrators experience changes and relationships. This research attempted to provide a case study level understanding of nonprofit actors and their perceptions, motivations and concerns in the emerging contract environment by exploring how they define their roles and negotiate competing values. Contracting nonprofit administrators identified their primary roles as implementers of program practices, potentially autonomous decision makers, and supporters of staff. Tools they may use to negotiate the values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy include implementing program practices as they are defined in policy, staying true to their organizational mission, establishing and maintaining inter-organizational relationships and collaborations, and supporting staff. Aspects of these perceived roles and tools vary from those outlined by the Children's Administration, notably the role as autonomous decision makers and the tool of upholding organizational missions. Acknowledging the tensions created by the differing perceptions of administrator roles and tools will be important when evaluating the "success" of both nonprofit agencies and the reform model in Washington State, as well as the developing relationship between Children's Administration and contracting nonprofits.

An unanticipated discovery from this research is the prominence of staff support in contracting nonprofit child welfare organizations in Washington State. While research exists on the benefits of and methods for staff support in nonprofits, it is not necessarily

well represented as a component of public policy implementation. Proper staff support could address all three of the competing values, allowing for the non-profit administrator to have a base for managing tensions while also focusing on improvement and adaptation for successful public program implementation that is called for by scholars such as Pressman and Wildavsky. Because it does not rely on the policy itself for its democratizing nature, the policy can also be interpreted and updated during implementation without losing legitimacy.

By embracing the culture of staff support as a central tenet of reform, we can acknowledge and make space for the unresolvable negotiations between democracy and efficiency introduced in my Review of Literature. I suggested at that point that perhaps services such as child welfare are driven into the nonprofit sector, not just for purposes of furthering scientific management, but also for managing the seemingly unresolvable demands of the tension inherent in public service provision in the United States. If this is conceivable, then we would benefit from adopting reform packages or implementation styles that integrate both the performance-based technical aspects of service delivery while respecting the features of the social service nonprofit field that allow for the management of the tension.

One example of integrated child welfare reform that combines staff support with performance based practice is the strategic redevelopment of New Zealand's service system. New Zealand Child, Youth and Family (CYF) coordinates the child welfare system and contracts with community organizations for a variety of services. As Connolly and Smith (2010) describe in their article outlining the integrated approach, the goal of CYF reforms was to "create a strong vision, develop a culture of high

performance, and strengthen organizational stability and confidence” (p. 12). Their agenda focused on developing a more positive culture of child welfare as a platform for implementation of professional reforms.

The state recognized that negative media exposure and the unrealistic public expectation that services should never fail an at-risk child, both of which are at play in the child welfare culture of Washington State, created the dual effect of both driving the development of over-proceduralized reforms and fostering damaging negativity amongst staff. They began a staff-driven reform strategy by talking with CYF service providers and collecting information on their perceptions, motivations, and concerns about their practice and potential reforms. Their reasoning for selecting such an approach echoes those suggested in both the Review of Literature and research of this thesis.

It was assumed that organizations with a professional workforce would function most effectively if the system acknowledged and supported professional values and the multidisciplinary evidence base of best practice in child welfare. This is not to say that a strong management focus is not important. Indeed, good management strategies are critical to the successful development of a strong organizational system. But in building the [Integrated Service System], it is believed that the complementary strengths of professional and managerial leadership would most likely result in reforms that resonated with the people, and that would ultimately give effect to changes in practice (p. 12).

The subsequent reforms in New Zealand directly addressed the very same roles that nonprofit contracting administrators in Washington State articulated: effective implementation of program practices, autonomous decision making, and supporting staff. An additional key element to the reforms was to apply a process that supported flexibility and reflexive responses to inevitable challenges of implementation. While New Zealand’s implementation of reform differs structurally from Washington State’s and attends to somewhat different value negotiations, it provides an interesting case for

review given the manner in which it identified and addressed the perceived roles of child welfare staff

Summary

Primary themes that emerged from the interviews with contracting nonprofit administrators included staff support, inter-organizational relationships and organizational principles and practices. Administrators thus defined their primary responsibilities for governance during the implementation of 2SHB 2106 as: supporters of staff, coalition builders, facilitators of service teams, representatives of agency values, and both implementers of and decision makers regarding program practices. Three prominent methods for negotiating the values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy during the implementation of 2SHB 2106 include: the application of evidence- and strengths- based program practices; inter-organizational, multi-sector collaborations; and staff empowerment and support.

The roles and tools for value negotiations perceived by nonprofit administrators differed somewhat from those outlined by the Request for Proposals, as contracting nonprofit administrators saw their role as autonomous decision makers while delivering services and felt a tool for maintaining a balance of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy was to stay true to their missions while implementing reforms. The role of administrators as implementers of strengths- and evidence-based program practices was prevalent in both the research and the Request for Proposals, which may encourage effective implementation. The concept of staff support as an inherent aspect of reforms in child welfare emerged as a topic for further consideration, given its consistent appearance as a concern for contracting nonprofit administrators.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Research

This research emerged from the recognition that current child welfare reforms create an interesting triangulation of values: policy is focused on tangible outcome improvement for effective service delivery; agencies must accomplish reforms with heightened attention on efficiency given the economic climate; and public-nonprofit partnerships generate a new dynamic in democratic public administration. As noted in both the Review of Literature and in the Analysis, contracting nonprofit administrators, as street level bureaucrats, have the ability to impact such reform implementation. The research I presented here connected the literature on theoretical and structural components of public-nonprofit partnerships in social service delivery with the cognitive aspects of change experienced by individual administrators. I sought to fill a gap in existing literature by collecting the perceptions of contracting nonprofit administrators and exploring how they are woven into policy implementation and democratic social welfare programming.

I asked two to two exploratory questions: 1) How, in the implementation of 2SHB 2106, do contracting nonprofit administrators perceive and define their roles, and 2) How are these administrators negotiating the values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy in the context of these roles during implementation? I conducted grounded theory method research involving interviews of 10 mid- and upper-level nonprofit administrators in organizations holding contracts with the state. Contracting nonprofit administrators identified their primary roles as implementers of program practices, potentially autonomous decision makers, and supporters of staff. Tools they may use to negotiate the values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy include implementing

program practices as they are defined in policy, staying true to their organizational mission, establishing and maintaining inter-organizational relationships and collaborations, and supporting staff.

Applicability for Washington State

Washington State created a detailed policy package with an even more detailed implementation package designed by the TDC in order to meet the expectations of the federal government, court mandates and the general public. Both the legislation and the RFP will likely find success in attempts to incorporate wraparound, evidence- and strengths-based models for service delivery. The state may run into roadblocks in their partnerships, however, due to perceptions of nonprofit administrators, notably their role as autonomous decision makers and the tool of upholding organizational missions to negotiate the values of efficiency, effectiveness and democracy. This conflict creates tension for the organization in determining how it can best serve youth. Additionally, contracting nonprofit administrators focused on staff support as a primary aspect of their role in implementation and as a way to negotiate these competing values. Disconnect between the proscribed responsibilities and internalized roles may lead nonprofit administrators to identify organizational boundaries and encounter misgivings as to how they can fulfill their role. Such boundaries will become apparent as organizations decide to develop proposals for contracting.

Perhaps the demonstration of the perceptions held by these administrators and the suggestion that such perceptions will influence successful outcomes will give pause to those driving and assessing implementation efforts. Maybe such pause could lead to questioning why Washington State is seeking to partner with nonprofits in particular and

how they can reinforce this intention given the research presented here. Other questions the State can ask itself include: What will drive nonprofits to generate effective and efficient service provision, and how can the partnerships evolve to best support positive outcomes? If encouraging further legitimization and accountability were reasons Washington State sought to restructure its partnerships, which may to be the case given the origins of the reforms and the negative press, then implementation should involve the question of how to establish boundaries and maintain the legitimacy of the nonprofits. If staff support really is so central in the success of nonprofits as service providers, then reform implementation needs to incorporate a platform for strengthening such support, particularly during such intense change. Nonprofits may be capable of negotiating the tensions of child welfare service delivery in Washington State, but we must set up structures that recognize why they would be successful at accomplishing such a task.

While the TDC and Children's Administration have already established benchmarks for the success of contracts in the RFP, the Washington Institute for Public Policy and the legislature will be responsible for evaluating the progress of overall policy implementation. Pressman and Wildavsky say implementation failure is the inability to learn a more effective process emerging from less rigid policy design and collaborative process evaluation. Inversely, success in implementation is the ability to learn a more effective process. The legislation itself, while identifying specific outcomes, remained fairly open to interpretation by the TDC and offers opportunity for collaborative process evaluation and such success, given that evaluators are looking at all of the pieces.

Limitations and Future Research

The questions arising from the perceptions of contracting nonprofit administrators are for Washington State in particular. The specific roles and value negotiations presented here belong to those involved in this case and the findings are limited by this fact. We cannot generalize and say that nonprofit administrators in child welfare across the country, or even those throughout Washington State, are all concerned with staff support or autonomy in decision making. We cannot even assume that evidence-based practices will be successfully implemented in Washington State.

What we can generalize, however, is the importance of taking into account the perceptions of administrators and the influence of this perception on policy implementation. If a public agency is seeking to develop or reform public-nonprofit partnerships, we can encourage this agency to examine why such a partnership is the answer and how implementation design can incorporate these reasons.

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APPENDIX

Research Timeline

Table 4. Research Timeline

2010	
March to June 18	Independent learning contract to develop background of lit review and create research questions.
June 18	Thesis proposal submitted.
June 22	Thesis proposal approved by MPA Director.
June 28	Submit HSR application with instrument.
July 6	HSR approval received.
July 6 to July 12	Follow up in person with contacts and telephone initial contacts with additional nonprofit organizations to set up meetings.
July 12 to July 23	Conduct initial interviews in person, begin establishing codes.
July 24 to December 22	Telephone interviews with additional agencies submitting contract proposals. Begin draft of thesis document. Begin coding and categorizing.
2011	
January 7 to February 11	Continue draft of thesis document, coding, categorizing. Conduct interviews on phone.
January 21 to February 17	Continue coding, comparison and memoing, review coding scheme with advisor, begin incorporating theoretical literature.
March 3	Submit draft of thesis to advisor
April 12	Submit second draft of thesis to advisor
April 22	Submit first draft of thesis to all readers
June 2	Submit final copy of thesis to all readers.
June 10	Submit signed copy to Evergreen.

Sample Detailed Analysis Table

Table 5. Questions 3-7 Incidents to Code

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10
Q3. How would you define your role	passively receiving information	theory to practice, partnerships with other agencies, transparency, mission based work	taking direction, relationships with staff for implementation	offering expertise to agency, understanding theory to practice, prioritizing direct services	develop teaming, identify community strengths, hope to see it makes sense	engagement of family, chose service expansion, engage underserved population	opportunity to change service delivery, determining services, program management	program management, only control over what I do, staff relationships	different case workers having different responses - coordinating	communication in agency, support families through relationships
Q4. What are your major responsibilities	model equaling outcomes, theory to practice (intervention to prevention)	partnerships, relationship with state, decision made at board level	x	waiting, focus on trust building and relationships	preparing people for change intellectually, building teams, theory to practice	x	contract management, outcomes	taking direction, family directed services	x	engage families to support themselves (autonomy)
Q5. Are your responsibilities changing	Money attached to outcomes, partnerships	manage staff anxiety, outcomes, family voice and youth voice, theory to practice	money/outcome driven, change agency structure to manage tension, stand up for values	uncertain of new niche, empower foster parents, evidence based program	program development, contract development, relationships with competitors	x	flexibility, transparency, accountability	balance requirements of state and mission of org		partnerships, trust building with organizations
Q6. Can you name several values that guide your work	transparency, communication	empowering foster families, ebb, optimism, advocacy, strengths based	trust building, communication, empathy, optimism	self-determination, social justice, advocate, strengths based, service standards	applied science models, managing change	safety, strengths based, ebp, flexibility, unconditional	strengths based, optimism, transparent, honest partners, communication, manage change	safety, strengths based, teams, community	organizations values	autonomy-self determination, strengths based, safety, communication, transparency
Q7. Do you see yourself as a public servant	defines public service as a steward of public values, transparency, public funds	maintaining a democratic organization, constantly checking values	contributing to the immediate community, long term community safety, helping kids be successful	public service is advocacy	Public service is serving children and families. Psychologist	strengthening families as a public value	public venue and public service not the same. Nonprofit NOT a public entity	public service is creativity in service delivery, responding to needs of family	moral obligation to population	public money, empowerment of at risk population

Human Subjects Review Application

Human Subjects Review Application

1. How would you summarize, in the form of an abstract, the nature and purpose of your research project?

This research will inform the completion of a Master of Public Administration thesis and potentially subsequent publications in academic journals.

Across the country, states face pressure from national regulation and court mandates to reform child welfare service delivery. Many states already employ contracting as a mechanism for service provision and are now examining how such contracts can be re-designed to accomplish reform objectives. The new wave of reform focuses primarily on tangible improvement of outcomes with negligible costs in a time of severe economic recession, all in a unique environment of long-standing public-nonprofit relationships. While these relationships primarily function to improve the quality of service, cost savings and efficiency, non-profits also play a unique democratic role in this country. Such organizations often help legitimize social service delivery, as well as to represent and advocate for their participants and clientele. Non-profit administrators will therefore be confronted by new challenges during the implementation of reform policy. Within the development of these new contracting relationships, they must negotiate the competing values of effectiveness, efficiency and democracy.

This study explores how, during the early implementation of reform in Washington State, non-profit public administrators involved define their roles. Non-profit public administrators here are considered to be top level administrators, middle management, board members and front line case management staff of 501 (c) 3 organizations with public service missions that are contracting for social service delivery. The role of a public administrator here refers to a set of responsibilities for governance, as well as relationships to citizens and the general public. The research will follow a Glaserian Classic Grounded Theory method of data collection, coding and analysis in an attempt to better understand the main concerns and processes of nonprofit public administrators as they negotiate their responsibilities for governance and to citizens. The responses to the following questions follow the guidelines for Classic Grounded Theory methodology, an internationally recognized research process, and are adapted from Otis Simmons' article, *Grounded Theory Guidelines for IRB reviewers at Fielding Graduate University*¹.

¹ Simmons, Otis (2009). *Grounded Theory Guidelines for IRB reviewers at Fielding Graduate University*. Retrieved from <http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/getting-started/ethical-review-irb>.

2. What are the procedures to which humans will be subjected, i.e., questionnaires, interviews, audio or video recordings, etc.? When, where, and how will these procedures be carried out? In the case of questionnaires or interviews, please attach a copy of the questions you will be asking.

This study will gather initial data through open-ended interviews. These interviews will typically last about an hour. If the individual being interviewed seems to have more to share on the topic and is interested in sharing further information, an additional interview will be arranged at their discretion. No demographic information will be collected on any of the participants. The research will begin only with the general topic of how administrators define their roles, open with a grand tour question and several follow up questions, and contain potential prompts for more information. Simmons writes,

A grand tour question is a broad open-ended question related to the general topic area. A grand tour question is designed merely to prompt the participant to respond to the general topic, on their terms. Subsequent questions are derived from previous responses so that the participant always leads the interview. Grand tour questions are modified for each interview, according the purposes of the interview, as indicated by theoretical sampling. As defined by Glaser & Strauss (originators of the Grounded Theory method), “Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges”².

The four broad questions and prompts are attached to this application. Interviews may occur in person, over the telephone, or via Skype. These interviews will not be recorded in any way aside from notes coded by interview number taken as the interviews occur.

3. How will the recruitment of human subjects for your proposed project be carried out? Include your recruitment criteria and procedures.

The sample of this research project will be determined via theoretical sampling, therefore it is not a random sample. Theoretical sampling is defined as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges”³. In the context of this research, participants will be defined by who has the most experience and knowledge to offer useful information for the topic of study. Ultimately, theoretical sampling ceases when theoretical saturation has occurred, or the point at which no new concepts emerge from new data collection. While theory

² Glaser & Strauss. (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory.

³ Ibid, page 45.

will be constructed, empirical data will not be generalized past the data collected because the study does not employ a random sample.

Stakeholder support will begin through existing professional relationships with contracting agencies, beginning with ***, and expand through networks developed from these relationships and collaborations. With the exception of the initial interviews, selection criteria depend on the theory emerging from research and cannot be determined in advance. After the initial interviews have been analyzed, the next location and organization will be determined by the theory development.

Focus will primarily rest on collecting data from those agencies that are pursuing contracts with Washington State directly during the transition, which will limit the possible numbers of nonprofit organizations significantly from hundreds to only several in each DSHS contracting region, including ***, ***, ***, and ***. Also, data will be limited due to its focus on the process of self perception within a limited population. While initially, participation will consist of non-profit upper level management, selection may be driven into other levels of staff or board members based on the need for further theory elaboration on nonprofit public administrator governance in Washington State's child welfare reform.

4. What are the possible risks to the human subjects? Specify possible kinds and degrees of risks, e.g., minimal, emotional risk in the form of distress or embarrassment. Outline the precautions that will be taken to minimize these risks, including methods of ensuring confidentiality or obtaining a release to use collected material and information.

NOTE: The concept of risk goes beyond obvious physical risk. It could include risk to the subject's dignity and self-respect, as well as emotional, psychological, and behavioral risk. Risk could also include the potential for jeopardizing one's employment or standing in an academic program, organization or workplace, community, or other group.

The purpose of conducting this Grounded Theory research is to understand patterns in the behavior of non-profit public administrators in these circumstances, not of individuals or particular cases. Names of individuals and organizations would only be kept for the purpose of follow up interviews and would be strictly confidential. Interview transcripts will be hand-written and not tape recorded, will be identified by number for analysis and not by name, and will be destroyed after the completion of the project.

The research is not designed to test a hypothesis that could jeopardize the career or reputation of public administrators should they be involved, such as whether or not a particular policy is effective or if a contractual relationship is beneficial. It is solely to gain a clearer picture of how administrators understand their role at this particular

moment in time as change is occurring. Administrators will not experience professional risk.

Interview participants may experience minimal discomfort during the interview because the topic involves an emerging, high profile policy change. The methodology is constructed to not interfere with the processing of participants. Therefore, they may skip any question they prefer not to answer and may stop or exit the interview at any time. Grounded Theory relies on the participant maintaining control of the direction of the interview and what is discussed. Also, the interviews will be completely confidential, not tape recorded and coded only by numbers for analysis. No demographic information will be collected from participants.

5. What are the specific, anticipated benefits to be gained by completing the project? These may be at an individual, institutional, or societal level.

This research may offer practitioners an understanding of nonprofit actors and their perceptions and motivations in the emerging contracting environment. It will help articulate the shifting roles of administrators in nonprofit organizations during policy implementation. It will provide Washington State with insight into the current atmosphere of their reform agenda from a different perspective than sheer outcome data and analysis of models. Through examining how nonprofit administrators negotiate different values in role definition, it can also help theorists gain insight into the place of democratic values in contracting environments.

The project will also benefit the researcher by providing valuable materials for the completion of her Master of Public Administration thesis for The Evergreen State College. This thesis work will contribute to the body of knowledge kept at the The Evergreen State College Library and will also be condensed and submitted for publication in an academic journal.

6. How will the information derived from this activity be used? To whom will the information be distributed, and if made, how will the promise of confidentiality be kept or carried out in the final product?

The information obtained from these interviews will be used as a part of a Master of Public Administration thesis at The Evergreen State College and in any subsequent publications pertaining to the theory generated from the research. Very brief excerpts of quotes may be included in the final write up to illustrate a concept, but will not associate with an individual or organization on any identifiable level. The final draft of this thesis will also be offered to those who participated in the study.

Cover Letter and Consent Form

<< Cover Letter >>

Dear Participant,

I am currently a student in the Master of Public Administration program at The Evergreen State College and am conducting my thesis research on child welfare reform. The purpose of my project is to explore how, during the early implementation of reform in Washington State, nonprofit administrators working within child welfare serving organizations identify their roles.

The interviews I am conducting are open ended, beginning with several guiding questions and lasting at most an hour in length. We can set up interviews in person, on the telephone, or via Skype. Participation in this project is completely confidential. I will collect no identifying information from you and will code and analyze the interviews by number. The goal of the project is to develop a more general theory, and not to discuss individual perceptions or cases.

I understand that discussing your role during a high profile policy change may potentially be uncomfortable or feel risky. The interviews are open-ended, so I am happy to discuss whatever aspects of this topic you feel most comfortable with. Participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may discontinue your involvement at any time.

This research will inform the completion of my thesis, which I will send to participants upon their request. It will also be included in subsequent articles submitted for publication in academic journals, drafts of which can also be sent upon request. Unfortunately, there is no other compensation available for participation.

If you are willing to set up an interview time or have any questions about this project please contact me at 608-443-9543 or fauvic10@evergreen.edu, I will also follow up this email with a phone call to check in.

If you have any questions about this project or your participation, If you experience any problems as a result of your participation in this project, please contact Eddy Brown, Academic Dean at the Evergreen State College, L-2211, Olympia, WA 98505, phone number 360-867-6972.

Thank you so much for your time. I greatly appreciate it!

Victoria Faust
The Evergreen State College
Master in Public Administration Program

<<Informed Consent>>

I understand that I am making a choice to participate in research conducted by Victoria Faust for the completion of her thesis on at The Evergreen State College on child welfare reform in Washington State. I have been informed that this research may also be included in articles for publication.

I am aware that no identifying information will be collected about me, that interview records will only be written and maintained by reference number, that any records will be destroyed after completion of the project, and that my participation is confidential.

I know that participation in this project is completely voluntary and that I can discontinue involvement at any time. I also understand that the interviews will be open-ended and that I can guide the conversation and not discuss aspects of roles, policies, or procedures I am uncomfortable sharing.

I am aware that I can receive a copy of the final draft of this thesis at my request.

I understand that if I have any questions about this project or my participation in it, I can call Victoria at 608-443-9543, or email her at fauvic10@evergreen.edu . The person to contact if I experience problems as a result of my participation in this project is Eddy Brown, Academic Dean at The Evergreen State College, Library 2002, Olympia, WA 98505, phone 360.867.6972.

I understand that my participation in this project is completely voluntary, and that my choice of whether to participate in this project will not jeopardize my relationship with The Evergreen State College. I am free to withdraw at any point before or during the interview. I have read and agree to the foregoing.

Signature _____ Date _____