A Lifetime of Scholarship: Selected Publications

Michael J. Austin

A Lifetime of Scholarship: Selected Publications

Michael J. Austin, PhD, MSW, MSPH

Mack Professor Emeritus
School of Social Welfare
University of California, Berkeley

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Carnochan, S., McBeath, B., & Austin, M.J. (2017). Managerial and Frontline Perspectives on the Process of Evidence-Informed Practice Within Human Service Organizations. *Human Service Organizations*. 41(1), 346-358.

Graaf, G., McBeath, B., Lwin, K., Holmes, D. & Austin, M.J. (2017). Supporting evidence-informed practice in human service organizations: An exploratory study of link officers *Human Service Organizations*. 41(1), 58-75.

Carnochan, S., Weissinger,E., Henry, C., Liner-Jigamian. N. & Austin, M.J. (2019). Using Qualitative Data-Mining to Identify Skillful Practice in Child Welfare Case Records, *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 13:4, 419-440.

Carnochan, S., McBeath, B., Chuang, E. & Austin, M.J. (2019). Perspectives of public and nonprofit managers on communications in human se vices contracting, *Public Performance & Management Review*, 42:3, 657-684.

III Books

Austin, M.J. (1981). *Supervisory management for the human services*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: rentice-Hall.

Betten, N. & Austin, M.J. (1990). *Roots of community organizing, 1917-1939*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Austin, M.J., Ahearn, F. & English, R. (1997). *The p ofessional school dean: Meeting the leadership challenges*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Austin, M.J. & Hopkins, K. (Eds.) (2004). *Supervision as collaboration in the human services: Building a learning culture*. Thousand   aks, CA: Sage Publications.

Austin, M.J. (Ed.) (2004). *Changing welfare services: Case studies of local welfare reform programs*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.

Austin, M.J. (Ed.) (2013). *Organizational histories of nonprofit human se vice organizations*. London, UK: Routledge.

Austin, M.J. (Ed.) (2014). *Social justice and social work: Rediscovering a core value of the profession*. Sage Publications.

Austin, M.J. & Carnochan, S. (2020). *Practice Research in the Human Services: A University-Agency Partnership Model.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

PREFACE

My 80th year has been a wonderful time for reflection. In the previous volume, *Connecting the Dots: An Unauthorized Biography,* I reminisced about my life, and included a list of my scholarly publications. While my family was pleased to see the list of publications that captures the range of my interests, they urged me to compile a more accessible subset of publications. In response, I have selected a few articles for this volume from my growing list of 160+ articles that I wrote over the last 50 years. I have also selected a third of my 23 book titles for inclusion. These selected articles and book titles represent work that I most value. They either speak to my strong interest in improving management practice or relate to my years of investment in researching the dynamics of human service organizations.

As a promoter of concept maps, I have included my own concept map (Figure 1) designed to highlight the inter-relationships of the themes of my research career. Concept maps provide a visual representation of the relationships between ideas or themes. The three major themes that capture the trajectory of my research career include: 1) managing self and others, 2) managing organizational relationships and partnerships, and 3) promoting evidence-informed management practice. The theme of managing self and others includes articles related to executive entry and exit as well as the processes of managing up, down, and out. The second theme of managing organizational relationships features the processes of working across nonprofit and public sectors, the breadth and depth of contracting, and the building of research platform partnerships. The third theme on promoting evidence-informed practice features knowledge dissemination, enhanced decision-making, and the emerging methodologies of practice research. The articles in this volume reflect one or more of these themes. The selection of books complements the articles and reflect either an in-depth treatment of one of the sub-themes (e.g. supervisory management) or a much broader treatment of such a sub-theme (e.g. organizational histories of nonprofit human service organizations).

Figure 1: Concept map designed to highlight the inter-relationships of the themes of my research career.

Concept map showing overlapping ovals:

Managing Self and Others
- Executive Entry and Exit
- Managing Up, Out, and Down

Managing Organizational Relations and Partnerships
- Crossing Boundaries between Nonprofit and Public sector
- Contracting
- Consortium Development

MJA

Promoting Evidence-Informed Practice
- Managerial Decision-Making
- Disseminating Evidence
- Practice Research Methods

Supervisory Management

Supervision as Collaboration

Community Organizing

Professional School Dean

Changing Welfare Services

Organizational Histories

Social Justice

Practice Research

Articles and Books Related to Major Theme

The articles are organized into two categories that reflect a variety of intersecting interests; namely, managing self and others and organizational research. Management practice refers to my fascination with how supervisors and administrators assume their organizational role upon entry and exit as well as how they make the transition from supervisor to administrator and manage key relationships (up, out and down).

The second category, organizational research, includes managing partnerships and promoting evidence-informed practice. These publications capture my interest in how organizations adjust to their environments, especially how they engage service users, respond to economic crises, react to major policy changes, utilize evidence to inform decision-making, and manage contractual relationships between public and nonprofit organizations. Since most of my organizational research took place under the auspices of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) which I helped build, I have explored how organizations access and utilize research in order to promote evidence-informed practice. In addition, I have searched for examples of skillful practice by utilizing case record data-mining which involves extracting written case record data in order to search for various themes.

In addition to including selected articles in this volume, I highlight eight books that reflect my various interests. I wanted to publish books that provided students with the knowledge and skills needed for effective social work practice. Two of those books focus on the role of supervisor which I regarded as the middle-management entry point into social service administration *(Supervisory Management, 1981 and Supervision as Collaboration, 2004).*

Paralleling my articles on organizational research, the next set of books focus on implementing public policy *(Changing Welfare Services, 2004)* and the sustainability of nonprofit human service organizations *(Histories of Pioneering Nonprofits, 2013).* My early social work education and long-standing interest in community organizing are reflected in my collaboration with an urban historian to capture a unique period of history, 1917-1939 *(Roots of Community Organizing, 1990).* Another one of my enduring interests relates to the core social work value of social justice captured in my edited volume *(Social Justice and Social Work, 2014)* that was created with several of my graduate students.

One of my books grew out of my experiences as Dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work. It is based upon my experience with a group of other deans who participated with me in a highly valued support group *(Professional School Dean, 1997).*

Another pivotal experience has been my relationship with international colleagues engaged in practice research. My 30-year experience with BASSC developing university-agency partnerships provided the ideal connection with these international colleagues who shared my interest in practice research. One satisfying result of this relationship is the book *Practice Research in the Human Services (2020),* which has recently become my first international co-published edition published in China (2023).

Following My Intellectual Curiosity

As I reflect upon the areas of scholarly interests that have emerged over my 50-year career in academe, it seems important to elaborate upon each of the publications selected for this volume; namely, why did I select them, what do I find interesting about each one, and what might be the relevance and importance of each for today and tomorrow?

The articles in the first circle of the concept map in Figure 1 featuring managing self and others can be divided into two categories. The first one features the process of managing self when it comes to entering and exiting organizations. This topic became clear to me as I entered and exited the deanship at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work. As I reflected upon my first major management practice experience as well as recounted my observations derived from serving under three former deans, I was struck by the absence of literature on the entry and exit processes and decided to keep notes on my experiences. I also noticed that these deans displayed behaviors associated with shy extroverts, a new area of literature for me to explore.

My interest in preparing for assuming a deanship can be traced to my doctoral program dissertation where I studied the newly emerging supervisory relationships. In that work, my focus was on helping neighborhood-based indigenous paraprofessionals enter the ranks of social service agencies, a focus of the 1960s federal war on poverty programs. This interest led to teaching a course on staff supervision that provided direct service practitioner with the tools for entering the first level of agency management, often referred to as a unit supervisor of 5-8 direct service workers. Again, with the limited literature in this area, I invested heavily in developing a textbook for students interested in this area of practice and called it *Supervisory Management in the Human Services.*

As I planned and conducted training sessions for supervisors in the fields of child welfare and Jewish communal service, I began to identify other aspects of supervision that I had not previously considered. The first aspect was the process of *managing up* to one's superior; namely, helping your "boss" do her/his job so that this person could help you do yours. Similarly, the process of managing out refers to networking with other supervisors in order to learn from others as well as coordinate services. And finally, *managing down* involves an array of supervisory management skills related to leadership, case management, managing by objectives, deploying staff, monitoring performance, staff evelopment, and managing time and stress. This line of research then evolved from becoming a staff upervisor to becoming a program manager.

My second area of scholarship involves organizational research. This category has two components – partnerships and promoting evidence-informed practice. The partnership theme features the relationship between public and nonprofit organization as evidenced in the implementation of welfare reform and captured in *Changing Welfare Services.* I also became curious about the sustainability of nonprofit human service organizations and looked more closely at pioneering nonprofits that had been in existence for decades. This broad inquiry is captured in *Organizational*

Histories of Nonprofit Human Service Organizations. And finally, the ultimate tool for promoting partnerships in the delivery of human services is the contract. As a result, a major investment of research funds was made to learn more about the contracting process between public and nonprofit human service organizations.

Based on fieldwork in the UK and the Nordic countries, I became intrigued by the growing interest in evidence-informed practice and the organizational supports for disseminating evidence for use in organizational practices and the promotion of research-minded practitioners. This interest led to learning more about the approach of managers to evidence-informed decision-making and the role of link officers who facilitated the transfer of knowledge to enable evidence-informed practice. Another form of disseminating evidence emerged from the use of data-mining research methods used on case records in the field of child welfare to identify skillful practices to share with students and practitioners. And finally, my most recent interest focuses on the relationship of service users with human service organizations and their encounters with bureaucracies.

All of these studies were made possible by building a practice research platform in the form of an intermediary organization, Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC), based on a partnership between local agencies, universities, and foundations. Many of the studies launched on this platform are described in *Practice Research in the Human Services: A University-Agency Partnership Model.*

In addition to my practice research interests, my curiosity also included questions that emerged from my doctoral program studies and my master's program about the origins of community organizing practices in social work. For example, when seeking to understand the roots of community organizing, I collaborated with an urban historian to explore the period of 1917-1939 in the US where some of the pioneering work in neighborhood block organizing, labor organizing, and federated fundraising began as documented in *Roots of Community Organizing, 1917-1939.*

I also was curious about the origins of the concept of social justice so frequently noted in my master's program as a core value of social work. I wondered about the origins of concept in relationship to the humanities, social sciences, social injustice, and social work ethics. This line of inquiry also intrigued a group of graduate students who were motivated by the opportunity to build upon their undergraduate major from the perspective of social justice. They ultimately contributed to an edited volume entitled *Social Justice and Social Work: Rediscovering a Core Value of the Profession.*

The origins of my interests in research methodologies can be traced back to my doctoral program where I focused on quantitative survey research methods relevant to my study of *Professionals and Paraprofessionals* (1978). This was my first formal study of social work practice. Following this experience, I wanted to get closer to actual practice using qualitative research methods in order to capture the experiences of supervisors that I noted in my training and consultation experiences. It was the observational data that led me back to the literature and the formulation of my interests in supervisory management, managing up-down-out, and the pilot project

on the nature of differential staffing involving different levels of college students. With these observations of practitioners, I became increasingly intrigued with the role and function of practice research that could bridge the divide between practice and research. In particular, I found in-depth case studies provided rich qualitative data for use in cross-case analysis as well as the results of case record data-mining.

In addition to collecting observational data, it proved to helpful to practitioners to learn about the evolution of knowledge emerging from comprehensive reviews and syntheses of the literature. These literature reviews could stand alone as publications as well as serve as a foundation for empirical research. The investment in articulating the elements of practice research *(Practice Research in the Human Services: A University-Agency Partnership Model,* 2020) led to a new synthesis of my research themes where I linked the nature of practice research with the critical element of defining organizational support. In essence, this relatively new methodology called for considerable support from agency administrators, staff, and service users to sustain a research collaboration between universities and human service organizations. My interest in organizational support for practice research led to the formation of an international collaborative composed of researchers and practitioners with shared interests regarding the capacity to sustain practice research in the form of funding, practitioner and service user support, and the support of policymakers (see the website <icprsw.com>).

Assessing the relevance of a lifetime of scholarship

While I have highlighted the various scholarly pathways that I followed, it may be less clear as to why I found the topics to be important as well as relevant today. The importance that I have attached to management and organizing can be traced back to my teen years when I was involved in congregational youth programs and as an assistant manager at a summer camp for 300 campers. I enjoyed the planning, coordinating, and organizing aspects of managing and only discovered later when applying to a graduate school of social work that there was a profession that matched my values and interests. Near the end of my career, I was invited to trace the roots of social work management over the past 100 years (Social Work management practice, 1917-2017: A history to inform the future. *Social Service Review, 2018).* It was definitely an honor to be invited by the editor of one of our premier journals and gave me the challenge of covering a huge span of time in order to capture the richness of various eras of practice.

As for the importance that I attach to the topics of my publications, my rise to increasing responsibilities on editorial boards gave me a national platform to view scholarly contributions in relationship to my own work. Early in my career, I joined my colleague, Rino Patti, on the board of the journal *Administration in Social Work* with the goal to assisting others develop publishable manuscripts. When he appointed me Associate Editor, I began to think about the role of the journal within the larger field of nonprofit and public sector management. When I became the Editor along with the Editor-in-Chief Richard Edwards, we changed the name of the journal to *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership and Governance.* We

engaged an expand editorial board and encouraged the members to find new ways to strengthen the journal.

From my first teaching job at Florida State University School of Social Work, it became increasingly clear to me that managing and organizing were social work skills in great demand given that most of the students were focused on direct services to clients. The emerging distinction between micro and macro practice became increasingly problematic as many of the graduates with clinical interests were promoted within fi e years of graduation into first line management positions as supervisors. Many were unprepared for this transition let alone further advancement to positions of program managers later in their careers. As a result, both my teaching and scholarship focused on organizational and management issues and thereby represented the importance that I placed on this area of social work research.

As for the relevance of my publications, I can only speculate since others are in a better position to make this judgment. From my perspective, the relevance of my work can be seen in the continuing challenges facing the profession. They include preparing future practitioners for the complexities of management as well as helping more experienced practitioners guide organizational change. In the case of this latter challenge, with the help of agency administrators, I created an executive development program for middle managers seeking to refine their management skills on their pathway to future career advancement *(Guiding Organizational Change: A Casebook for the Executive Development Program of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium,* 25th ed, 2019).

I continuously tested the relevance of my scholarship in the classroom with my students. I encouraged them to explore new areas of practice through the use of term papers in the form of literature reviews on organizational and management topics. I would propose cutting-edge topics but students often chose their own topics.

While I rarely consulted the citation index to see how often my scholarship was cited, I found myself intrigued and confused when I stumbled across a citation of my work. Specifically, I was pleased to see that someone had read my article. However, I often found myself confused when the quotation or paraphrasing of my work had no relationship to what I wrote. I fear that some colleagues sprinkle references throughout their manuscripts somewhat randomly to demonstrate that they have cited relevant literature. As a result of seeing my work cited, I find it difficult to assess the impact, importance, and relevance of my scholarship given the randomness of online searching for related scholarship.

While I find the vast majority of my scholarship to be important, I also recognize that its "shelf-life" may become shorter and shorter given the fast pace of changing interests. I recall students objecting to reading an article that was published more than two years ago and the vigorous negative reaction to reading a classic textbook that was written decades ago. In essence, I am not the best judge of the importance and relevance of my work in an age of rapid computer access to information.

In summary, the current literature in my field suggests that the three major domains of my scholarship have enduring value and interest; namely, managing self

and others, managing organizational partnerships, and promoting evidence-informed practice. I have attempted to stay on the cutting-edge of theory-informed practice in my most recent publication (Connecting Practice Research with the Process of Theorizing. *Research on Social Work Practice).*

My effort to focus on theorizing based on research findings has been highly influenced by my European social work colleagues who focus their teaching on theory-informed practice These colleagues rely upon the major theories of philosopher Karl Marx, psychologist Lev Vygotsky, historian/philosopher Michel Foucault, and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In contrast, our American research is highly influenced by social scientists and their empirical approach to knowledge development whether quantitatively or qualitatively. It is my hope that the future of social work education and the preparation of practitioners for macro practice will combine the European and American traditions to more clearly articulate theory-informed practice.

Looking back

This overview of my publications reflects far more hindsight than foresight. Only in retirement could I look back and see connections that were not apparent at the time. The only clear thread from the beginning is my continuous interest in the nature of social work management practice and the search for finding ways to improve it.

Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to pursue these interests with the freedom and privilege associated with the position of university professor. I continue to be amazed and grateful to have had the opportunity to choose and design the topics in my courses as well to pursue a wide range of research interests.

As I look back over my publishing career, I have become increasingly aware of two realities. First, I never envisioned an academic career for myself. Instead, I thought that I would be involved with working in a public or nonprofit human service organization in an administrative capacity. Ultimately, I found myself attracted to administrative roles inside of higher education. Second, as someone focused on practical and action-oriented endeavors, I never imagined myself to be a sedentary writer. While I found that I had a great deal I wanted to say, I never took the opportunity to educate myself in the craft of effective writing. I simply learned by doing, relying heavily on others (especially my loving wife) to provide important editorial feedback related to both clarity and the flow of ideas. In conclusion, my scholarship reflects the competitive publish or perish pressures related to advance in academe. It also reflects opportunities to "learn by doing" when pursuing new areas of study that call for learning new methodologies.

SELECTED ARTICLES:
MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Managing Up:
Relationship Building Between
Middle Management and Top Management

Michael J. Austin, PhD

Middle management personnel in human service agencies frequently complain about the difficulties encountered in working with their bosses. These challenges are usually identified in workshops or training sessions when middle managers feel free enough to share and open enough to learn that others may be experiencing similar frustrations. Agency executives or top managers also experience difficulties in relating effectively to their middle-management staff. Some top managers feel threatened by their talented middle managers and sometimes fear that they are in competition with one another for the top job in the organization. In other cases, gender differences may be the major theme whereby male executives are threatened by assertive female program managers or female executives are threatened by assertive male program managers. Whatever the causes, more light needs to be shed on the process of relationship building between middle managers and top managers. This analysis includes the concept of "managing up," highlights from relevant management, and strategies for building and maintaining effective managerial relationships.

The environmental changes inside and outside human service organizations over the past decade have created new pressures on management personnel (Austin, 1984). Organizational survival has been a dominant theme and renewed attention to organizational cultures has been one of the by-products of reorganized agencies. Some organizations have experienced significant retrenchment while others have grown rapidly. The changes in funding patterns

along with the pressures for accountability and the introduction of computer-based management information systems have created considerable stress on managerial relationships.

The relationship between top management and middle management has suffered greatly under the strains of guiding human service organizations through turbulent times. The most obvious strain results from the fact that as organizations grew during the 1960s and 1970s, the personnel and internal management problems could be "papered over" with new funding for program expansion. Problem employees and weak operation systems could be ignored or transferred to new programs in a period of growth. With the advent of cutbacks and reorganization of the 1980s, these old problems required attention by both top and middle management. Agency personnel were asked to do more with less, resulting in more strain on management. Programs and agencies were being merged. Old staff were leaving through the agency's front door as new staff were entering through the back door. New lay leaders were appearing on agency boards and county commissions demanding more attention to the "bottom line." The missions of the agencies were changing and strategic planning was the new route to survival. While these changes added new demands and strains to managerial relationships, agency personnel, "whip-lashed" by change, were calling for increased efforts to humanize the workplace. Managers were confronted with the tension of attending to the culture of the organization at the same time that changing community needs required attention. All of these factors put a strain on excellent relations between top management and middle management and forced major disruptions in those organizations where the relationships were not strong. Middle managers were preoccupied with their own program responsibilities, ignoring the need for teamwork with colleagues and top management. Top management was consumed with both organizational survival and program expansion under the intense scrutiny of "bottom line" board members and funding sources. In this context, the one aspect of relationship building between top management and middle-management that merits analysis is the process of managing up.

MANAGING UP

Most of the literature on supervisory management in the human services (Kadushin, 1985; Middleman & Rhodes, 1985; Austin, 1981) tends to emphasize the managing of several staff members or

managing down. Very little attention has been given to managing up. The closest activity to managing up is the process of advocating for staff which derives its momentum from the process of managing down. The concept of managing up is based on the premise that helping your boss or director do his or her job is one method for gaining help in carrying out the middle-management job.

When middle managers first consider the concept of managing up, there is a tendency to resist it by saying, "Why should I be doing part of my boss's job? If they want to pay me as much as my boss, I'll consider it." While this may be a normal reaction, it tends to overlook the considerable interdependency of managerial work existing between top management and middle management. The sharing of work is an essential ingredient of successful agency management. However, in defense of the middle manager, it is clear that if the top manager's work performance is deteriorating, there is a legitimate concern about the cost of supporting a weak or incompetent director. The middle manager may even be doing the agency a disservice to the extent that the executive director's incompetence is obscured.

For the purpose of this analysis, "managing up" is defined in terms of the following components:

1. Advocating for the needs of subordinates in relationship to career development, meritorious performance, environmental needs such as space to work, and social needs in terms of work climate.
2. Influencing agency policy by proposing changes in the way in which the organization functions (e.g., travel policies, intake policies, personnel policies, etc.).
3. Influencing agency program development by proposing new program directions and identifying implementation strategies.
4. Influencing agency leadership and providing constructive feedback by analyzing:

   a. the organizational climate with respect to improving inter-unit communications and team-building;
   b. the impact of the executive's management style and actions on staff;
   c. the need for recognition of outstanding staff work;
   d. the changing nature of work life in order to foster maximum creativity and participation.

5. Enhancing top management's capacity to receive and utilize input from middle managers who seek to manage up and middle managers' capacity to view the managing up process as enhancing their career development (e.g., working to improve relationships rather than simply seeking other employment).

These five components of managing up are based on the assumption that "helping the boss to do good" is a shared responsibility between the middle manager and the top manager. While the relationship between top management and middle management includes a wide range of issues, this paper focuses primarily on the process of managing up.

Some may argue that this working definition of managing up is nothing new. Effective middle managers and top managers engage in relationship building processes which enhance advocating for subordinates, new policies, and/or new programs. The argument suggested in this analysis is that during times of significant change inside and outside human service organizations, it is less likely that the relationship building and maintenance process will sufficiently address the fourth and fifth components of the working definition of managing up — namely, influencing agency leadership through constructive feedback and the capacity to receive and utilize such feedback. It is this perspective which leads to a closer assessment of the assumptions underlying the process of managing up.

Managing up is based on the assumption that middle managers continually seek to understand the cross pressures and role strains experienced by top managers. This may be an unrealistic expectation for someone new to the middle management role. However, managing up is based on a set of important perceptions of the top manager, namely that the agency director is a human being who makes mistakes like all of us, who may have significant limitations as well as strengths, who has a managerial style which needs to be accurately assessed by middle managers, who needs to be recognized and appreciated as much as anyone else in the organization, and who needs regular feedback (positive and negative) from his or her middle managers.

Realistic perceptions of the top manager need to be balanced with realistic recognition of some of the blinders worn by middle managers. Middle managers need to guard against viewing the agency director as a source of paternal or maternal approval or seeing hostility among middle managers as a form of sibling rivalry for recog-

nition by top management. In a similar manner, it is important to assess to what extent middle managers deny the need for assistance from top managers or the extent to which executive directors can serve as mentors for middle managers. These issues can provide a base for assessing the middle manager's expectations about the relationship with top management. The following are a few examples of the managing up process:

1. By helping the boss recognize that I'm a good professional, I gain the necessary freedom to do my job and the boss can be assured that my responsibilities will be addressed.
2. My boss can be very compulsive by dropping into my office many times in one day. So I help him to see that he is keeping me from doing my job by using humor or telling him with a big smile to get out of my office.
3. My boss presents himself in such a way that one is not always sure about what he is thinking. So I accommodate to his style by being more assertive and nurturing in order to help him be more expressive.
4. I've spent the past two years promoting the idea that our organization needs an in-house staff development program by soliciting the ideas of others and reminding my boss of the importance of orienting, updating, and upgrading staff.
5. When my salary as a female senior manager lagged significantly behind my male counterparts, it was necessary for me to advocate for myself and educate my boss. This was a scary but necessary component of our managerial relationship.
6. While I have a difficult time saying "no" to anyone on my staff, it is even more difficult for me to say "no" to my boss. And yet, if I don't set realistic limits for my broad area of responsibility, who will? As I set limits, my boss gains greater understanding of my strengths and areas for improvement.

In contrast to middle managers, top managers have their own worries and dilemmas related to receiving input from subordinates who seek to manage up. Prior experiences in receiving input from subordinates clearly affect one's receptivity to feedback. If the experiences have been more positive than negative, then the managing up process might be well received. However, if the superior has been "burned" in the past, is currently feeling vulnerable, or is unwilling to address his or her "blind spots," the process will prob-

ably not be well received. Some top managers may already feel sufficiently receptive to input from staff and lay leaders based on clear and established norms related to receiving feedback and engaging in self-disclosure. By contrast, other top managers may experience considerable isolation and loneliness which can serve as obstacles to being receptive to the process of managing up. Such experiences may also relate to the size of the organization whereby top managers in small organizations feel overloaded by the range of issues needing attention or those in large organizations confronted by very complex issues. Organizational size may be a significant factor influencing the process of managing up.

It is also important to recognize individual differences as the top manager seeks to answer such questions as:

1. Who can I take feedback from?
2. Whose feedback do I truly value over time?
3. Which subordinates need more "strokes" in order to create a comfortable climate for managing up?
4. Which subordinates bring out the worst in me?
5. How does my assessment of a subordinate's capabilities affect my ability to receive input from the managing up process?
6. How threatened do I feel by some of my middle managers?
7. How much time do I want to invest in receiving input from the managing up process?

These are important questions for the top manager who seeks to be receptive and supportive of the subordinate who attempts to manage up.

Each side of the managerial relationship brings a personal history to the work site. Understanding the history of the top manager is as important as understanding the history of the middle manager. Top management may expect middle managers to act and respond in a certain manner based upon the top manager's prior experience (e.g., ability to tolerate ambiguity or delayed gratification, ability to adapt to change, or the ability to put others at ease). Similarly, middle managers bring their own personal history to the work site where they may expect top management to remember important details or to engage in open disagreements without jeopardizing the working relationship. Personal history is also affected by gender differences. To what extent does the entry of women into the managerial domain affect interpersonal communications and relationship

building? How does sex role socialization during childhood affect the way in which female and male managers experience intimidation by one another? These difficult questions may require years of exploration to arrive at answers which help to clarify the working relationships among managers. However, the limited literature cited in the next section can help shape the direction of this exploration.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE

The highlights from the literature were selected on the basis of their contribution to informing the managing up process. The selected concepts either help to explain barriers to the process or identify facilitators to the process.

Most of the literature relevant to managerial relationship building can be found in the management and behavioral sciences. The four key concepts selected for assessment are power sharing, intimidation rituals, shared madness, and communication styles. The concepts of intimidation rituals and shared madness refer to barriers while power sharing and communication styles refer to facilitators. The selective citations from the literature reflect an effort to illustrate the richness of the four concepts in increasing our understanding of managerial relationship building. It is assumed that competent managers at any level of the organization will recognize the uses and misuses of the four concepts.

Power Sharing

Kaplan, Drath, and Kofodimos (1984) have noted that the power of top management can block or restrict the upward flow of criticism. They noted that the top executive's demeanor or bearing can impede feedback. Such a demeanor may include fostering a personal aura of power, monopolizing conversation, using fear tactics, and/or operating with an abrasive style. They also observed that the top executive's impact on people or the degree to which he or she personifies the organization can block feedback. This dynamic can be seen in the way the top executive may engage in distancing relationships or the way in which middle managers only tell the top executive what he or she wants to hear. In a similar fashion, the top executive may participate in structuring the organization in such a way as to guarantee his or her own isolation. Pyramid structures

tend to place those at the top in positions whereby they are in contact with fewer and fewer people. While the isolation may or may not be structural, it is also possible to insulate oneself whereby others, especially middle managers, conspire to protect the top executive from everyday organizational demands.

In order to lift the restrictions and impediments to receiving feedback and criticism, Kaplan et al. (1984) identified action steps for executives interested in power sharing and open communications. The steps are grouped into three categories, namely what the organization can do, what middle managers can do, and what the executive can do. First of all, organizations can de-emphasize power differences by making executive offices less flashy and less isolated from others in order to increase accessibility. Organizations can also mandate the application of performance appraisals to all levels of the organization, including the executive. Involving board members in assessing one or more units of the organization on an annual basis is another method of demonstrating the agency's commitment to self-assessment. Secondly, middle managers can also play a significant role in establishing methods for generating constructive feedback to executives. For example, the use of outside consultants may be helpful in giving sensitive feedback to executives. Thirdly, executives can do a great deal to foster feedback by rewarding middle managers who speak out and reflect an attitude of openness. The key ingredient appears to be the executive's awareness of the restrictions on criticism inherent in exercising power. If there is awareness, executives can demonstrate through word and action that they are really interested in feedback and thereby actively seek it out.

Intimidation Rituals

The second major organizing concept involves intimidation rituals. O'Day (1974) identified four major phases of intimidation which have been adapted to reflect how executives might deal with reform-minded middle managers. Intimidation rituals are used to control others while carefully seeking to manage an image of reasonableness. Intimidation rituals are usually used to respond to a perceived threat, such as accusations about inadequate actions followed by suggested corrections, a moral challenge revealing the executive's strength or weakness of commitment to the organization, or a challenge to the ability of the executive to maintain order

in the organization. The four major phases of intimidation are: (1) nullification, (2) isolation, (3) defamation, and (4) expulsion. The first two phases are indirect and the last two are direct.

Nullification is basically a discounting strategy used to convince subordinates that their ideas are unrealistic and misguided. The explicit message is "you don't know what you're talking about but we'll look into the matter." The process involves blocking the ideas of middle managers by reaffirming the collective wisdom of the organization and thereby avoiding personal responsibility. As O'Day (1974) notes:

> Repeated exposure to the nullification ritual (the "beating your head against the wall" phenomenon) is expected to convince any sane organizational member that a reformist voice or presence is unwelcome. He/she is expected to take the hint and stop pestering superiors with misguided opinions. (p. 376)

The second phase of indirect intimidation is isolation. This involves being separated out from others in order to reduce the impact on the organization and make it difficult for the subordinate to mobilize support. This action is taken under the guise of protecting the organization and usually involves a show of force from the top. The major action steps include closing off communication links, restricting freedom of movement, and reducing the allocations of organizational resources. If these steps do not work, middle managers can be transferred to less visible positions. Another strategy involves a systematic unresponsiveness to the subordinate's criticism or suggestions. As O'Day (1974) notes:

> This lack of response is meant to convince the reformer of the invalidity of his/her position, but if he/she presses his/her right to be heard, it may be used to create a feeling of such impotence that the reformer overreacts in order to elicit a response from his/her superiors. This overreaction may then be used to demonstrate the reformer's psychological imperfections. (p. 376)

The third major phase of intimidation involves defamation by impugning the subordinate's character and motives. Distorted events or fabricated instances of misconduct can be used to intimidate the subordinate and others in the organization. This direct form of intimidation seeks to blackmail the subordinate by suggesting

questionable motives, underlying psychopathology, and/or gross incompetence. The goal is to focus attention away from the executive and onto the subordinate by casting doubt on motives, intentions, and personality. As O'Day (1974) notes:

> The superiors hope that by threatening to destroy the reformer's reputation and his/her character, he/she will retreat into silence and passivity or leave the organization for greener pastures; if however, the reformer continues his/her efforts, superiors have laid the groundwork for expulsion. (p. 378)

The fourth and final phase of intimidation is expulsion. This phase is used when nullification, isolation, and defamation have not been successful strategies in forcing voluntary withdrawal from the organization. An expulsion or official dismissal serves as a warning to others in the organization. Expulsion is a verdict of unfitness and seeks to support the contention that the subordinate is immoral or irrational. There is a keen interest in avoiding formal dismissal proceedings in order to avoid the implication that the organization has failed and that top management was unable to maintain order.

While the discussion has focused on the intimidation process used by top management, it should also be noted that these same phases of intimidation can be used by middle managers in dealing with subordinates. The primary factor seems to be the ability to exercise or exert power over others. Up to this point, the issues of power sharing and intimidation appear to be important themes in seeking an understanding of the relationship between middle management and top management. The next two concepts relate to shared madness and communication styles.

Shared Madness

Kets de Vries (1979) studied emotionally charged superior-subordinate relationships among top managers and noted the potential for shared madness to emerge and impair the ability of both managers to see things realistically. The shared madness resulted from "closed communities" whereby both managers lose touch with the reality of the organization's environment, to the detriment of all members of the organization.

The process of shared madness involves "contagious irrational behavior patterns" which unfold in a number of ways. Here are some of the steps:

1. The top manager is under considerable strain and a preoccupation with power and control leads to gradual loss of ability to view accurately the organization's reality.
2. Middle managers are often dependent upon the top manager for support and the interdependence between them increases significantly during times of stress.
3. Some event triggers the top executive who becomes preoccupied with some delusionary ideas (not always conscious) such as the fear that subordinates are taking advantage of him or her.
4. The top executive develops a certain amount of hostility but feels guilty as a result of the attachments displayed by middle managers which fulfill the executive's dependency needs.
5. The top executive is extremely reluctant to give up his/her relationships with middle managers, sometimes the only close relationships.
6. In order to defend against the emerging hostility toward middle managers, the executive begins to attribute the hostility to people other than immediate subordinates.
7. The top executive needs the support of middle managers and induces them to share his/her delusionary ideas and actions.
8. If the middle manager resists, the top executive becomes overly hostile and includes the middle manager in "the other camp."
9. The middle manager's anxiety rises over choosing between the wrath of the top executive and the loss of reality.
10. Frequently middle managers solve this double-bind situation by giving into the ultimatum from the top executive in order to satisfy their own dependency needs and to deflect the hostility of the top executive. The cycle of the contagious irrational behavior pattern is now complete and shared madness results.

According to Kets de Vries (1979), shared madness can be prevented by recognizing individual and organizational symptoms. First, it is important to look for certain personality characteristics. For example, executives who possess considerable personal charm and seductiveness may be covering up attitudes of conceit, arrogance, and self-righteousness. Such managers can be prone to shared madness and may find it difficult to alter their ideas and then actions. Second, the organization's culture and operating proce-

dures may contain the seeds for shared madness. For example, unusual selection and promotion procedures which reflect the top executive's idiosyncrasies, unsystematic decision-making, erratic information systems, excessive control, high turnover of managers, frequently changed organizational goals, and extreme secrecy are all danger signs in the organization's culture.

Kets de Vries (1979) identifies four steps for taking corrective action. First, it is important to establish trusting relationships in order to create the climate where the top executive can entertain the possibility that his/her assumptions about the organizational environment are invalid. Second, it is necessary to monitor one's own susceptibilities to shared madness by periodically taking a critical look at one's own values, actions, and interpersonal relationships with the assistance of someone outside the organization. Third, it is possible to solicit help from interested parties outside the organization who have a vested interest in the organization (e.g., funding sources, board of directors, consumers, etc.) and possess a countervailing source of power. And fourth, executives can modify the work climate and structure by supporting middle managers who display individual responsibility and independence of mind. Contagious irrational behaviors are usually blocked in an organizational climate which fosters mutual collaboration, delegation, open conflict resolution, and respect for individuality.

Communication Styles

The dynamics of shared madness can also be prevented by paying attention to the communication process between the top executive and middle managers. Gabarro and Kotter (1980) suggest that the communication process needs to be managed. They observe that the executive-subordinate relationship can be misunderstood if the mutual dependence between two fallible human beings is not recognized. Subordinates frequently fail to see how the executive needs help and cooperation in order to do his/her job effectively. Acquiring a thorough understanding of each other's strengths, weaknesses, work styles, and needs can contribute to the development and management of a healthy working relationship. A thorough understanding includes seeking to clarify goals and objectives (i.e., not making assumptions about them), gaining an understanding of the cross-pressures being experienced by both parties in order to handle multiple agendas, and acquiring sensitivity to each other's

work styles (e.g., organized and formal versus informal and intuitive).

Gabarro and Kotter suggest that understanding self is a key ingredient in fostering effective managerial relationships. From the middle manager's perspective, there are several critical questions which needed to be addressed periodically:

1. What is it about your personality and work style (in addition to strengths and areas for improvement) which facilitates and impedes working with the executive?
2. What is your predisposition toward your own dependence upon the executive such as subordinating feelings (anger and frustration) or resenting the executive's authority?
3. To what extent are you a "counterdependent" middle manager who has difficulty with an authoritarian or directive executive who subtly becomes the enemy, senses your latent hostility, begins to lose trust in your judgment, and behaves less openly?
4. To what extent are you an "overdependent" manager who swallows anger, avoids disagreements, compliantly denies anger, and sees the executive as the "all wise parent who should know best"?

Clearly both the "counterdependent" and the "overdependent" middle manager hold unrealistic views of the executive. However, middle managers may reflect aspects of both as they experience executives whose own time pressures and concerns are at odds with the middle manager's needs.

Gabarro and Kotter identified two key communication issues as they sought to clarify the ingredients of compatible work styles. They focused on the ability of the middle manager to adjust to the executive's work styles by assessing whether or not the boss is a reader or a listener. Readers prefer to review written information and reports in advance of discussions in order to study and prepare. Listeners prefer to talk about ideas first and then review them again in written form. Similarly, middle managers need to assess whether or not they are working for a high involvement executive or a delegating executive. High involvement executives like to "touch base" with middle managers on an ad hoc basis in order to be involved in decisions or problems as they arise. Delegating execu-

tives do not want to be involved and expect middle managers to come to them with problems and inform them of important changes.

While the emphasis has been on the work style of the executive, the middle manager also needs to assess his/her own work style in terms of reading/listening and involving/delegating. Since it takes "two to tango," an assessment of the styles of both the executive and the middle manager provide a foundation for seeking accommodation and adjustments needed to build and maintain an effective managerial relationship.

Based on the assessments related to reading and listening as well as involving and delegating, the middle manager can increase effective communications by checking expectations and information flow. Middle managers can get into trouble quickly if they assume that their executives' expectations are clear or that the middle managers' expectations are clear to the executives. Middle managers need to continually clarify with the executive the types of problems about which the executive expects to be informed and when information sharing should take place. By initiating an ongoing series of informal discussions, the middle manager can check specific expectations about when projects are to be completed as well as the nature of interim reports. At the same time, middle managers can check the flow of information to the executive. It is common for the executive to need more information than the middle manager would naturally supply or for the middle manager to assume that the executive knows more than may be the case. Regular informal discussions provide the middle manager with an opportunity to display dependability and honesty while seeking to make the best use of the executive's time and not reducing the middle manager's credibility by raising relatively trivial issues.

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

In the previous section, the four concepts of power sharing, intimidation rituals, shared madness, and communication styles were selected to provide perspectives on managing up. By way of conclusion, there are at least three strategies which could serve as tools for guiding the process of managing up: (1) redefining the job description; (2) engaging in ongoing self-assessment; and (3) analyzing and changing organizations. These three strategies are based on the premise that managing up is enhanced when job responsibilities

are clearly articulated, that intimidation and shared madness are reduced when there is an active process of self-assessment, and that effective oversharing and communications are increased when there is an ongoing process of organizational analysis and change.

The updating of managerial job descriptions is an essential strategy in building and maintaining effective managerial relations. Current and relevant job descriptions include the specification of major responsibility areas, along with the specification of task statements representing major action sequences under each responsibility area (Austin, 1981). Most managerial job descriptions include responsibility areas related to planning, budgeting, program development, program coordination, and staff supervision. However, rarely do we include the responsibility area of managing up. It is estimated that an effective relationship between top management and middle management requires the minimum investment of 10% to 20% of the middle manager's total job responsibility in the area of managing up. For some, this may appear to be too high an investment. If the function of managing up is institutionalized into the culture of the organization, the responsibility for managing up needs to be reflected in managerial job descriptions. Once the function is in the job description, it can be assessed annually by both parties as one of many topics in the annual performance evaluation conference.

The second strategy for managing up involves regular managerial self-assessment. The process of self-assessment needed to improve managerial relationships has its parallel in the practitioner-client relationship. Practitioners engage in ongoing self-assessment related to the effectiveness of their helping relationship. Managers also need to devote time to assessing their managerial relationships. In so doing, it should be possible to enhance the process of managing up by improving communications, increasing power sharing, reducing intimidation, and neutralizing shared madness.

If executives and middle managers are committed to the principles of organizational excellence related to promoting creativity and leadership, identifying productivity through people, and promoting the agency s central values and philosophy (Peters & Waterman, 1983), then periodic self-assessment becomes essential. Similarly, if there is a mutual desire to prevent the emergence of intimidation rituals and shared madness, then self-assessment is critical. The self-assessment process can take place at the level of the individual, the group, and/or the organization in terms of career development.

Self-assessment on an individual basis can take the form of self-

talk in which the manager cognitively processes his/her reactions and impressions of the work situation. Tools to facilitate this process have been developed by Gendlin (1981) as part of a self-help strategy to assist individuals with the activity of focusing. Gendlin's framework includes six steps: (1) clearing a space; (2) identifying a felt sense about a worry or concern; (3) finding a label for that concern; (4) resonanting about the appropriateness of the label; (5) asking questions about the nature of the concern; and (6) being open enough to develop answers to those questions.

Self-assessment on a group basis can be facilitated by joining a professional support group composed of other managers in similar or different organizational settings. Such groups can be valuable in gaining a perspective on one's own work as well as a comparative view of others in similar and/or different situations.

Career development is the third approach to self-assessment and is based on active participation in structured learning experiences (e.g., workshops, conferences, courses, etc.). For experienced managers, this form of self-assessment involves planning and risk-taking. The planning relates to the recognition that upgrading one's skills and knowledge requires the recognition of the value of such activities and the searching out of relevant conferences, workshops, or university continuing education opportunities. The risk-taking relates to actually attending structured learning programs (e.g., not avoiding them due to the press of work) and actively participating in such programs by sharing one's own trials and tribulations in carrying out managerial work. The rewards for planning and risk-taking usually far outweigh the lost work time and fears of self-disclosure.

The third and final strategy for managing up relates to the ongoing process of analyzing the structure and culture of the organization and using the tools of planned change. The analysis phase is greatly facilitated by engaging in a planful program of reading about leadership (Bennis & Namus, 1985) and organizational assessment (Morgan, 1986). Over the past decade there has been a flood of literature on Japanese management techniques, quality circles, organizational excellence, entrepreneurship, organizational culture, organizational change agents, and autobiographies by successful managers. The increased volume of books and articles on managerial work provides a foundation for all managers to read about other managers and organizations and thereby compare organizational experiences and managerial methods with their own organizations.

While the technology of organization change is described in an ever-expanding literature, Resnick and Patti (1980) have identified the critical phases of planned change for those seeking change inside human service organizations. Similarly, Holloway and Brager (1985) have identified a series of political strategies useful in promoting organizational change. Since all managers are, by definition, students of organizational life and managerial practices, it seems essential that lifelong learning related to analysis and action serves as the foundation for effectively managing up.

In summary, this analysis represents a beginning attempt to define managing up within the context of organizational excellence. Key organizing concepts related to power sharing, intimidation rituals, shared madness, and communication styles highlight some of the knowledge relevant to managing up. Three strategies for engaging in the practice of managing up were identified. These included redesigning job descriptions, routinely engaging in self-assessment, and maintaining an ongoing agenda of organizational analysis and change. The "bottom line" for the managing up process can be captured in a simple question, "How many times over the past year did you recognize and compliment your superior on a job well done?"

REFERENCES

Austin, M.J. *Supervisory management for the human services*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1981.

Austin, M.J. Managing cutbacks in the 1980s. *Social Work*, 1984, *29*(5), 428-437.

Bennis, W. & Namus, B. *Leadership: The strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper and Row, 1985.

Gabarro, J.J. & Kotter, J.P. Managing your boss. *Harvard Business Review*, 1980, *58*, 92-100.

Gendlin, E. *Focusing*. New York: Bantam, 1981.

Holloway, S. & Brager, G. Implicit negotiations and organizational practice. *Administration in Social Work*, 1985, *9*(2), 15-24.

Kadushin, A. *Supervision in social work*. 2nd edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Kaplan, R.E., Drath, W. & Kofodimos, J.R. Power and getting criticism. *Issues and observations: Center for Creative Leadership*, 1984, *4*(3), 1-8.

Kets de Vries, M.F.R. Managers can drive their subordinates mad. *Harvard Business Review*, 1979, *57*(4), 125-134.

Kirschenbaum, H. & Glaser, B. *Developing support groups: A manual for facilitators and participants*. La Jolla, CA: University Associates, 1978.

Middleman, R.R. & Rhodes, G.B. *Competent supervision: Making imaginative judgments*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1985.

Morgan, G., *Images of organizations*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1986.

O'Day, R. Intimidation rituals: Reactions to reform. *Journal of Applied Behavior Science*, 1974, *10*, 373-386.

Peters, T.J. & Waterman, R.H. *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*. New York: Harper and Row, 1983.

Resnick, H. & Patti, R.J. (Eds.). *Change from within: Humanizing social welfare organization*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980.

Executive Entry:
Multiple Perspectives
on the Process of Muddling Through

Michael J. Austin, PhD

INTRODUCTION

The organization and management literature reflects considerable attention to the issue of leadership (Burns, 1978; Fiedler, 1967; Sayles, 1979). The recent upsurge in interest in leadership is again found in the current literature (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Schein, 1985; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). However, very little attention has been given in the literature to the process of executive entry. This process refers to the period of time which can range from three months to two years in which an executive of an organization enters a new position.

Gilmore (1988) makes a significant contribution to our understanding of executive entry by placing it within the context of leadership succession. In so doing, he identifies the following key phases of the overall leadership change process:

- Understanding the problem or opportunity of leadership turnover
- Managing leadership transitions resulting from expected or unexpected resignations
- Identifying the organization's future leadership needs
- Developing a profile and set of expectations of a new leader
- Conducting an effective executive search
- Selecting and hiring the best candidate

Dr. Austin is Dean, School of Social Work, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

- Coping with interim leadership
- Managing the executive entry process
  - Dealing with the shadows of previous leaders
  - Connecting with existing staff
  - Building a new management team
  - Developing a new shared vision of the organization
  - Managing reorganization by linking structure to strategy and people to roles
  - Cultivating, rebuilding, and maintaining productive working alliances
- Managing the pace of organizational change
- Preparing the organization for future transitions

This paper describes the executive entry process in order to identify a set of principles to guide executive entry. Executive entry is defined as the personal process of managing oneself in order to lead others. It includes learning about self in the context of the executive role as well as learning about the process of providing leadership.

The ultimate goal of this paper is to assess the relationship between the process of executive entry and the way in which executives help to create a vision and to position an organization for the future. Since one of the key ingredients of the positioning process is building trust with people inside and outside the organization, it is helpful to assess executive learning and leadership in order to identify principles for developing trust and for guiding executive entry.

ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE-TAKING

The process of assuming the role of an executive reflects an important transition, frequently a mid-life transition. The opportunity does not usually appear "out of thin air" but rather emerges out of a convergence between an individual's readiness for managerial leadership and an organization's receptivity to new leadership. The convergence usually results from a long process in which the individual consciously and/or unconsciously anticipates the opportunity to assume the executive role. The anticipation is frequently reflected through the assumption of increasingly responsible roles in an organization whereby managerial competence can be exhibited. Over time, an individual uses observation and experience in order to en-

vision the prospect of assuming an executive role. Once the decision is made to take on the executive role, many factors converge to influence the performance of the executive role. The new executive is influenced by the expectations of superiors or board members as well as subordinates. These expectations are sent in the form of verbal and non-verbal messages which teach the executive the "do's and don'ts" associated with the top management position. The executive receives these role expectations which influence managerial behavior and serve as sources of motivation in carrying out the executive role.

Katz and Kahn (1966) identify the following four major concepts related to role-sending and role-receiving which have been applied to the executive:

- *role expectations* — evaluative standards applied to the behavior of the executive.
- *sent role* — communications stemming from role expectations and sent by members of the organization in order to influence the executive.
- *received role* — executives' perception of the role-sending of others as well as the roles they send to themselves.
- *role behavior* — response of the executive to the complex of information and influence received.

These four concepts comprise a role episode which provides an important framework for understanding what the executive experiences during the entry phase. The executive is expected to send role expectations to superiors, subordinates, and constituents inside and outside the organization while at the same time receiving role expectations to be acted upon. The role episodes are heavily influenced by organizational, interpersonal, and personal factors. Organizational factors include such issues as fiscal solvency, institutional history and memory, and public perceptions. Personal factors include such elements as tolerance for ambiguity and capacity for delayed gratification. Interpersonal factors represent a major overlay on each episode, such as the communication styles of immediate staff, staff morale throughout the organization, and the meaning of symbols and traditions buried deep in the organization's interpersonal culture. Symbols might include pictures of the found-

ing leaders in the organization's entry area and traditions might include a closely held organizational philosophy transmitted through an oral tradition. All of these concepts relate to organizational role-taking.

The analysis in this paper seeks to explore more fully the personal factors which emerge as the executive enters a new role. Some view the executive role as a "two-way medium" between the external or community expectations of the organization and the internal expectations of staff (Weick, 1978). Others perceive the executive as a leader whose credibility is constantly being tested in a context where management is viewed as a performing art (Vaill, 1978). The most useful approach to understanding the personal factors affecting the process of executive role-taking appears to be the learning style of the executive. The executive entry process can be described as a time of rapid and intense learning about the organization, its staff, and its environment. For many, the experience has been described as scaling a "steep learning curve." Mitroff (1978) describes the learning executive as one who: (1) innovates by reflecting and then creating original response patterns, (2) views the variables and dimensions of a situation from at least two independent frames of reference, (3) tests several alternatives within multiple frames of reference, (4) demonstrates a willingness to modify, even to destroy, some central aspects of the organization's boundaries and patterns of relations so new ones can be constructed, (5) engages in controlled activity, experiments, and otherwise pursues data that are meaningful within multiple frames of reference and can be used to construct new and useful relationships, and (6) innovates by use of the unconscious (the irrational and, even less understood, the non-rational) and the humorous to gain new meaning and perspective (pp. 141-142). The concepts of the learning executive and organizational role-taking provide the framework for exploring the process of executive entry.

THE PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE – UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF AND LEADING OTHERS

This section of the analysis is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the process of learning required upon entry into an executive position. The second part refers to the process of leading

during the entry phase. While the distinctions between learning and leading are blurred throughout the entry process, they have been divided into two areas for analysis in order to identify some of the major characteristics of the entry process and the potential principles to guide day-to-day managerial behaviors.

Learning About Self and the Executive Role

In the earliest phase of the entry process, the executive enters the new position and is *confronted immediately by a wide variety of demands*. These demands range from planning budgets to handling the varying pent-up needs of both staff and significant others in the organization's environment. In this learning phase, the executive is not only focusing on the management of paperwork and the setting-up of office procedures, but is also involved in learning about the demands of the executive role. Throughout this process, it is common for the executive to engage in constant questioning about the wisdom of having agreed to serve in the position as well as lingering self-doubts about one's own ability to manage all the demands of the position. Irrespective of how much personal planning took place prior to executive entry (e.g., reading reports, interviewing key actors, buying and selling homes, settling the family, etc.) the immediacy of job demands can feel overwhelming.

In the process of learning a new position, the executive is also in the process of *unlearning his or her previous role*. For example, if one moves from a middle management position to a top management position or from a top management position in one organization to a similar position in another organization, there is the constant shifting of roles and expectations. Usually the chaos surrounding the exit from a previous job is compounded by the frantic pace of learning a new job. This shifting can produce considerable confusion as the executive acquires a new "sense of self" based upon the expectations of people inside and outside the organization. During the honeymoon period, executives may continuously reassess their own leadership style depending upon the interaction between the executive as a person and the organization as the significant environment. The executive can be primarily proactive or reactive. Such a style may vary if the executive inherits an organization (moves in from the outside) or inherits a job (moves up from

within). Despite the previous role of the executive, skillful executives can clearly articulate a leadership style (e.g., emphasis on planning with few surprises, promoting participation but specifying an agenda, making a conscious effort to meet the needs of the organization as well as reflecting the use of compromise as essential for organizational survival, etc.). Leadership style is also greatly affected by the size of the organization, the previous definition of the job, and the executive's prior managerial experience.

In contrast to unlearning the expectations of the previous role, the new executive is also engaged in a *continuing assessment of his or her personal agenda* in taking on the new administrative role. As is common in accepting a new position, most executives bring with them a set of hopes and dreams for managing the organization. In the early days of executive entry, these hopes and dreams are continuously challenged by the nature of the organization's past and the feasibility of how much can be accomplished in the months and years ahead. If the expectations for change and the development of new directions for the organization are too high, the executive immediately encounters a beginning set of frustrations and fears about the prospects of success and the potentials for failure.

Confronting the fear of failure can be one of the most trying aspects of the executive entry process. This is particularly true if the individual has come from a position where he or she had maximum control in guiding personal plans and creativity. In the executive position where control over one's life is affected by multiple factors inside and outside the organization, the potential paralysis that can come from a fear of failure can be significant. For example, if the organization's services are poorly marketed, the budget deficit is significant, the staff has low morale, and the organization has negative press in the community, where does the executive begin? Similarly, the fear of success comes when the executive takes specific steps to secure new funding for innovative programs and the staff resists becoming involved in implementing the new program. It is at this point that the executive begins to truly understand the process of muddling through and the slow and incremental steps which are inherent in the organizational change process.

Another aspect of the learning process relates to the degree to which the executive is *open to receiving and understanding feed-*

back and observations from other members of the organization. This degree of openness is critical in the early phase of the entry process. Since non-verbal behavior is difficult to read when the executive is beginning relationships with staff, it is necessary to find informal opportunities (e.g., walking the halls) to gather and process staff feedback. For example, a brief meeting in a staff member's office yields feedback to the executive that the phrase "this organization" used in staff meetings can be interpreted negatively by staff. The phrase connotes distance between the staff and the new executive who still may not feel "a part of" the organization. This piece of communication, after considerable self-assessment, was corrected with the phrase "our organization." This example can be multiplied a hundred times during the executive's honeymoon period. As a result, it is necessary to maintain as much openness to staff feedback as possible and to sort the information through a self-assessment process.

Staff expectations of the executive relate very closely to the issue of soliciting and understanding feedback. Most interactions with members of the organization relate to the *role* of the executive as distinct from the person who happens to fill that role, and as a result, many interactions carry a set of expectations about the power and influence of the executive. At the same time, it is clear that the role of staff prerogatives becomes a central feature in the balance of power and any attempts to step across the invisible boundary demarcating staff turf will be met by both resistance as well as the demonstration of a collective will on the part of the staff. Similarly, the executive's immediate administrative staff have a set of expectations with respect to how their administrative roles will be supported by the new executive. At the same time, the executive is assessing the capacities of staff and developing his or her expectations of staff. When these expectations are higher than staffs' apparent capacities, the executive may need to engage in further self-assessment to determine if the discrepancy should be owned by the executive and thereby adjusted downward or should be owned by staff with further support and training needed. Termination may also need to be considered.

In addition to developing and adjusting expectations about style, the executive also needs to demonstrate the capacity to self-disclose

his/her own adjustments. Since learning involves making mistakes, the executive has the added responsibility of sharing his or her uncertainty about the future while maintaining a continuing posture of optimism and a "can do" philosophy. This may help to allay staff anxieties about the shape of the new organizational directions emerging under the direction of the new executive. Since mistakes are part of risk-taking, it is almost a certainty that there will be misunderstandings when the executive seeks to delegate assignments to staff or communicates with people outside the organization. The executive needs to publicly own his or her mistakes which are inevitable during the entry phase.

It is possible at this point to begin to speculate on principles which might guide the early phase of learning about self. The following four principles reflect the combining of assessment and communication skills related to blending one's own data about self with the feedback from others. These principles could be viewed as hunches or hypotheses since they currently lack sufficient empirical research to generalize to executives across organizational settings or across differences in age, gender, race, or span of control.

Principle 1 — Being Open to Acquiring Knowledge About Self
> This continuous inquiry process involves the daily and weekly activity of self-assessment, such as keeping a personal journal, and provides an opportunity to reflect on the frustrations as well as the exhilaration of the initial "roller coaster" experience.

Principle 2 — Using Assessment Skills and Intuition
> During the "honeymoon period" the executive assesses information about the organization as well as gathers information and insights from various members inside and outside the organization. The executive relies heavily on intuition in making quick decisions. Staff members are expecting to see the signs of leadership in one form or another as a demonstration of commitment to the organization along with a sense of action and momentum.

Principle 3 — Demonstrating a Capacity to Be Open to New Learning
> The executive who enters the organization is very much dependent upon learning about the history of the organization as well as the interests of its members.

Principle 4 — Actively Soliciting Feedback from Others
Asking individuals for their advice and guidance in the early
phase of executive entry serves to empower individuals and to
begin the long and slow process of relationship-building and
trust-building. This process is as critical for relationships inside
the organization as it is for developing relationships outside the
organization.

(Adapted from W. Bennis & B. Nanus, *Leaders: The strategies for
taking charge*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985)

A second set of principles are noted later in relationship to provid-
ing leadership.

Learning About Leading the Members of the Organization

The second major phase of managing oneself and leading others
is the process of organizational leading. Organizational leading dur-
ing the entry phase includes picking up the reins of one's predeces-
sor in order to develop followership, involving informal leaders,
and charting new directions for the organization. There are a num-
ber of challenges to learning the leadership role, namely *the process
of succeeding your predecessor and envisioning one's own legacy*.
    With respect to one's predecessor, it becomes important to un-
derstand the previous management style utilized in the organization
in terms of its strengths as well as weaknesses. This analysis clearly
takes time during the entry phase and is frequently identified when
members of the staff relate to the executive in what appears to be
the same manner as they did with the predecessor. Staff may also be
transferring their own worries and/or limitations on to the role as-
sumed by the new executive. Similarly, relying on the counsel of
one's predecessor can be problematic. While organizational history
may be effectively transmitted through such counsel, the very diffi-
culties that the organization experienced may be related to the man-
agement style of your predecessor.
    At the same time that the new executive is dealing with the leg-
acy of one's predecessor, the new executive is also challenged to
identify and envision the legacy with which to be known and re-
membered. In this case, the identification of a vision and its various

components are the essential ingredients of the new executive's legacy. Dealing with the predecessor and envisioning one's own legacy are clearly aspects of the uncertain time in which a new management structure and direction is being put in place.

During the entry phase, the learning process can also be confounded by a continuous series of unanticipated events. Such events might include staff resignations, the hiring of new staff members, staff retirements and/or the unexpected termination of staff members. Unanticipated events may also include the breakdown of equipment, the malfunctioning of heating and air conditioning, or leaks in the roof of the building. While dealing with the unanticipated is part of the ongoing management responsibility of an executive, the emergence of unanticipated events during the entry phase creates one more challenge during the executive entry process.

The second aspect of learning about leading involves *charting new territory and setting of directions for the organization*. This process can be exhilarating for the executive and frustrating for members of the organization. The frustration that members can experience relates to their own perceptions that change may not be necessary or that only small changes may be necessary. As a result, the executive immediately confronts resistance from members of the organization in a wide variety of initiatives. The resistance may be related to the demoralized nature of organizational members based on their experience with the previous executive, or it may relate to a lack of clarity about the future directions of the organization and a fear that change will somehow affect their own areas of concern in a negative way. Charting new territory also relies heavily upon the support of informal leaders in the organization. If these leaders have not been consulted in what is seen as an appropriate manner or if these leaders had at one time envisioned themselves as being the executive of the organization, it becomes increasingly clear that the new executive must engage in relationship-building and empowerment. The empowerment refers to the recognition of the role of informal leaders and proper deference to their seniority and longevity in the organization.

Setting new directions also relies heavily on the informal and formal socializing among members of the organization. It becomes critical for the new executive to locate situations and informal envi-

ronments in which to share views and observations that may not lend themselves to an official memo or scheduled appointment. The process of getting to know members of the organization beyond their organizational role in terms of their personal interests and fam-ily concerns needs to be balanced by the executive's own efforts to self-disclose about his or her interests, worries, and family con-cerns. This exchange process provides the executive with important information about staff views and behaviors. This information is useful in empowering staff members to give their best to the organization.

A third aspect of learning about leading relates to the *management of the executive's calendar*. The degree to which organizational members feel that they have access to the executive is found in their ability to get on the calendar. The appointment setting process involves not only the issue of timing, but also the issue of initiative. For some organizational members, the securing of an appointment is seen as a major activity, while for others it is as routine as waking up in the morning. The new executive must be sensitive to this difference and recognize that when certain organizational members do not appear on the calendar, it becomes important to seek them out. From the executive's perspective, the calendar can also be an opportunity to learn from others as well as an opportunity to manage daily affairs. For example, if inadequate free time is not scheduled on the calendar, the executive can experience information overload from one appointment after another on any given day. The executive may also become a captive of the calendar and un-able to engage in informal communications and relationship-building by moving around the organization. It is clear that the calendar can trap an executive in the office and prevent the process of leadership development from unfolding during the entry phase. Setting priorities for the organization also involves setting personal priorities. Therefore, leaving open-space on the calendar may be critical for both the executive and those who want to drop in.

And finally, in addition to providing leadership inside the organization, the executive also must pay attention to the *development of relationships outside the organization*. This becomes particularly crucial in the early days of executive entry where the credibility of the organization directly links to the credibility of the top executive.

For example, the public's perception of the organization is greatly influenced by what the executive says and how he or she acts. Judgments are formed quickly. The issues of funding, informal and formal resources, and goodwill become the major ingredients of external relationship-building. If the organization has a long history of being well received, these efforts in the early phase of executive entry will be limited. However, if the organization has had an uneven history of relationships with significant others outside the organization, the relationship-building process with external constituencies will demand considerable time and energy on the part of the executive. For example, if key agency executives in the community had a negative experience with your organization in the past, and it could be as much as 15 to 20 years ago, slow and steady patience may be needed in the process of informing them of the positive changes which have taken place in your organization over the past several years.

Conceptualizing one's own legacy, charting new territory, managing the calendar, and developing relationships outside of the organization represent a leadership challenge for any executive. Building on the first set of principles related to learning about self, the second set of principles focuses on the processes of providing leadership for those inside and outside the organization.The following principles highlight some of these leadership challenges:

Principle 5 — Sharing Uncertainty While Maintaining Momentum
   The sharing of uncertainty involves the presentation of self in such a way as to let others in the organization know that the learning process is continuing and is an integral part of the leading process, especially the uncertainty about the directions that the organization will take as a result of new managerial leadership.

Principle 6 — Owning Mistakes as an Essential Part of Risk-Taking
   Errors or mistakes can range from unknowingly insulting a significant outside supporter of the organization to creating misunderstandings due to lack of clarity in delegating staff activities or assignments. Mistakes are often made in the entry phase and it is important to publicly affirm that mistakes are part of risk-taking.

Principle 7—Becoming Interpersonally Competent in Order to Empower Others

> This principle relates to the exchange that emerges between the executive and members of the organization and the degree of trust that develops from such exchanges. If members of the organization feel that they have access to the executive and feel comfortable in sharing their views, then they may be more empowered to take new initiatives, suggest new directions, and engage with others in pursuit of the organization's mission.

Principle 8—Helping to Set Goals While Questioning Current Operating Assumptions and Priorities

> The process of questioning involves probing to understand why things are the way they are and provides further data for analyzing the current status of the organization as well as the potential for change in charting new directions.

(Adapted from W. Bennis & B. Nanus, *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985)

FROM LEARNING AND LEADING
TO POSITIONING AND VISIONING

It is clear that learning about self and learning about leading the organization are two processes that are often intertwined during executive entry. These processes provide a foundation for building trust, positioning the organization, and developing a vision.

Building Trust and Positioning
the Organization

The development of trust and managing the trust level in the organization is an important by-product of learning about self and leading others. Helping to position the organization in order to maximize its strengths, both internally and externally, requires the development of significant levels of trust among all organizational members. Trust is the emotional glue that binds the followers and leaders of any organization. Trust requires predictability about the behaviors of both the executive and the members of the organiza-

tion. Leaders are trusted when followers know where the leader stands in relationship to the organization and its environment.

With the development of trust, the executive is capable of helping to position the organization. This is a process by which the organization designs, establishes, and sustains a viable niche in its external environments. Organizational positioning can be accomplished by leaders who are either reactive to the internal and external demands on the organization, proactive in terms of changing both internal and external environments, or are brokers who establish new linkages between the external and internal environments. Any or all of these approaches are involved when an executive engages in helping to position an organization. Some of the challenges of organizational positioning include: (1) overcoming resistance to change by seeking the voluntary commitment of organizational members to common or shared values; (2) brokering between the needs of constituencies both within the organization and outside the organization; and (3) assuming responsibility for the norms that govern the behavior of people in the organization.

Developing a Vision

Executives must be both effective listeners and effective question-askers in an attempt to construct a viable and credible vision which all members can understand. Organizational leadership requires the selecting, organizing, structuring, and interpreting of information about the organization's past, present, and future. The vision of the organization must be simple, easily understood, clearly desirable, and energizing. The goal of a vision for an organization is to fire the imagination and emotions of others and to empower others to make decisions that address the needs of the organization.

The actions and symbols of leadership help to frame and mobilize the underlying meaning of a vision. The executive is called upon to define and articulate selected aspects of the organization's future as well as to invent images and metaphors to characterize the nature of that future. The process of vision-building includes: (1) creating a new and compelling vision which is capable of bringing members of the organization to a new place; (2) developing a commitment on

the part of all members to the new vision; and (3) institutionalizing the vision through the development of administrative policies, procedures, and cultural supports. In order to develop the vision, the executive must continuously assess the strong undertow of cultural forces at play in the organization at all times. The executive therefore is "a social architect" who must understand the organization and help to shape the way it works.

It is not clear how long it takes to build and articulate the vision. While some may be able to do it in six months, it will most likely require the entire first year of the executive entry process. Similarly, it is difficult to assess the speed with which members of the organization can identify with the vision. It is also difficult for the executive to know how to "take the pulse" on the rate of progress towards reaching the vision. It is clear that the top management team needs to understand the vision and yet it is not clear how the development of the management team, composed of new and old members, coincides with the development of the vision.

Organizational Role-Taking Revisited

Learning about self and learning about leadership have been central themes in this analysis of executive role-taking. The constant flow of information related to role-sending and role-receiving shapes the way in which a new executive deals with the strong staff expectations for leadership as well as the personal fear of failure and self-doubt. Similarly, the numerous role episodes are influenced by the interpersonal dynamics of staff relations, the pattern of communications with various internal and external constituencies, and the multiple perceptions of the organization's past, present, and future.

The conceptual framework of organizational role-taking also provides a basis for developing a research agenda on the executive entry process. For example, how can we develop a better understanding of role readiness or anticipatory socialization for those aspiring to the executive role and for those who have accepted a new position and seek to ready themselves for the transition? How do other staff members of an organization view the executive entry process? To what extent is insight into one's own experiences dur-

ing the entry phase a help or a hindrance in building trust and developing a vision of the organization's future? How much self-disclosure is enough to solidify a position of leadership and trust? What is the relationship between acquiring an in-depth understanding of self during the executive entry phase and the capacity of the individual to take care of self in terms of one's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being? What is the role of humor and a philosophical posture in handling the crazy and unexpected realities of the executive entry process?

Further study is needed to identify how internal and external organizational factors impact on the executive entry process. Such research should help to inform administrative practice about the executive's "two-way medium" between external and internal phenomena, the extent to which credibility is constantly being tested, the degree to which management is a performing art, and the extent to which reactive executives and proactive executives differ during the executive entry process. While a comprehensive list of questions is beyond the scope of this analysis, it is clear that we need to learn more from those who have survived the entry phase of executive leadership.

In conclusion, it has been noted that there is a distinction between an executive who is a manager and an executive who is a leader (Zaleznik, 1977). The managers focus on efficiency by "doing things right." The leaders focus on effectiveness by "doing the right things." Effective leaders appear to know the process of seeking to "know why" ahead of "knowing how" as they engage in both problem-finding as well as problem-solving.

REFERENCES

Austin, M.J. *Professionals and paraprofessionals*. New York: Human Services Press, 1978.

Bennis, W. & Nanus, B. *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.

Burns, J.M. *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

Fiedler, F.A. *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.

Gilmore, T. *Making a leadership change: How organizations and leaders can handle leadership transitions successfully*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.

Katz, D. & Kahn, R.L. *The social psychology of organizations.* New York: John Wiley, 1966.

Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. *The leadership challenge: How to get extra-ordinary things done in organizations.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.

McCall, M.W. & Lombardo, M.M. (Eds.). *Leadership: Where else can we go?* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978.

Mitroff, I.I. Systemic problem solving. In M.W. McCall & M.M. Lombardo (Eds.), *Leadership: Where else can we go?* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978.

Pfeffer, J. The ambiguity of leadership. In M.W. McCall & M.M. Lombardo (Eds.), *Leadership: Where else can we go?*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978.

Sayles, L.R. *Leadership: What effective managers really do, and how they do it.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979.

Schein, E.H. *Organizational culture and leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.

Tichy, N.M. & Devanna, M.A. *The transformational leader.* New York: John Wiley, 1986.

Vaill, P. Toward a behavioral description of high-performing systems. In M.W. McCall & M.M. Lombardo (Eds.), *Leadership: Where else can we go?*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978.

Weick, K. The spines of leaders. In M.W. McCall & M.M. Lombardo (Eds.), *Leadership: Where else can we go?*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978.

Zaleznik, A. Managers and leaders: Are they different? *Harvard Business Review*, 1977, 55, 67-80.

Executive Exit:
Multiple Perspectives
on Managing the Leadership Transition

Michael J. Austin, PhD
Thomas N. Gilmore, PhD

The complex process of entering and exiting a position of orga-
nizational leadership has received little attention in the management
literature. Studies of effective leadership usually focus on the
middle phase in the tenure of an executive. Only recently have we
begun to explore the critical factors surrounding the entry process
of taking command (Gilmore, 1988; Austin, 1988; Gabarro, 1987;
Brauer, 1986). The one exception to the relative dearth of attention
given to the process of executive exit is Sonnenfeld's *The Hero's
Farewell* (1988) which deals more with retirement than with the
more frequent occurrences of executive exit throughout one's career.

Research on executive exit is difficult to conduct because transi-
tions are complex and fleeting and are often not stable enough to
assess. The subjects of such research, both departing executives and
those who remain, usually want to look ahead to less difficult cir-
cumstances. Researchers may have difficulty gaining access to key
actors in organizations experiencing an important transition. It is
not surprising, therefore, that more attention might be given to the
entry process reflecting the optimism, the sense of possibilities, the
adrenalin of "taking charge," the excitement of building a new
team, than to the issues of leaving. Executive exit, in contrast,

Dr. Austin is Professor, School of Social Welfare, University of California at
Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720. Dr. Gilmore is Vice President, The Wharton
Center for Applied Research, 3600 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

requires the capacities to reflect on what might have been, to relinquish control, to disengage from satisfying relationships, and to come to terms with one's accomplishments and disappointments.

The seeds of executive exit are planted during executive entry. The hopes and visions for the organization developed upon entry often are the baseline criteria for assessing organizational performance upon exit. Performance is also assessed at several junctures throughout the tenure of the executive in the form of annual reports, job performance evaluations, self-assessment, and assessments by outside experts. The exit process represents the one final opportunity to assess the executive's role in enhancing the organization's effectiveness. Were the highest priorities addressed? Were important stakeholders inside and outside the organization adequately involved in organizational decision-making? Were key processes and procedures institutionalized to provide an organizational memory for continuity and change? These are some of the questions which help staff and executives focus on the role which is being vacated rather than just the management style of the departing executive.

Exits stir up complex feelings in both those individuals actually leaving and those staying. For those remaining behind, the departure of one leader and the entry of another stirs up hopes, fears of abandonment, newly found freedom, and/or anxieties about the impact of change on their own careers. By contagion from the departing executive, they begin to explore new opportunities for themselves.

An executive who is leaving is usually simultaneously entering a new role. The following feelings are common: relief from no longer dealing with intractable problems, satisfaction over the successes of one's tenure in office, sadness over leaving trusted and supportive colleagues, and anxiety and excitement over the prospect of starting over in another organization. Superiors and/or members of the organizations's board of directors feel both the burden and excitement of choosing a successor. They may need to handle the transition period by appointing an acting director. At the same time, the exit situation can increase internal struggles for power among members of the staff or the board.

Participants often "get through" this period without facing the hard work of managing the exit process. Irrespective of the smooth-

ness or roughness of the transition, all too frequently key stakeholders fail to use the transition as an opportunity to rethink the organization's overall strategy about the future (Gilmore, 1988).

This article provides a beginning analysis of the exit process by selecting, as the modal case, the executive who chooses to move on to another opportunity (Fuchsberg, 1990). It does not address the issues of executives who exit due to retirement (Sonnenfeld, 1988; Vancil, 1987), termination (Markoff, 1990), resignation in protest (Pruger, 1979; Weisband & Franck, 1975), reassignment, or illness and/or death. This article identifies the key components of the exit process and some strategies for managing executive exit.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE EXIT PROCESS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Timing

The timing of the departure is often related to expectations upon entry. For example, most organizations have either explicit or implicit tenures associated with different roles. Executives also estimate how long it will take to accomplish a set of objectives. These formally stated expectations, as well as the informal personal estimates, provide a hindsight perspective from which to assess the timing of the departure. If an executive perceives that the bulk of the objectives have been accomplished or have been judged unreachable, he or she may be ready to "move on."

Frequently, the timing issue is more unpredictable. Some have spoken of an "itch" for a change that has them attend more to other opportunities. If staff problems become a continuing source of irritation or the accomplishment of organizational objectives are blocked by factors negatively impacting the organization from the external environment, then the likelihood of exit increases.

Once an executive decides, then he or she needs to plan the sequence of disclosure: usually beginning with family members and immediate superior; followed by immediate colleagues and friends; and finally, to the staff and public at large. At the same time, current projects and commitments require immediate attention in order to

maintain momentum and set realistic expectations for what can be accomplished before departure and what must wait for the successor.

Legacy to the Organization

Most departing executives hope that the changes and stability provided through their leadership will remain long after their departure. When looking back over the accomplishments, the enduring changes or improvements reflect an "architecture that stuck." Most executives will be able to identify a list of accomplishments and to specify which were planned and unplanned (Finn, 1983). The realistic executive understands that accomplishments were directly related to the talents of various staff members as well as the executive's ability to capture opportunities which happened to emerge "during his/her watch." Conversely, some of his or her most important initiatives will not be recognized until they mature under their successor. At the same time, executives can identify their major disappointments where the effort required to reach an objective far exceeded the pay-off.

The delineation of a legacy serves several purposes. First, it provides the executive with the opportunity to make a final report including relevant data and/or recommendations. Second, it gives the organization an interpretation of recent history which may be useful for placing the executive's stewardship in a context (e.g., "the ship was steered by someone before the executive arrived and will be steered by someone after the executive departs"). It is, by definition, a personal accounting with obvious biases, but also it reflects the valuable perspectives of someone "high enough up the mountain" in order to see the breadth of the terrain, perspectives which are usually wider in scope but not necessarily deeper in understanding than most people inside or outside the organization.

Describing a legacy is also a public acknowledgment of shared efforts to improve the organization and effectively serve its clientele. These reflections may include the organization's financial health, service volume, key alliances, the quality of the management team, programs firmly planted in the structure of the organization, buildings built or renovated, or awards won.

Frequently, the departing executive may overstate achievements

and organizational stability, in contrast to the perceptions of those remaining who may focus on what has been left undone. For example, in a workshop with a departing executive who had been in office for fifteen months and his top staff, his perception of his tenure included solid, stable accomplishments. The staff, in contrast, used metaphors of "balls in the air" along with considerable anxiety about which balls would drop during the transition and what new balls will be thrown in the air by the incoming executive. The departing executive emphasized the forces of continuity: the support of top management and the careful appointment of the successor, the continuing pressures in the marketplace, and the momentum of internal projects. However, those staff remaining felt vulnerable, as if the new executive would have a completely free hand to mandate change. Staff feared that a new leader would not be as skilled in negotiating with top management to gain support for key decisions.

Executives ponder many questions at the time of exit. A key concern is, "What will last after I leave?" The true test of successful legacy can be found in the continuing relationships and programs which endure and grow long after the executive has departed. If the investment in human capital has been substantial, then the nature of the executives's influence on the organization and its members should last long after one's departure. The impact of the influence will also be affected by the availability financial resources and the support of the staff and board members.

Successor

Contemplating a successor can be a significant challenge for the exiting executive. In some organizations, there is a tradition that the departing executive should avoid any involvement in selecting a successor (Levinson, 1974). In other organizations, the exiting executive is viewed as a consultant to advise superiors or board members with respect to promising prospects who might be able successors.

Sometimes, departing executives are so caught up in their own vision and accomplishments that they implicitly or explicitly define the role for a successor as an executor of existing goals and strategies, as if they were "leaders" and now the situation called for "management." There may be a tendency to encourage someone

"just like me" to be the successor. Or, there may be a wish for the successor not to perform as well out of a fear of being outperformed. Yet with the increased rate of change, mature leaders acknowledge that their successors will need to reset the direction and appropriately make changes in the prior leader's strategy.

Regardless of the role which a departing executive may have in the succession process, leaders should be developing talent, either as possible successors or as management team members throughout the organization. Yet, it is striking how many executives have known that they will be leaving within a year or two and have not found a way either to focus on leadership succession or to expand the talent to help the organization cope with a change. Perhaps this challenge is unconsciously avoided because handling rivalries for the top job among insiders is very difficult (Kets de Vries, 1979; Vancil, 1987; O'Day, 1974). There may be a clear successor, a reality which may inhibit others from applying. If there are clear rivals, then the competition could be intense. If there is no clear successor, several managers might be interested but hold back in order to assess their chances. Alternatively, a strong person from the outside might be recruited as a potential successor which might allow for much more time for an orderly transition. This approach inevitably stirs up jealousies among the top team.

The successor issue is equally complicated when an able prospect currently works in the organization. Formal or informal sponsorship may be a help or a hindrance to a prospect. Depending on the organizational politics, some members may view the prospect with suspicion based on the perception that leadership succession is a foregone conclusion. Others may perceive the prospect as an "heir apparent" with the hope that continuity and stability will be maintained. Whatever the perceptions, the exiting executive is caught in the dilemma of grooming or damning an internal candidate for the top position in the organization.

Ideally, the executive should foster an open climate for staff to discuss their possible interests and to get some relatively candid feedback about how they are regarded as candidates for the top job. For example, significant external assignments for key internal candidates might let them test out their own readiness and give others the opportunity to reach judgments about their fitness for the top

job. One public executive took the risk of telling her top staff of her intention to leave a year in advance, making a promise, "I will not leave abruptly. We will talk about it." This enabled the group to have a rich but difficult discussion about succession and the continuity of the strategy that had been guiding the agency. Participants disclosed their personal plans, with one individual taking the risk to indicate publicly her possible interest in the job. This enabled considerable planning, although many of the discussions were extremely difficult because of the emotions that leaving and succession stir up. Few organizations or leaders have the courage, or have created the climate in the top team, for the exit issues to be shared so far in advance. Yet lead time is critical to the development of sophisticated strategies to deal with the transition.

Capitalizing on the Lame Duck Period

When a leader has announced in advance that he or she is leaving, or knows it without communicating it, the agenda for that time period inevitably will be shaped by the sense of a deadline. The lame duck period may include a range of actions from slowing down to speeding up. The speeding up process may involve a flurry of activity as a way of denying the feelings that surround endings and/or as a way of compensating for all that one did not accomplish during one's tenure. Speeding up can also reflect an inability on the part of the executive to let go or give up control. Staff may collude, based on their interest, in completing a pet project before it can be influenced by a new leader. At the same time, there may be very good reasons to complete projects before departure. Completing particularly onerous tasks and "dirty work" may keep the successor from being unreasonably burdened with unpleasant unfinished business. Despite the risks of being a lame duck, it can be a useful time to refine organizational plans with key colleagues so that they, in turn, can envision time-lines that can shape their own career thinking and the ways they tackle specific projects.

One leader, realizing that she wanted to leave in the next year or two, announced her intentions at a staff retreat of her top managers. She then proceeded to review carefully their collective agenda to see how the deadline might affect their allocation of effort. Some issues

had considerable time invested in them and would need to be finished prior to a leadership change. For example, the documentation needed to be completed regarding the non-performance of a few staff members in order to reach closure and avoid transferring a messy personnel matter to the new executive. Other activities, such as a major fundraising campaign, did not warrant considerable work because staff would not be able to get far enough with the issues, and the shift in leadership during the middle of the initiative would be damaging.

For agenda items that are particularly significant to the departing executive, he or she may want to take irreversible actions as a hedge against changes by a successor. For example, one public agency executive had worked for many years on plans to develop a replacement for a large detention facility for juveniles, carefully working out a more decentralized network of facilities as the replacement of the central facility. In this case, she wanted to be sure that the sites had been chosen, the design set, and the building program underway because of the realistic possibility that the decisions could come undone given community opposition to such facilities and cost consideration. While presumably irreversible actions may enhance the future viability of the organization, such actions may also have a negative impact on the organization.

Another activity that is valuable for an outgoing leader in reviewing the organization's agenda is to ensure that each issue has an advocate. Often, as a leader reviews his or her portfolio, there will be some issues that others have helped with but which are clearly the lead responsibility of the chief executive. In the former case, one can get the behind the scenes support to be more visible and to share more publicly the stewardship of the issue with the lead staff person so that it will be carried into the next tenure. On those issues that have been exclusively the executive's, one must quickly find a champion for the concern, or expect it to encounter difficulty in making it across the change of command. For example, a departing hospital executive reviewed with trustees his major responsibility for two capital projects and worked carefully to transfer the leadership on these initiatives to others.

In dealing with one's wider network, it is also useful to make lists of key relationships and those with whom it is most important to talk

personally about one's departure and its meaning for them and for the institution. Just as in executive entry, where staff speculate about who is important by the sequence of contact made by the new executive, people attach importance to the sequence of "who heard it first" regarding the executive's departure and the resulting definition of an inner circle. Some people will require a special meeting, others a phone call or a letter. There may be a subset of individuals outside the organization requiring on-going communications since they are so valuable to the organization. The departing executive may wish to strategize ways to link the successor with these individuals.

Helping Remaining Staff Adjust

Inevitably, the executive's departure stirs up the thoughts of others about leaving. All too often, staff handle these thoughts by vicariously living through the experiences of the departing executive. In one organization with a tradition of high job security, most of the top staff were more interested in the next career move of their outgoing leader than in the changes that would be in store for them. In order to foster a more proactive posture among staff who remained, the executive involved a consultant in a staff retreat. Each staff member was asked to write a vivid scenario of his or her life a year or so hence, on the assumption that they had accepted an excellent job offer from outside the organization. In this way, each had to imagine leaving, reflect on his or her strengths and areas for improvement, how those might be viewed in other organizational settings, and different ways of creating opportunities to market themselves. Also, by thinking about leaving, they were in a better position to reflect on what they found particularly valuable in staying. "Resigning" and "re-signing up" are closely linked.

Managing the Actual Hand-Off

Once the actual date has been set, and a successor has been named, our experience suggests that a relatively short period (a month or two) for the two individuals to make the final transition works better than a prolonged "handoff." The potential for ambivalent feelings among individuals themselves and confusion among

staff is too great when longer transition periods are used. Orienting the new or interim executive can be a key component of the transition process. There is a fine line between sharing objective data, such as budget information and upcoming deadlines, and subjective data regarding the exiting executive's views of staff potential or the leadership styles of supervisors or board members. Sharing too much can bias the new executive and sharing too little can hamper the success of the transition. This meeting with the departing executive can be a vehicle for linking the executive entry process with the inevitability of one's own future exit. Yet, people often do not meet with the predecessor or listen to their perspectives on the issues, fearing being "captured" by past perspectives.

Promoting Continuity

At the end of the exit process, most organizations use rituals such as farewell parties, speeches, gift-giving and picture-taking to mark the ending of a leadership phase. While exit rituals can be easily overlooked or forgotten during this critical period for organizational continuity, a skillful executive will usually play a role in orchestrating these events. These events provide the organization with a public opportunity for staff and others to demonstrate commitment to the purpose of the organization. They also recognize contributions made by the departing executive. The executive must carry out two functions simultaneously, namely receiving the best wishes of staff and others while at the same time reassuring all parties that the organization will continue to function effectively under new leadership.

The opportunity for the departing executive to make a speech and/or to send a written message to staff and others represents the final ritual of the exit process (Harris & Sutton, 1986). In this situation, the executive is able to cite the organization's strengths in the same way as during the executive entry phase. Such an approach clearly signals the importance of the organization's mission above the interests of any particular member or constituent. It is an opportunity for all parties to recognize publicly the organization's past, present, and future. At the same time, the departing executive is able to cite the accomplishments achieved through the teamwork

of all present during the tenure of the executive. The goal of such recitation is for all concerned parties to share in the legacy, as well as pause to reflect on recent accomplishments which may have been apparent to some but not to others. It is also time to share a sense of togetherness and speculate on the nature of future leadership. Such ending events also enable all the participants to meet with each other and continue the business of organizational life (e.g., checking perceptions, making appointments, updating colleagues, etc.).

Though farewell events can be exhausting and/or exhilarating experiences for the departing executive, they represent the final leadership responsibility, as well as an opportunity to express appreciation for all the support received while serving in the executive role. As the executive reassures others that the transition to new leadership promises to go well, the executive is also reassuring himself or herself that the correct decision was made to leave the current post and move on to new challenges. As a result of thoughtful self-assessment, the executive is in a position to utilize successful endings as the foundation for new beginnings.

Digesting One's Own Learning

The decision to exit can be a lonely decision. For the family, it may involve moving a second career in a dual career household and/or uprooting children from schools and friendships. If the administrative tenure has been successful, the disappointment expressed by supportive colleagues can feel overwhelming.

The personal feelings of the departing executive range from self-doubt to anticipation. Self-doubt relates to feelings of abandoning colleagues and friends. Was it a good decision to leave? Was the timing right for me? Was it right for the organization? Am I letting people down? Am I creating undue hardship for my family? Have I left my office in good order for my successor? Was the decision to exit based on a growing dissatisfaction with the job? Do I really want such a major change at this point in my life? Can I really handle the challenges of the new job? How much am I pulled by the new job or pushed out of the old job? The questions keep coming as the executive seeks to handle the self-doubt and deal with anticipating a new work environment, establishing new relationships, and

rebuilding a sense of leadership momentum in a different organization. The roller coaster of emotions can swing from incredible "highs" to immobilizing "lows."

One of the most profound areas of personal reaction and emotion relates to family relations. While not all exits require immense change for family and friends, there may be other significant personal challenges (e.g., divorce, mid-life transition, caring for aging parents, etc.). The timing of the executive's transition may not mesh with his or her children's stage in school or a spouse's career situation. The tension can be overwhelming as the executive seeks to relocate a family and a second career in a dual-career household. The emotional strain of uprooting children combined with the many farewells with family, friends and relatives can also be overwhelming.

Obviously, time is needed to sort out the lessons learned from one's tenure as an executive. It is also true that the process of ending one job and beginning another may not allow for sufficient time for reflection, insight, and integration of new learning. To some extent, the learning process is a daily or weekly phenomenon throughout the term of office. However, the ending phase may provide the opportunity to step back from the rush of ongoing events and reflect on both joyful and painful experiences. This sorting process helps to identify those factors which may have hindered success and hampered forward progress. For example, it is a real challenge to assess one's role in achieving organizational goals as well as determining how the executive's behavior or style contributed to roadblocks in achieving such goals. While it is easy to place the blame on others, it is not easy to identify new learning which can improve performance on the next job. Some of the most powerful learning experiences come from one-on-one discussions with staff where an executive can acquire feedback on his or her accomplishments and unfinished business.

Finally, when one is leaving because of a new, challenging opportunity, it is easy to flee into the new setting without dealing with one's emotions about leaving—disappointment, sadness, excitement, relief—and without digesting one's learning from this phase of one's career. Leadership changes, like remarriages, work much better when the dynamics of the first have been well-understood before

rushing into the next. Often, an outside mentor or colleague can help best with this learning agenda.

CONCLUSION

We have identified some of the multiple perspectives held by those who remain and those who leave. We have identified several strategies for managing the voluntary exit of an executive and how others might assist in managing the transition. This important period of organizational life needs more research attention as executives and staff members reflect on the exit process and researchers probe for new knowledge about the organizational impact of executive exit.

If our culture is to sustain the turnover of key executives, we need to nurture a new orientation that helps executives and the organization's key stakeholders view the stewardship of the executive as time-limited. In so doing, we are able to be more attentive to the threads of continuity that are necessary for people to cope with the high levels of change.

REFERENCES

Austin, M.J. (1988). Managing up: Relationship building between middle management and top management. *Administration in Social Work, 12*(4), 29-46.

Austin, M.J. (1989). Executive entry: Multiple perspectives on the process of muddling through. *Administration in Social Work, 13*(3/4), 55-71.

Brauer, C.M. (1986). Presidential transitions: Eisenhower through Reagan. New York: Oxford University Press.

Finn, D. (1983). The price of ignoring posterity. *Harvard Business Review, 61*, 137-144.

Fuchsberg, G. (1990). Top executives are loyal, but first to themselves. *The Wall Street Journal*, April 30.

Gabarro, J.J. & Kotter, J.P. (1980). Managing your boss. *Harvard Business Review, 58*, 92-100.

Gabarro, J.J. (1987). *The dynamics of taking charge*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Gilmore, T.N. (1988). *Making a leadership change: How organizational leaders can handle leadership transitions successfully*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gilmore, T.N. (1989). Issues in ending consultancies. *Consultation, 8,* 41-47.

Harris, S.J., & Sutton, R.I. (1986). Functions of parting ceremonies in dying organizations. *Academy of Management Journal, 29,* 5-30.

Kets de Vries, M.F.R. (1979). Managers can drive their subordinates mad. *Harvard Business Review, 57,* 125-134.

Markoff, J. (1990). Pentagon's technology chief out: A dispute is seen over DARPA's role. *New York Times,* April 21, 31-32.

Levinson, H. (1974). Self-defeat in the executive suite addendum. *The Levinson Institute Report,* 1-6.

O'Day, R. (1974). Intimidation rituals: Reaction to reform. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 10,* 373-386.

Pruger, R. (1979). On resigning in protest. *Administration in Social Work, 3*(4), 453-463.

Sonnenfeld, J. (1988). *The hero's farewell: What happens when CEOs retire.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Stanley, D. T. (1966). *Changing administrations: The 1961 and 1964 transitions in six departments.* Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Vancil, R.F. (1987). *Passing the baton: Managing the process of CEO succession.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Weisband, E., & Franck, T.M. (1975). *Resignation in protest.* New York: Grossman Publishers.

Understanding Socially Inhibited Behaviors in Managers

Michael J. Austin, PhD
Maria Martin, MSW

INTRODUCTION

The executive director of our organization seems so aloof. He is very bright and effective, which comes through when you meet him in the office but not in the hallway. He seems uptight at staff meetings and at large staff gatherings. Sometimes he appears to be more interested in data or figures than in people or communications. He presents the image of having all the answers and rarely asks for assistance or advice. He seems to be either busy in his office alone or entering the building by the back door. Staff sometimes describe him as unfriendly or cold.

The manager in this vignette might be perceived to be shy, introverted, inhibited, unsociable, or lacking social skills. Alternatively, he might be seen as responding to situational factors in the organization's culture and/ or perception of his role within that culture. In fact, the manager's behavior most likely stems from a combination of staff perceptions along with personal and situational factors. Regardless of its origins, socially inhibited behavior by a manager can contribute to such workplace problems as low staff morale, poor interdepartmental communications, and confusion about the organization's goals. This study is an effort to define socially inhibited behaviors among managers, explore the implications of these behaviors, identify ways to assist managers with tendencies toward socially inhibited behaviors, and help staff relate to such managers.

Dr. Austin is Professor, School of Social Welfare, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720. Ms. Martin is a doctoral candidate, School of Social Welfare, University of California at Berkeley.

Management behaviors that could be considered socially inhibited usual-
ly reflect a lack of action where managers may be less likely than others to:

- solicit information or feedback;
- give appropriate praise and reinforcements;
- self-disclose;
- perform in undefined or less formal roles (such as mingling at a social
  event or initiating informal conversations);
- share their own problems and successes; and
- deal with conflict.

Socially inhibited behaviors can be thought of as occurring on a contin-
uum. Most managers occasionally exhibit some type of inhibited behavior,
such as not speaking up in a meeting, and the impact of this behavior may
have little consequence over time. In some cases, inhibited behavior may
be highly appropriate since, as Handy (1985) has noted, the actions of
managers must take into account not only their own preferred style of
operating, but also the leadership styles of subordinates along with task
and environmental factors. In addition, at least one observer of organiza-
tional leadership has argued that the "psychologically distant" manager
may contribute to the development of more effective teams than the man-
ager who emphasizes smooth interpersonal relations (Fiedler, 1967). How-
ever, repeated displays of inhibited behavior (or the inability to be less
inhibited as situations require) may negatively impact relationships with
superiors, colleagues, and staff; reduce the manager's ability to make
informed decisions; and hinder both organizational effectiveness and man-
agerial performance.

PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS AND SITUATIONAL
FACTORS UNDERLYING SOCIALLY INHIBITED BEHAVIOR

Little attention seems to have been paid to the origins or consequences
of socially inhibited behavior in the workplace. However, the literature on
shyness and introversion provides clues to some of the factors underlying
socially inhibited behavior.

Shyness. Perceiving someone as "shy" is one way that staff in an
organization might characterize a manager whose behavior is socially
inhibited. While shyness is a commonly used term in everyday life (Zim-
bardo, 1977), the research literature fails to provide a clear and shared
usage of this concept. Leery (1986) identified fourteen different defini-
tions of shyness, and Crozier (1990) has categorized them in terms of

personality traits, situational variables, emotional states, and personal problems. Given the commonly accepted notion that effective management involves developing the "best fit" between personal style and situational factors (Handy, 1985), the personality and situational perspectives seem most relevant to expanding our understanding of socially inhibited managerial behaviors.

Shyness as a personality trait. Much of the research on shyness as a dispositional tendency or trait indicates that self-consciousness is at its core. The self-conscious actor focuses on how he or she is performing rather than on the normal intentionality of his or her actions. Social anxiety may result from conflict between the public self and the ideal self (Leery, 1986; Crozier, 1990). Cheek and Briggs (1990), in their review of the social psychology literature, identified a distinctive pattern of cognitions typical among shy people. Unlike those who are not shy, shy individuals tend to expect they will be negatively evaluated during social interactions, become anxiously self-preoccupied during these interactions, and judge themselves more negatively than others judge them. Shy people are more likely to behave in a cautious, self-protective manner, to conform to majority opinion, and to avoid disclosing information about themselves. DePaulo, Epstein, and LeMay (1990) found that in the face of possible negative evaluation, socially anxious individuals tend to withdraw psychologically by talking less, and they usually engage in more superficial dialogue. Paradoxically, in situations where socially anxious individuals most want to make a good impression, they may be least likely to do so because of such self-protective strategies.

Shyness as a situational factor. Although the conceptualization of shyness as arising from social anxiety has been highly influential in past years, it is not without its critics. Crozier (1990), for example, points out that those who focus on social anxiety may fail to take into account situational determinants of behavior. Shyness may be particularly influenced by the role of the other person(s) in the interaction and the "rules" of the interaction. Van der Molen (1990) identified four dimensions that influenced the feeling of shyness: the size of the audience, the degree of familiarity with the audience, the level of formality of the situation, and whether or not the person was required to take initiative or simply respond. The most significant finding was that shyness is most likely to occur in informal situations. The author notes that the less familiar the individual is with the rules of the situation, the more difficult it becomes to select an appropriate behavior. Crozier (1986) found that shyness was also associated with interacting with authority figures, the expectation of being evaluated, and conspicuousness, such as being the only individual of one's gender or race. Jones

and Carpenter (1986) point out that the nature of the interpersonal relationship is critical in understanding shyness. Elements that influence shyness include: the level of intimacy, duration of the relationship, amount of interpersonal contact, and the goals of the individuals in the relationship.

Culture may also be an important situational determinant of socially inhibited behavior. In modern Western society, the norm seems to be one of assertive, extravert behaviors, whereas Asians, for example, are more likely to be socialized to show obedience and restraint. Van der Molen (1990) notes that the Javanese culture considers shyness a virtue. Higher incidences of shyness also have been identified among Japanese, Taiwanese, and Hawaiians. Shyness seems to be less common among Israelis, whose culture cultivates the frank and free expression of opinions.

Introversion. Another way of thinking about socially inhibited behavior is in the context of introversion. Although the terms shyness and introversion are commonly used interchangeably, current research indicates that the two concepts are not the same. Introversion, as conceptualized by Carl Jung (1971), is characterized by a direction of one's interests and energy to the internal rather than the external world. Although Jung's introverted type may manifest itself in a lower level of social behavior than the extravert, the critical factor in determining type is not one of behavior but of motivation. As Briggs (1988) has suggested, unlike the "socially anxious shy" individual who wishes she or he could be more sociable, the "introverted shy" individual prefers solitary pursuits, but can effectively take part in social situations if need be.

More recent research on introversion links low sociability and low energy and activity (Miller, 1991). Morris (1979) identified four components of introversion: social activity (introverts spend less time and energy socializing), social facility (introverts are less skilled at social interactions), risk-taking (introverts tend to take fewer risks and are less adventurous), and preference for reflection and introspection as opposed to action. Under stress, introverts prefer to be alone, whereas extraverts prefer to be with others. Introverts also appear to have very different expectations about social relations than do extraverts. Thorne (1987), in a study of conversations between introverts and extraverts, found that while extraverts tended to assume similarities between themselves and their conversation partners, introverts were less likely to expect to share common ground. In addition, the conversations of introverts tend to be more task-oriented than those of extraverts.

Introversion may play a much larger role than social anxiety in explaining socially inhibited behavior in managers. For example, Kroeger and Thuesen (1992) used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to survey

over 12,000 managers and found that 54% of middle managers, 44% of senior managers (branch and division heads), and 53% of top executives could be characterized as introverts. The authors note that the introvert's natural independence and ability to provide direction are strengths needed in management positions. On the other hand, introverted managers might not be sufficiently expressive and demonstrative, especially in stressful situations, and thereby may inadvertently give the impression of being impatient or disapproving. In addition to stressful situations, the factors that might elicit introverted behavior include: meeting new people, informal or ambiguous situations, and certain tasks that require introspection or an inward focus.

In order to integrate the findings from the research literature on introversion and shyness, Figure 1 summarizes the elements that seem to underlie socially inhibited behavior. Individuals who tend toward introversion and social anxiety may be more likely to respond to situations in an inhibited way. In most cases, socially inhibited behavior appears to stem from a combination of situational and personal factors. The requirements of most management positions make it unlikely that an individual with more than a mild level of social anxiety would be selected for a management position, because the extreme self-consciousness and fear of evaluation associated with social anxiety simply are not congruent with the role expectations of a manager. However, it is certainly possible to imagine how mild levels of social anxiety might be elicited by situational factors and thus inhibit managers' behavior. For example, a manager might be more reticent with a senior executive than with his or her own staff. In

FIGURE 1. A Summary of Factors Contributing to Socially Inhibited Behavior

	Social Anxiety	Introversion
SITUATIONAL FACTORS	• possibility of evaluation • authority figures • large/unfamiliar audience • culture/gender differences	• stress • unfamiliar people • informality/ambiguity • task elicits introspection/reserve
PERSONAL FACTORS	• self-consciousness • expectation of negative evaluation	• introspection • low social activity • low social facility • low risk-taking

most management situations, therefore, social anxiety, if it occurs, is likely to occur in combination with situational factors, and these situational factors may be the most critical element in inhibiting behavior. Likewise, a tendency toward introversion, which appears to be common among managers, may be further elicited by situational factors such as meeting new people or dealing with ambiguous tasks or information or interactions.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE WORKPLACE: MOVING FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

The literature on shyness, social anxiety, and introversion points to the importance of examining both personality characteristics and responses to situational factors in understanding socially inhibited behavior. Based on informal interviews with six senior managers in human services and business (two directors of county social services departments, one executive director of a large nonprofit agency, a bank president and senior vice president, and a division director for a computer software company), open-ended questions were used to explore each individual's management style, as well as their observations of others in their organizations. The information from these interviews, which cannot be generalized due to the small sample, was used to illustrate concepts identified in the literature as well as identifying areas for further research.

All of the managers interviewed readily identified management behaviors that could be interpreted as socially inhibited. Examples of such behaviors included persistent reticence or reserve:

- a preference for written over oral communication;
- a tendency to analyze decisions alone before involving others;
- a preference for solitary activities;
- a reluctance to offer opinions; and
- a tendency to avoid confrontation.

Those interviewed appeared to be more comfortable with the term "introverted" to describe socially inhibited behaviors than with "shyness," which implies fear or timidity—personal characteristics which usually prevent individuals from assuming management positions. Examples of behavior specifically described as introverted included: "inward directed," "solitary," "pleasant but not warm," "not sensitive to how people feel," "spends less time and energy socializing," and "has fewer interpersonal skills than extraverts."

Several of those interviewed revealed that they perceive themselves as

naturally introverted in their personal lives but as being extraverted at work, which was seen as a necessary component of being in a leadership role. One manager observed that although she can be extraverted in almost any situation, she is happiest when she can be introverted.

Regardless of whether managers considered themselves to be more introverted or more extraverted, there was consensus that certain situations can elicit introverted tendencies. These included:

- unstructured or spontaneous situations;
- meeting new people;
- dealing with people in authority;
- being criticized or under attack;
- when analyzing, as opposed to implementing decisions; and
- when acquiring and processing complex information.

In addition, certain aspects of organizational culture were thought to induce socially inhibited behaviors. For example, one manager suggested that "top-down" organizations, where people's opinions are not sought out and staff are not encouraged to be involved in decision-making, can induce socially inhibited behaviors. Another manager noted that increased training on sexual harassment may produce a heightened sense of formality in the workplace and that individuals may display more socially inhibited behaviors.

Finally, the interviews suggested that the interplay between culture or ethnicity of the individual manager and that of significant others in the organization can have important implications. One African-American manager noted that his culturally-developed "reserve" was interpreted by white supervisors as an unwillingness to argue his point of view aggressively in one instance, or to give praise to colleagues in another. In the first instance, his supervisor's values conflicted with his own culturally ingrained value for diplomacy and behaving as a gentleman. In the latter, the conflict was with his cultural perception that praising the performance of others is condescending unless the performance is truly outstanding. In both cases, the African-American manager was required to modify his normative behavior in order to succeed as a manager in a predominantly white organization.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIALLY INHIBITED BEHAVIORS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

While we have observed that an array of socially inhibited behaviors may be common among managers and appear to reflect a combination of

personal and situational factors, the challenge is to explore the relevance of such factors for improving organizational communications. To address this challenge, we focus on the individual manager, other staff (including more senior managers, colleagues, and subordinates) who interact with the manager, and the organizational culture and structure.

Implications for managers. One starting point for managers in thinking about their own personality, behavioral patterns, and situational tendencies is to consider how socially inhibited behaviors may relate to managerial roles. Quinn (1988) has identified eight managerial roles (producer, director, innovator, broker, mentor, facilitator, monitor, and coordinator), each of which involves particular activities and requires certain skills. It is unlikely that extreme extraverted or extreme introverted behaviors would be appropriate for any of these managerial roles. However, it is possible to think of roles in terms of those likely to require a more extraverted or outgoing approach for implementation and those that would relate to a more introverted approach. For example, the roles of monitor and coordinator emphasize information collecting and maintaining organizational stability, and include technical skills related to budgeting and fiscal controls, information systems, and quality control (Edwards & Austin, 1991). These roles may offer the best fit for a manager with strong introverted tendencies. The broker role, on the other hand, is primarily involved with acquiring resources, and thus needs the strong interpersonal and political skills as well as an external focus which is characteristic of extraverts. Several of the managers interviewed, in fact, described themselves as more introverted when making decisions (producer role) and more extroverted when implementing decisions (director role).

Managers with strong tendencies toward socially inhibited behaviors may either settle comfortably into lower or middle management positions that require primarily technical expertise and organizational skills, or they may find themselves unhappily "stuck" in these positions. One of those interviewed observed that a bright, but introverted manager in his organization is unlikely to progress beyond his current position. Although he feels "pigeonholed" in a technical role, he has been unable to take on more general management responsibilities due, in part, to persistent introverted behavior.

Senior managers who have acquired the capacity to control their tendency toward socially inhibited behavior may be able to delegate some of the management roles requiring extraversion. For example, one executive director described herself as "naturally" introverted, but capable of being extremely extraverted. Although she was very good at brokering activities (fund-raising and other resource development, and dealing with political

aspects of the organization), she most enjoyed the conceptualizing and planning activities, and she least enjoyed group facilitator activities such as staff training meetings. When the position of deputy director became open, she consciously recruited someone who was quite extraverted in order to be able to delegate some of the management roles requiring extraversion. This allowed her to spend more time on planning and program design, which was not only beneficial to the agency, but also provided her with a way of reenergizing herself.

The concept of reenergizing oneself is relevant to both introverted and extroverted managers. Kroeger and Thuesen (1992) noted that an effective way for managers to determine whether they have strong introverted or extraverted tendencies is to think about which activities make them feel energized and which make them feel depleted. Extraverts need to be with people to feel energized and they usually thrive on group interactions. Introverts, on the other hand, need to have time alone in order to "recharge."

Another strategy that socially inhibited managers can use to connect better in situations that require extraversion is to designate a staff member to serve, in part, as an "advance person." This idea is drawn from the political arena, where candidates employ staff to "scout the territory" prior to the candidate's arrival. By collecting information about significant others and building relationships, the advance person can assist the manager by laying the groundwork needed for the manager to make a more personal connection. For example, a senior manager described herself as naturally introverted when she meets a new staff person for the first time, finding herself at a loss for words because she has no context for conversation. The senior manager noted that if the new staff person were "properly introduced" (i.e., if she were given information about him or her that provided a context for the interaction), she would then have some basis for conversation, illustrating the notion that introverts may be less likely than extraverts to assume they have anything in common with new people they meet, especially in informal situations. Involving staff who can do advance work may be valuable for senior managers who tend to be more introverted.

Implications for staff. The socially inhibited manager in the introductory vignette was characterized by staff as unfriendly, aloof, and more interested in data than in people. Crowell (1982) noted that agency administrators, particularly in larger organizations, often become isolated from staff and as a result, can be seen as "uncaring, cold, and calculating." The relationship between staff and the director can be superficial, and thus staff may have inaccurate or incomplete information about the director. Crowell

identified four areas where staff often have very different viewpoints than managers: (1) accountability, (2) the nature of power, (3) organizational decision-making and organizational change, and (4) job satisfaction. Each of these areas can be negatively impacted by the socially inhibited behavior of managers. For example, the increasing importance of accountability has resulted in more emphasis on staff record keeping and evaluation activities. However, administrators might neglect to inform and educate staff about the funding, policy, and legislative matters that drive this need for accountability. As a result, socially inhibited administrators may be perceived as distant figures handing down edicts about defining, counting, and evaluating services, and are likely to meet with resistance from staff.

In addition to accountability issues, the role of power plays an important role in how staff view and understand the behaviors of senior managers. Because staff often lack a conceptual framework for understanding organizational behavior, administrators can be perceived as having more power and information than is actually the case. One way that staff perceive power dynamics is that power is derived from how one is connected through the informal network of the organization. Staff who see their administrators as accessible are more likely to feel a sense of personal power and to have higher levels of job satisfaction than those who feel isolated and unconnected. Staff who do not have contact with administrators are more likely to see themselves as unappreciated, unrecognized, and unfairly treated in terms of allocation of resources, promotions, and job opportunities.

Crowell (1982) sees communications problems as central to problems with job satisfaction. She defines organizational communication as "the social process through which meaning is conveyed, energy is generated, power and authority are exercised, support and feedback are given, instructions are provided, conflict is resolved, and loyalty and a sense of mission are inculcated." As the distance between administrators and staff increases, communication becomes less frequent and more formal in nature. As a result, staff begin to lack a sense of control and feel alienated and unimportant. Administrators who tend toward socially inhibited behaviors may further compound this organizational tendency by neglecting to reach out to staff in more informal ways.

Staff members who recognize managers as having introverted or socially inhibited tendencies may find it beneficial to take the first step to reach out, rather than waiting for the manager to take the initiative. This is, of course, easier for other senior managers and colleagues to do than for subordinates to attempt, since the power relationship between superior and subordinate must be acknowledged. Still, staff can become aware of situa-

tions where introverted or socially inhibited behaviors are likely to occur (e.g., social events) and be prepared to reach out in a low-key way (e.g., initiating brief non-task-oriented conversations).

Staff can also informally take on the role of the advance person. Staff members who carry out this role are in a position to benefit by acquiring the managerial skills of intelligence gathering and relationship building, which are useful for further advancement up the managerial ladder. However, in order for this approach to be accepted and effective, staff also need to see it as benefiting the manager and the organization. This is akin to the idea of managing up, or that "helping the boss who, in turn, can help you" is a shared responsibility. Managing up is based on the assumption that one's boss is a human being who, like everyone else, may have significant limitations as well as strengths and whose management style needs to be understood and influenced (Austin, 1989).

As part of assessing the management style of an administrator, staff need to be able to recognize when their manager displays tendencies toward introverted or socially inhibited behaviors. Gabarro and Kotter (1980) identified two ways staff can assess a manager's communication style: (1) whether they prefer to get information by reading or by listening, and (2) whether they want a high level of day-to-day involvement with their staff, or whether they only want to be informed about problems and important changes. It is quite possible that the manager who prefers written communication and limited day-to-day involvement has introverted tendencies as well, and might benefit from the active involvement of staff who manage up.

Implications for organizational culture and structure. The organizational environment may also influence the tendencies of managers toward socially inhibited behaviors. One senior executive observed more introverted or inhibited staff behavior as the organization went through a difficult restructuring. Given that introverted behavior can be associated with unfamiliarity and ambiguity, it seems likely that more inhibited behavior would be observed in unstable organizations. Organizational size may impact such behavior as well, since the larger the organization, the more likely the manager will need to deal with inhibiting situations, such as meeting unfamiliar people and relating to large groups. In addition, the more specialized roles typically found in larger organizations may allow more introverted managers to find their niche.

The structure of authority in an organization may inhibit behavior as well. One senior manager noted that more introverted or inhibited behavior occurs in organizations that were "paternalistic," with a rigid, top-down chain of command. Organizations that promote a more democratic,

team-oriented culture may be more likely to draw out introverted or socially inhibited individuals. Zimbardo (1986) constructed an experimental situation in which subjects were assembled in problem-solving teams which were controlled by either autocratic rules, where priority was given to those who requested to talk first, or democratic rules, which attempted to equalize speaking opportunities. Under the democratic rules, moderately shy individuals talked more, were more influential, and were more likely to be thought of as leaders than under the autocratic rules.

In summary, socially inhibited behavior in managers can have a powerful negative impact on organizational communications, compounding the distance that often occurs between administrators and staff. This behavior can arise from situational or personality factors and, most likely, from a combination of the two. Managers who recognize these tendencies in themselves can employ a range of strategies, from finding a niche in the organization where introverted tendencies are appreciated, to involving a staff member to serve as an "advance person" to help them connect with staff and others. Staff who work for administrators with these tendencies can benefit from a better understanding of situational, personality, and organizational factors that contribute to these behaviors. Staff who understand this phenomenon may be more likely to take steps themselves to improve communications between themselves and their managers.

CONCLUSIONS

Identified are certain behaviors of managers that could be considered socially inhibited, as well as some of the possible origins and impacts of these behaviors. These behaviors appear to be elicited by a variety of situational factors and can be linked to the concept of introversion. Managers with tendencies to behave in socially inhibited ways may be well suited for certain management roles; however, these behaviors may also cause problems in the workplace by compounding the distance between administrators and staff. A variety of strategies have been suggested for managers who have these tendencies and for the staff that work with them.

REFERENCES

Austin, M. J. (1989). Managing up: Relationship building between middle management and top management. *Administration in Social Work, 12*(4), 29-46.
Briggs, S. R. (1988). Shyness: Introversion or neuroticism? *Journal of Research in Personality, 22,* 290-307.

Cheek, J. M., & Briggs, S. R. (1990). Shyness as a personality trait. In W. R. Crozier, (Ed.), *Shyness and embarrassment: Perspectives from social psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Crowell, J. (1982). Understanding clinical staff's views of administration. In M. J. Austin & W. E. Hershey, *Handbook on mental health administration*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Crozier, W. R. (1986). Individual differences in shyness. In Jones, W. H. et al., (Eds.), *Shyness: Perspectives on research and treatment*. New York: Plenum Press.

Crozier, W. R. (1990). *Shyness and embarrassment: Perspectives from social psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

DePaulo, B. M., Epstein, J. A., & LeMay, C. S. (1990). Responses of the socially anxious to the prospect of interpersonal evaluation. *Journal of Personality, 58*(4), 623-640.

Edwards, R. L., & Austin, D. M. (1991). Managing effectively in an environment of competing values. In R. L. Edwards & J. A. Yankey, (Eds.), *Skills for effective human services management*. Silver Spring, MD: NASW Press.

Fiedler, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gabarro, J. J. & Kotter, J. P. (1980). Managing your boss. *Harvard Business Review, 58*, 92-100.

Handy, C. B. (1985). *Understanding organizations*. New York: Facts on File Publications.

Jones, W. H., & Carpenter, B. N. (1986). Shyness, social behavior, and relationships. In W. H. Jones et al., (Eds.), *Shyness: Perspectives on research and treatment*. New York: Plenum Press.

Jung, C. G. (1971). *Psychological types*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kroeger, O., & Thuesen, J. M. (1992). *Type talk at work*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Leery, M. R. (1986). Affective and behavioral components of shyness: Implications for theory, measurement, and research. In W. H. Jones et al., (Eds.), *Shyness: Perspectives on research and treatment*. New York: Plenum Press.

Miller, A. (1991). *Personality types: A modern synthesis*. Calgary, Canada: University of Canada Press.

Morris, J. (1979). *Extraversion and introversion: An interactional perspective*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

Quinn, R. E. (1988). *Beyond rational management: Mastering the paradoxes and competing demands of high performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Thorne, A. (1987). The press of personality: A study of conversations between introverts and extraverts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*(4), 718-726.

Van der Molen, H. T. (1990). A definition of shyness and its implications for clinical practice. In W. R. Crozier (Ed.), *Shyness and embarrassment: Perspectives from social psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zimbardo, P. G. (1977). *Shyness: What it is and what to do about it*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

Zimbardo, P. G. (1986). The Stanford Shyness Project. In W. H. Jones et al., (Eds.), *Shyness: Perspectives on research and treatment*. New York: Plenum Press.

Managing Out:
The Community Practice Dimensions
of Effective Agency Management

Michael J. Austin, PhD

ABSTRACT. With the advent of welfare reform and managed care, the nature of managerial practice has increasingly shifted from a primary focus on internal operations to a more external, community focus which involves actively monitoring and managing the boundary between the external environment and internal organizational arrangements. This article explores the boundary spanning aspects of community practice, the related theories of inter-organizational relations, and the process of "managing out" by those in top management and middle management positions in human service organizations. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2002 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

KEYWORDS. Management, community practice, management practice, boundary spanning, inter-organizational relations, human service organizations

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of welfare reform, based on the 1996 federal legislation, has provided those holding middle management and top management positions in public social service agencies with new chal-

Michael J. Austin is Professor of Management and Planning, School of Social Welfare, University of California at Berkeley.

lenges. One of these challenges involves the need to expand and refine the community practice skills needed to guide organizational change and reposition public social service agencies in local communities. This analysis builds upon some of the early findings emerging from welfare reform implementation. For example, Carnochan and Austin (2002) found in their study of county social service directors who were implementing welfare reform that the new challenges facing managers included: (1) restructuring the agency's mission to capture the shift from determining eligibility to fostering self-sufficiency, (2) substantial organizational restructuring, (3) engaging in partnerships and collaborations with a wide range of partners, including other county departments, community-based organizations, and for-profit businesses, (4) renewed pressure to integrate services as part of inter-agency collaborations and inter-disciplinary teams, and (5) increased demand for data-based planning and evaluation at all levels of the organization. While strengthening an agency's mission, engaging in organizational restructuring, and data-based planning and evaluation are part of the traditional skill sets of most senior managers, the *building of community partnerships* and fostering *inter-disciplinary practice* require community practice skills. This analysis will focus on community-based inter-agency partnerships and intra-agency collaboration as a way of addressing the community practice skills needed for effective networking inside and outside the agency.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICE AS WE KNOW IT

The literature on managerial skills in the human services reflects a primary focus on overseeing the work of others (Austin, 1981; Kettner, 2002; Lewis et al., 2001; Lohman & Lohman, 2002; Netting,1993; Rapp & Poertner, 1991). This focus includes an emphasis on supervising staff, managing financial and information resources, assessing client needs and evaluating services, service and program planning, and resource acquisition to maintain the agency's viability. This emphasis has its origins in the management sciences where lessons from the for-profit arena have been adapted and modified for the non-profit sector (Au, 1994;). For the purposes of this analysis, these traditional management functions are defined as *managing down* (Keys & Bell, 1982). In contrast, *managing up* involves middle management and top management influencing the thinking and behaviors of those at higher levels of authority (Austin, 1988). This paper explores a third domain of man-

agerial practice; namely, *managing out* which is defined here as the relationship-building process whereby: (a) top managers continuously network internally with their senior management group and externally with agency board members or county commissioners as well as with other community leaders and agency executives, and (b) middle managers actively network with other middle managers inside their own agency as well as outside with colleagues in other agencies.

The challenges of reaching out and networking are similar for both agency directors and middle managers. The increased pressure to integrate services, facilitate organizational change, foster interdisciplinary practice, and identify best practices is forcing middle and top managers to refine or add the community practice skills of "managing out" to their expertise in managing down and managing up. The community practice skills related to "managing out" include the group work skills of working on an inter-agency task force, the community work skills of building coalitions *inside and outside* the agency, and the community involvement and development skills needed to address social service issues. When referring to community practice skills, Weil's (1996) definition provides the context for the practice of managing out. She refers to community building as the foundation of community practice that includes the activities, practices, and policies that support and foster positive connections among individuals, groups, organizations, neighborhoods, and geographic and functional communities. Managing out involves all of these connections but uses the service delivery agency as the auspice for reaching out to people inside and outside the agency. From one perspective of managing out, the agency can be viewed as a community unto itself with its own history, power structure, leadership capacities, communication patterns, and future directions. From another perspective, the agency can be seen as simply one element in a network of agencies and neighborhood/community organizations.

The need for knowledge and skills in the area of managing out emerged dramatically in the early 1980s when social agencies confronted the first major round of budget cuts, resource scarcity, and organizational restructuring (Austin, 1984). The early 1980s were a wake-up call signaling the end of the era of continuous growth in human service expenditures and the beginning of an era of planning for the strategic use of scarce resources. Agency executives began to realize that new leadership capacities were needed to more actively reach out and network with other agencies, funding sources, and governing bodies outside their agencies. Using coalitions to lobby at the local, state, and national levels and expand relationships with Board members and community influentials

became a top priority for agency directors. Some of the outreach lessons of the 1980s are repeated in the 1990s as public social service agency directors and staff reached out and networked in the rapidly changing environment of welfare reform and managed care.

When it comes to incorporating community practice into management practice, the "managing out" process can be viewed in terms of Quinn's (1988) leadership domain of boundary spanning. This domain involves the skills of political negotiation and utilizing power relationships to carry out the roles of broker and innovator. *Brokering* includes the resource acquisition skills of developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, monitoring the community environment, promoting collaborative relations with other organizations in the community, and effectively using power and influence. The *innovator* role involves envisioning and facilitating change by managers seeking out new opportunities, encouraging and utilizing new ideas, and displaying a high level of tolerance for ambiguity and capacity to take risks.

The early signs of the need for middle managers to "manage out" can be found in the research of Havassy (1990) who noted that successful supervisors are able to accept and deal with differences by: (1) dealing with underlying *connectedness* (searching for common ground required of someone in "the middle") as a way to tolerate ambiguity, (2) *spanning boundaries* between various systems (departments inside and outside the agency) by maintaining loyalty to multiple groups, and (3) engaging in *cross-system communication* by expressing the needs, expectations, and demands for one system (top management or line staff) in the terms and concepts of another. In a similar way, Floyd and Woodridge (1996) identified the key interpersonal components of middle management practice: *synthesizing* (gathering new information and understanding the need for change), *facilitating* (preparing for change and nurturing the creative efforts of others), *championing* (stimulating change by matching recognized and unrecognized capabilities with emerging opportunities), and *implementing* (managing the process of changing the way existing capabilities are deployed). Successful efforts to "manage out" requires the synthesizing of new information, nurturing the creative efforts of others, seizing opportunities to promote change, and bringing people and resources together in new ways.

It is clear that the nature of managerial practice has shifted dramatically over the past two decades from a primary focus on internal operations to a more external, community focus. As Menefee and Thompson (1994) found in one of the few studies of management practice in social service settings:

No longer are social work managers predominantly concerned with structures, processes, and conditions within the agency; they now give equal if not more attention to the entire context of service delivery by actively monitoring and managing the boundary between the external environment and internal organizational arrangements.

Menefee and Thompson noted that managers actively engage in modeling the values and practices of boundary spanning for their staff as they seek to foster greater staff and community ownership in the service of the agency. They identified the core skills as networking, managing internal and external relationships, lobbying external and internal constituencies, fostering agency-community relations, and effectively using one's own power. They also found that boundary spanning took place at least once a week and was regarded as very important by the managers in their study.

In a follow-up study, Menefee (1998) found that boundary spanning had become the central skill needed to foster internal and external relationships. The skills for successful boundary spanning include communicating, teaming, facilitating, aligning, and coordinating which are defined as follows (Menefee, 1998):

- *Communicating*–Exchanging information between the agency and its internal and external stakeholders by keeping staff informed, making presentations in the community, and developing publications and related correspondence.
- *Teaming*–Organizing and enlisting the work of groups to support agency operations and services by developing coalitions to respond to community needs, organizing and developing staff teams, planning and leading agency/community initiatives, and modeling effective meeting management capabilities.
- *Facilitating*–Enabling others to carry out the work of the agency by helping others (staff and community) to influence agency operations and programs, empowering staff with educational experiences and career guidance, educating the board and community, and serving as a role model.
- *Aligning*–Arranging or rearranging structures, processes, and resources by delegating tasks and responsibilities, organizing tasks into jobs or programs, recruiting and hiring staff, and maintaining staff morale.

- *Coordinating*–Directing and guiding the agency which includes service delivery and infrastructure development, coordinating units/departments, attending to staff needs and concerns, providing distance supervision in the form of oversight/monitoring, and consulting through the use of advising and supporting staff.

This set of boundary spanning skills is part of a comprehensive array of managerial skills required to manage in a changing environment. The other skill sets identified by Menefee (1998) include: *futuring* (strategic planning), *managing and leveraging resources* (financial, physical, material, and human), *evaluating* (needs, effectiveness, cost-benefit, and capabilities), and *policy practice* (interpreting laws/regulations, translating policies into practices, and representing the agency by lobbying/testifying before policy-making bodies).

THEORY TO INFORM PRACTICE

Before exploring the major practice components of managing out, it is important to identify some of the critical concepts from inter-organizational relations theory to provide a context for understanding the need for managing out. In Reitan's (1998) review of inter-organizational relations in the human services, she notes the growing shift in focus from an emphasis on intra-organizational issues to inter-organizational relations. Based on an analysis that spans the social sciences, she concluded that inter-organizational relations in the human services: (1) feature new ways of governing through networks of agencies, (2) represent a continuous changing of intensity and content as agencies actively engage each other in an effort to address such factors as scarce resources and service fragmentation, (3) reflect inter-organizational structures (collaboratives, consortia, partnerships) that are designed to ensure goal attainment and efficiency (sharing insufficient resources or providing integrated services), (4) carry significant importance for the recipients of services (accessibility, availability, responsiveness), and (5) seek stability so that they can endure. The central feature of inter-organizational relations theory is the way agency interdependence is managed as the human services increasingly shift back and forth from competition to cooperation (Hasenfeld & Gidron, 1993). These issues are viewed differently by social scientists. The sociological literature on inter-organizational relations focuses on cooperating relationships (Hall & Taylor,

1996), while the political economy perspective emphasizes the inter-agency relationship factors of transaction costs, contracting, and accountability (Reitan, 1998). And the organizational psychology perspective focuses more on the strategic choices that organizational leaders make as they respond to problems in their environment by maximizing their discretion and producing different kinds of inter-organizational relations (Oliver, 1988).

Each of these social science perspectives adds an important dimension to our understanding of inter-organizational relations. It is also important to highlight the empirical research on inter-organizational relations among human service organizations. In his search for the key ingredients that foster inter-organizational collaboration, Bardach (1998) found that inter-agency collaboration was a "joint activity between two or more agencies intended to increase public value by working together" based on "tangible components" (formal agreements) and "intangible components" (expectations of each other). His major contribution to our understanding of inter-organizational relations is that successful relationships require a shared capacity to manage joint activity. In so doing, he isolated the following critical ingredients to managing collaboration: (1) an operating system that promotes flexibility around turf issues, cross-training to enhance trust and open dialogue, peer accountability, and financial incentives, (2) the sharing of resources (acquiring and allocating fiscal, human, and facility resources), (3) establishing a process of shared leadership to steer a course (strategic directions, customer-centered, shared problem-solving, leadership succession planning, and a set of shared values to guide decision-making), (4) building a culture of joint problem-solving (embracing change, mediating differences, and continuous trust-building), and (5) action planning (a structure of specific steps that builds from the bottom up and generates/sustains momentum beginning with early successes). To foster and maintain the collaborative process, Bardach (1998) calls for "administrative craftsmanship" in the form of seizing opportunities, playing new roles, converting problems into challenges, appreciating the slow pace of developing collaborations, working backwards from the goals to be achieved to build action steps, and "muddling through" to address shortcomings and promote continuous process improvement. Many of these elements of interagency collaboration are central to the process of managing out.

In addition to Bardach (1998), it is also important to note the significant empirical work of Alter and Hage (1993) on inter-organizational

networks and relationships. Their contribution is in the form of an evolutionary theory of collaboration and a set of key questions. The core elements of their theory are: (1) willingness to collaborate (linked to a culture of trust, history and complexity of relationships), (2) need for expertise (linked to innovation, standardization, and task complexity), (3) need for financial resources and shared risk (linked to the political economy of the organizational environment and the specialization of each agency's market niche), and (4) need for adaptive efficiency (linked to the size of collaborating organizations and the pace of change in technology and knowledge). While they document the complexity of inter-organizational relationships, they also provide important guideposts to the continuous search for understanding this complexity. The guideposts are in the form of key questions (p. 261):

1. What pushes organizations towards collaboration in spite of the difficulties?
2. What are the forms of collaboration and how do they differ?
3. What influences the way in which systemic networks (of organizations) are structured and operate?
4. What influences the choices of partners and insures compliance (with shared goals)?

These questions can provide a foundation for evaluating the impact of managing out.

And finally, the search for theory to inform practice needs to include the impact of internal operations on the external agency relationships. In essence, the ability to collaborate successfully with other organizations can be linked to the effectiveness of internal relationships and processes within the agency. This perspective takes us to the important work of Hastings (1993) and Senge (1990). Hastings focuses our attention on shifting the organizational culture from a traditional, bureaucratic mode to a new culture of networking. Senge identifies the important organizational roles needed to develop a learning organization.

It has become increasingly clear that leadership at any level in an organization is directly affected by the culture of the organization and the organization's capacity to learn and change. Identifying and modifying elements of an organization's culture can be exceedingly difficult. One approach used by Hastings (1993) is to restructure organizations by creating organizational networks and thereby grow a new organizational culture. The first step is to identify the nature of the old, traditional cul-

ture in contrast to the new, networking culture. Hastings (1993) identifies four key elements that need to be addressed in order to transform an organization's culture from the old way of doing business to the new networking model of operations; namely role, relationships, communication, and organizational perspective. Some examples of this transformation include: (1) making the *role* transition from one of specialists "telling" others to one of specialists "learning from" others, (2) facilitating the *relationship* transition from "exclusivity" to "inclusivity," (3) modifying the *organizational perspective* from "top down" to "inside out and outside in," and (4) transforming the *communication of information* from "retaining" information to "sharing" information.

Changing the organizational culture is related to transforming human service agencies into learning organizations. Senge (1990) first identified the art and practice of building a learning organization in which staff continually expand their capacities to understand complexity, clarify vision, improve their ability to think creatively, and take responsibility for continued learning. The challenge for the transformational manager is to foster a learning environment by refining one's skills in carrying out the following roles: (a) *designer* or "organizational architect" who constructs learning processes to deal productively with critical issues and develop a sense of mastery whereby all staff can approach their work from the perspective of "what can I learn today?" rather than "what must get done today?", (b) *steward* who seeks to balance the desire for continuity with the desire for innovation by integrating the "big picture" into the daily testing of new ideas as well as listening to the ideas of others as a way to demonstrate a willingness to change or modify one's own vision of the future, and (c) *teacher* who helps staff achieve more accurate, insightful, and empowering views of reality by shifting the focus of attention beyond the daily events and patterns of behavior (reactive) to the organization's purpose for existence and future direction (proactive) to assist others in developing systemic understandings of the role of the agency in the community. Each of these leadership roles is valuable for building a learning community inside and outside the organization by identifying the forces that contribute to current realities. The gap between current realities and the vision produces the creative tension needed to energize others. For example, the extensive efforts made by some California county social service agencies to involve the community in developing the county's welfare reform plan provided all segments of the community (including the business com-

munity) an opportunity to contribute to a new service system as well as share ownership in its processes and outcomes.

This brief literature review provides a foundation of key concepts for exploring the process of "managing out." With regard to organizational structures, Bardach's (1998) concepts suggest that new structures inside and outside the organization are needed to create effective operating systems, facilitate the sharing of resources and leadership, and establish mechanisms for linking joint problem-solving with action planning. When it comes to redefining organizational processes, Alter and Hage (1993) identify critical concepts that can facilitate collaborative processes; namely, a willingness to collaborate as well as a recognized need for expertise, shared risk, and adaptive efficiency. One way to capture the inter-relationships of these structural and process concepts is to frame them as part of the following checklist for those in organizations who are engaged in "managing out":

Organizational Structures (Bardach, 1998)

1. Do we have the human resource capacities to build operating systems to support inter-agency collaboration in the community?
2. Do we have the mechanisms in place to share resources and leadership in the community?
3. Do we have mechanisms for joint problem-solving (internal work groups or external advisory groups) that can facilitate action planning and community collaboration?

Organizational Processes (Alter & Hage, 1993)

4. Do we have a method for demonstrating our willingness to collaborate and monitor the messages?
5. Do we have mechanisms in place to identify our need for expertise, our capacity to share risks, and our commitment to collaboration and change?

In addition to this focus on organizational structures and processes, the literature on organizational collaboration also suggests the need to redefine managerial leadership. As Hastings (1993) noted, traditional organizations need leadership that can foster a networking culture which calls for changes in roles, relationships, communications, and perspectives. In a similar way, Senge (1990) is calling for the new leadership roles of designer, steward, and teacher. Each of these concepts

can be reflected in the following questions that address the leadership challenges facing organizations with staff committed to effectively "managing out":

Fostering a Networking Culture (Hastings, 1993)

1. Is there a capacity to promote *networks of staff* inside and outside the organization where "help-seeking" is seen as a strength by staff who reach out for consultation and advice?
2. Are there ways to promote *multi-disciplinary teamwork* based on *relationships* that are inclusive, capable of searching for common goals with outsiders, and oriented toward reducing barriers to exchange in the community?
3. Can *information* be *shared* on the basis of "wanting to know" rather than a "need to know"?
4. Can the *organizational perspectives* of staff be altered from a "top down" to an "inside out and outside in" viewpoint where boundaries are spanned, ambiguity is tolerated, and responsibilities are shared with others in the community?

Adopting New Leadership Roles (Senge, 1990)

5. How do leadership styles need to be modified to become the *designer* of learning processes that deal productively with critical issues?
6. How does one's day to day work reflect a balance between the need for continuity and the need for innovation that includes actively testing new ideas, listening for new ideas and demonstrating a capacity to change one's views (*stewardship*)?
7. How does one help staff gain new insights about the need to maintain a balance between reactive and proactive behaviors as well as gain a more holistic understanding of the role of the organization in the community (*teacher*)?

These questions, that seek to link theory with practice, provide a context for describing the community practice aspects of "managing out" in human service organizations.

THE MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF MANAGING OUT

While managing out can be demonstrated at all levels of staff (e.g., secretaries who coordinate effectively with other units in the agency as

well as network effectively with agencies and clients in the community), the focus here is on the top and middle levels of management. Irrespective of the level of management, managing out can include the three key functions of leading, managing, and partnering. Using Kotter's (1990) definitions for leading and managing, *leading* relates to coping with change (setting directions, aligning people, and motivating/inspiring) and *managing* refers to coping with complexity (planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and evaluating and problem-solving). The third concept of *partnering* relates to the governance of human service organizations in a community, such as working with governing boards and inter-agency advisory boards (public and voluntary) and monitoring changing community needs and building partnerships with a wide variety of institutions and individuals. In order to illustrate the potential array of activities related to managing out, sample activities are highlighted in Figure 1 for two levels of management (middle and top) and the three domains of management practice (leading, managing, and partnering).

While the agency director may be able to devote a substantial portion of a typical work week to managing out, the challenge of setting priorities is no different than for anyone else holding a management position in the agency. However, in the case of top management there may be greater freedom and autonomy (often as a result of delegating tasks to others) than can be found in the middle management ranks. There is also greater accountability to keep members of the agency's governing board apprised of the director's managing out efforts on behalf of the agency. While most successful directors understand the importance of networking and relationship-building in the community, it has only recently become apparent that proactively seeking and scheduling public speaking engagements with community groups needs to receive higher priority (McDaniel, 1994). These outreach activities address one of the most neglected areas of human service administration, namely community and media relations (Brawley, 1995). By managing out, managers can engage in the continuous process of educating the American public about the nature of human services, sharing the successes emerging daily from excellent staff work, and reminding the community that it is their neighbors who need support from everyone, not just from the public and non-profit human service agencies (Goldberg, Cullen, & Austin, 2001).

The challenges facing middle-managers and supervisors related to managing out can be substantial. While top management has the authority to manage out, middle managers often need to secure that authority

FIGURE 1. Sample Activities of Managing Out

	Leading = Coping with Change	Managing = Coping with Complexity	Partnering = Building and Maintaining Relationships
Top Management	• scanning the local, regional, state, and national environment for issues of potential importance to the organization • developing a shared vision of the organization's future by involving all key stakeholders • continuously on the alert for opportunities to promote inter-agency collaboration	• continuously seeking client's assessment of the organization • consistently team-building at the top of the organization • extensive schedule of meetings with key people outside the organization • conscientiously mentoring those inside the organization	• consistently fostering improved executive board relations • coalition-building at local, regional, state, and national levels • seeking pubic speaking and lobbying opportunities to market the organization • continuously seizing opportunities to celebrate successes inside and outside the organization
Middle Management	• continuously assessing the needs for internal organizational change • actively participating in setting organizational priorities • proposing and designing strategies to modify and strengthen operations	• negotiating and mediating inter-departmental conflicts • building coalitions inside the organization • continuously fostering a climate of collegiality and sharing • repeatedly searching for opportunities for team-building • mentoring others inside the organization	• building coalitions with colleagues outside the organization • negotiating and mediating inter-agency conflicts • mentoring others outside the organization • fostering a climate of collegiality and sharing in the community • continuously seizing opportunities to celebrate successes inside and outside the organization

from top management. Even with the delegated authority, middle managers find their managing out activities to be primarily horizontal with peers, relying more on persuasive abilities than any authority to mandate change. Some of the most prevalent challenges facing middle managers engaged in managing out can be: (1) getting the "right" people at the table to foster exchange and collaboration across boundaries, (2) developing common understandings needed to get everyone "on the same page" in order to sustain momentum, (3) understanding differing agency politics that relate to "turf" issues in order to reach decisions, (4) dealing with the interests of agencies and communities that may differ, and (5) getting clarity as to who has authority to reach a decision and monitor its implementation. These challenges are organized in Figure 2 into four areas: (1) forming group structures, (2) addressing power and leadership issues, (3) fostering and maintaining group processes, and (4) engaging in follow-up and implementation.

CONCLUSION

This discussion of managing out began with the community practice dimensions of spanning organizational boundaries. It was followed by

FIGURE 2. Challenges Facing Middle Managers Engaged in Managing Out

I. Addressing Power and Leadership Issues

       Letting go of turf issues

       Building an understanding of who has authority to make decisions

       Knowing the politics of participating organizations

       Handling the mutual/competing interests between agency and community

       Meeting the needs of agencies and clients

II. Forming Group Structures

       Getting the "right" people at that table

       Identifying array of stakeholders

       Finding a time and place to meet

       Receiving support from above

III. Fostering and Maintaining Group Processes

       Getting everyone on the same page

       Getting groups to decide

       Sustaining momentum

       Developing common understandings

       Motivating participants to complete agreed-upon work

       Maintaining attendance levels

       Dealing with previous histories that affect involvement (collaboration issues)

       Handling a variety of issues/interests, especially competing interests

       Facilitating without dominating

       Identifying roles to be taken

       Dealing with a lack of openness

       Using the expertise of others

       Saying the "right" thing (being knowledgeable and not being stereotypical)

IV. Engaging in Follow-Up and Implementation

       Monitoring decision-making and implementation

       Insuring unified agency position on a given issue (shared understandings)

       Anticipating program implications

       Identifying external constraints on implementation

       Developing creative strategies to make departmental changes

       Monitoring implementation to see that resources are not spread too thin

an assessment of inter-organizational concepts relevant to the process of managing out. This assessment identified a series of questions for agency managers to use in their ongoing assessment of the external and internal dimensions of their organizational structures and processes as well as the elements of leadership and networking. The questions pro-

vided a beginning framework for exploring the organizational dynamics of managing out. Particular attention was given to examples of managing out by those in top management as well as middle management positions.

For middle managers, managing out to others inside their agency as well as to those in other agencies may require a significant realignment of traditional middle management job functions. (e.g., reducing the amount of time devoted to supervising staff and increasing the amount of time devoted to managing out). For senior managers, managing out may require an expanded commitment to the agency's *external* issues in the larger community as well as the *internal* issues related to promoting the culture of a learning organization (DuBrow, Wocher, & Austin, 2001).

In the cases of both middle managers and top managers, the rebalancing of current job activities to account for more managing out would mean that internal operations might receive less attention while external relations might receive more attention. Ultimately, the role of the middle manager and top manager in human service organizations will need to be redesigned if future managers are going to master the skills of managing out as well as monitor the impact of this increasingly important community practice component of effective agency management. As seen in the lessons learned from implementing welfare reform, top management will be increasingly called upon to build and maintain community partnerships and middle managers will be encouraged to give more attention to inter-disciplinary practice inside and outside the agency.

REFERENCES

Au, C. (1994). The status of theory and knowledge in social welfare administration. *Administration in Social Work*, *18*(3).

Austin, M. J. (1981). *Supervisory management for the human services*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Austin, M. J. (1988). Managing up: Relationship building between middle management and top management. *Administration in Social Work*, *12*(4).

Austin, M. J. (1984). Managing cutbacks in the 1980s. *Social Work*, *29*(5).

Brawley, E. (1995). *Human services and the media: Developing partnerships for change*. New Brunswick, NJ: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Carnochan, S. & Austin, M. J. (2002). Implementing welfare reform and guiding organizational change. *Administration in Social Work*, *26*(1).

DuBrow, A., Wocher, D., & Austin, M. J. (2001). Introducing organizational development (OD) practices into a county social service agency. *Administration in Social Work*, *25(4)*.

Floyd, S. W. & Woodridge, B. (1996). *The strategic middle manager: How to create and sustain competitive advantage*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Goldberg, S., Cullen, J., & Austin, M. J..(2001). Developing a public information and community relations strategy in a county social service agency. *Administration in Social Work*, 25(2).

Hastings, C. (1993). *The new organization: Growing the culture of organizational networking*. London: McGraw-Hill.

Havassy, H. M. (1990). Effective second-story bureaucrats: Mastering the paradox of diversity. *Social Work*, *35*(2).

Kettner, P. M. (2002). *Achieving Excellence in the Management of Human Service Organizations*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Keys, B. & Bell, R. (1982). Four faces of the fully functioning middle manager. *California Management Review*, *24*(4).

Kotter, J. P. (1990). What leaders really do. *Harvard Business Review*, May-June.

Lewis, J. A., Lewis, M. D., Packard, T. & Souflee, F. (2001). *Management of human service programs, Third Edition*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Lohman, R. A. & Lohman, N. (2002). *Social administration*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

McDaniel, R. (1994). *Scared speechless: Public speaking step by step*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Menefee, D. (1998). Identifying and comparing competencies for social work management II; A replication study. *Administration in Social Work*, *22*(4).

Menefee, D. T. & Thompson, J. J. (1994). Identifying and comparing competencies for social work management: A practice driven approach. *Administration in Social Work*, *18*(3).

Netting, F. E., Kettner, P. M., & McMurty, S.L. (1993). *Social Work Macro Practice*. New York, NY: Longman.

Quinn, R. E. (1988). *Beyond rational management: Mastering the paradoxes and competing demands of high performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rapp, C. & Poertner, J. (1991). *Social administration: A client-centered approach*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Schein, E. (1988). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.

Weil, M. O. (1996). Community building: Building community practice. *Social Work, 41(5), 481-499.*

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Becoming a Manager in Nonprofit Human Service Organizations: Making the Transition from Specialist to Generalist

Michael J. Austin, Kate Regan, Suzanne Gothard, and Sarah Carnochan
School of Social Work, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA

The transition from direct service to management in human service organizations requires newly promoted managers to engage in significant role transformation that calls into question their self-concept and identity. This analysis draws upon the for-profit and nonprofit literature to construct a conceptual model of managerial identity formation. The model is then applied to a case vignette of a managerial leadership development training program developed by a regional network of nonprofit human service agency directors. The analysis concludes with implications for managerial training and leadership development in human service organizations.

Keywords: human service organizations, leadership, management, training

INTRODUCTION

It is common for human service organizations to promote direct service practitioners into management positions, yet there is often little attention paid to the altered sense of identity and role changes that accompany this transition. While formal prior training and experience can be useful when direct service practitioners in human service organizations move into managerial roles, new managers often face challenges as they learn to exercise authority, negotiate competing interests, manage organizational politics, and move from their role as a technical specialist to becoming a managerial generalist (Austin, 1981; Donovan & Jackson, 1991; Lowe & Austin, 1997; Patti, Diedrick, Olson, & Crowell, 1979). Nonprofit and public sector training programs often do not adequately address these transition challenges and tend to focus more on managerial skills.

The organizational assumptions underlying most promotions in nonprofits, even when those promoted have moved up through the ranks of human service organizations (often with little or no management training), include: 1) that participants enter with a relatively clear idea of their managerial responsibilities and seek primarily to improve their management skills; 2) that participants have broadened their client-focused identity to include an organizational and community focus; and 3) that participants have assumed a managerial role that fits their career interests.

Based on the comments, reflections, and observations of participants in a new managerial leadership training program that is described elsewhere (Austin, Regan, Samples, Schwartz, & Carnochan,

2011), it became apparent that nonprofit human service managers were having difficulty with their managerial roles where the "managerial hat" neither "fit" nor "looked good." For example, the following comments were shared by the training program participants (Austin, et al., 2011):

1. "I miss the satisfaction of working with clients and I try to get similar satisfaction from working with staff, but I really identify with the clients we serve."
2. "I like the power and authority that comes with my manager role, but I find it difficult to be part of the administrative hierarchy of the agency or to actually use my power and authority."
3. "When faced with new roles, like fundraising, I find it very difficult to envision myself attending fundraising events where I need to dress-up. I can't imagine liking this part of being a manager as talking to wealthy people puts me in conflict with who I am and what I believe about serving poor people."
4. "I often feel like I'm under siege as a manager, making it difficult to see the big picture of my agency within its larger environment."
5. "One of my biggest challenges is dealing with the negative projections of my staff now that I'm a manager, especially when I'm attempting to set or maintain accountability."
6. "I have no clearly identified space to reflect and get feedback about how I'm doing as a manager, especially in my relationships with staff."

These perceptions made it clear that the issues of identity and role required further investigation and future program adjustments.

We found that some of the issues were addressed in the literature on the transition from technical specialist to first-line manager. However, due to the limited research in the nonprofit and public sector human service organizations on this transition from direct service supervisor to program manager (e.g, there is no aggregate data in either sector to identify the number of people advancing each year up the managerial leadership ladder), this analysis involves a review of the for-profit management literature in search of concepts and findings relevant to the nonprofit sector. The outcome is a conceptual framework that is then used to inform nonprofit management.

This framework evolved as part of the redesign process of a nonprofit managerial leadership development program in order to address the emerging issues of identity and role development. The framework served as a lens to examine the experiences of participants in subsequent cohorts to develop a deeper understanding of managerial and leadership identity formation. The following review of the literature and its application to a managerial leadership development program concludes with implications and recommendations for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In reflecting on the transition from specialist to generalist in for-profit organizations, McCall et al. (1988) found that successful transitions are often built upon a prior on-the-job work history of developmental assignments (sometimes referred to as stretch assignments) where managerial capabilities are demonstrated through a variety of activities (e.g., first supervisory experience, project/task force experience, demonstrated capacity to cope with the ambiguity through an understanding organizational culture and strategies, leading a team and surviving difficult situations, fixing programs that requires persuasion and toughness, and/or a significant expansion in scope of work that requires relying on others and thinking like a manager). Successful transitions from specialist to generalist were found by McCall et al. (1988) to reflect the following lessons learned: 1) *setting and implementing agendas* (e.g., taking responsibility, building and using organizational structures, thinking strategically and engaging in innovative problem solving); 2) *handling relationships* (e.g., dealing with people over whom you have no authority, negotiating

political situations, understanding other people's perspectives, dealing with conflict, directing-motivating-evaluating-developing subordinates, and managing up to senior management); and 3) *demonstrating core values rooted in self-awareness* (e.g., belief that one can not manage everything alone, importance of the human side of management, continuous acknowledgement of one's limits and blind spots, and recognizing and seizing opportunities by taking charge of one's career and maintaining balance between work and personal life).

The theme of self-awareness calls for a personal framework for self-reflective practice that, according to McCall et al. (1988), involves identifying one's shortcomings (either reactively as a result of negative feedback or proactively by learning how to expand one's self-reflective capacities), accepting responsibility for one's shortcomings by searching for their sources, and addressing shortcomings (e.g., placing oneself in situations calling for new learning, accessing the expertise of others, hiring staff that compensate for one's weaknesses, and/or change the situation, and/or seeking coaching for use in developing personal change).

In more recent work, Charan, et al. (2011) reflect on the process of managing self to managing others where they focus on getting work done through others (rather than relying exclusively on yourself) and giving up the tasks and responsibilities that gave them the recognition needed to become a manager. They noted that the transition from specialist to generalist calls for different skills, use of time, and work values. For example, the different skills include defining/assigning work to be done, monitoring/communicating/coaching/acquiring resources/problem solving, and building relationships up/down/out). According to Charan et al. (2011), the use of these skills should lead to less doing and more discussing, completing the role transition, hiring others who reflect the organization's work style and beliefs, maintaining availability to teach, sharing in the successes of staff, and continuously learning about the organization's expectations of managers. With respect to the use of time, they note that managers need to move from the daily discipline of managing one's own time to more annual planning (budgets/projects) and making time available for others (communications and team priority setting). And finally, with regard to work values, they observed that there needs to be a shift from valuing personal/technical proficiency to valuing the results of others and the successes of teamwork. In commenting on the transition from specialist to generalist, Charan et al. (2011) noted that:

> When first-time managers lack the ability to delegate or coach, they'll schedule relatively little time for each activity, preferring to spend as much time as possible on what they're good at . . . They don't want to look foolish in front of their former peers and will therefore spend time on activities that make them appear competent. They also are avoiding the monumental shift of being responsible for the productivity, output, and expansion of individual capacity that comes with a manager's job (p.48).

Some observers of the transition process have sought to compile their findings into a set of success strategies to be used in the first 90 days of becoming a manager. For example, Watkins (2003) identified the following 10 key strategies viewed as prescriptions for success: 1) promote yourself by making the mental break from specialist to generalist; 2) maintain a systematic focus on what needs to be learned and how to do it efficiently; 3) match strategy to situation by using diagnosis in order to develop action plan; 4) focus on early wins to build credibility and momentum; 5) negotiate success by building relationship with your boss through multiple conversations about expectations; 6) achieve alignment by bringing organizational structures into alignment with its strategies, especially systems and skills; 7) build your team by evaluating current members and recruiting new members; 8) create coalitions, both internal and external, to identify those whose support is essential for success; 9) keep your balance between the personal and the professional with the use of an advice/counsel network (avoid getting isolated, making poor decisions, and/or losing perspective); and 10) help others accelerate their own performance and transitions (p. 12–14)

As these highlights from the for-profit literature on transitions indicate, the considerable change process involves: 1) developing a sense of self and interpersonal judgment, 2) gaining role clarity

and learning how to transition into and out of role, and 3) learning how to learn on the job (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2003). In essence, a profound professional and psychological transformation takes place in the process of becoming a manager (Hill, 2003).

Developing a Sense of Self

Learning to engage as a self-reflective practitioner is a key theme throughout the literature on becoming a manager. Hill (2003) notes that personal learning is often more demanding than task learning. Many of the managers in Hill's (2003) study had previously relied primarily on taking action rather than engaging in reflection and introspection and quickly discovered that this action-oriented approach was not sustainable in their new managerial role where developing a sense of self was critical. Watson (2001) notes that many components of managerial learning require self-awareness and include helping staff feel valued, recognizing hidden agendas, and navigating organizational politics. Interpersonal styles, attitudes, and mindsets that worked well at the line level may need to be modified to be effective at the managerial level (Hill, 2003, 2007). Leadership coaching has been shown to assist new managers in identifying their own interpersonal style and ways of adapting in order to develop a managerial style that is both comfortable and effective (Koonce, 2008). Additional examples of the process of developing self are located in Appendix A.

Managing Role Transitions

New managers need to learn how to shift from the role of specialist where they rely primarily on their own efforts to carry out their jobs to that of generalist where they rely on others to get things done (Hill, 2003). Yet, the satisfaction that new managers typically derive from excelling as a specialist may make it difficult for them to leave this role in order to manage a broader scope of work and acquire the wider lens needed for managerial work (Hill, 2003). Moreover, this transition requires that new managers move from a position of independence to one of organizational interdependence where they are called upon to integrate multiple agendas and build networks both internal and external to the organization (Hill, 2003). However, the conceptions of work and the responsibilities held by new managers often conflict with the notion of getting work done through others (Hill, 2003). In addition, the increased interdependence that characterizes the role of manager heightens the sense of a loss of control (Hill, 2003). New managers are tempted to revert back to their specialist role when they feel most out of control, and feedback from subordinates can help them resist this temptation and embrace the interdependent nature of the managerial role (Hill, 2003). Additional examples of the process of managing role transitions are located in Appendix B.

Learning How to Learn from Experiences and Training

New managers need to learn from experiences in order to make a successful transition into management (Hill, 2003; Hill, 2004; McCall and Hollenbeck, 2007; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; Watson, 2001). On-the-job learning requires active reflection and inquiry, asking the questions "What did I do?" "What did I learn?" and "Why did I do it that way?" (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; Watson, 2001). To engage in self-development, managers need to "adopt an explorer's stance" by using introspection and reflection, incorporating diverse perspectives, and seeking out opportunities for life-long learning (Hill, 2004, p. 124). To help managers learn from their experiences, superiors need to offer coaching and multiple sources of feedback (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007). Research indicates that learning on the job is enhanced if the learner is able to access support from both peers and superiors (Hill, 2007). A person's natural curiosity and ability, desire, and drive to learn from her or his own experiences are often considered when assessing leadership potential (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; Muson, 2008). McCall and Hollenbeck (2008) warn against moving people into

leadership positions too quickly because sequential experiences with increasing responsibilities are necessary to grasp some leadership concepts related to one's own stage of development. Watson (2001) presents the concept of an "emergent manager," one whose on-the-job preparation and training for management can be understood in the context of a full life history of leadership development rather than simply the point at which a formal promotion occurs.

The responsibility to develop new managers rests on both the future manager and the organization (Hill, 2003; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008). Organizations need to provide prospective managers with: 1) an accurate portrayal of management, 2) resources and support throughout the transition, 3) opportunities for stretch assignments to develop managerial competence, and 4) opportunities for post-training follow-up that reinforces new learning and allows discussion of challenges that arise from putting training principles into practice (Hill, 2003; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; Pledger, 2007). Dubouloy (2004) notes that to develop managers who are comfortable innovating and able to use their talents, management training programs need to: 1) help participants examine and construct their identity, 2) allow time for experiences to be discussed, and 3) provide an emotionally safe environment.

In essence, future managers need to engage in their own self-assessments to identify the fit between their skills, attitudes, strengths, and interests and the managerial role itself, as well as substantial "self-development" throughout their first year on the job (Hill, 2003). Suggestions for new managers who make the transition include the need to: 1) be patient, 2) anticipate common pitfalls, 3) demonstrate an openness to criticism, 4) maintain integrity and honesty, 5) engage in ongoing training and development of yourself and your subordinates, and 6) develop a resource base for ongoing assistance (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2003).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

These themes parallel the issues faced by human service managers who experience substantial "social psychological discontinuity" in the areas of: 1) exercising authority, 2) guiding group decision making, 3) focusing on service effectiveness and outcomes, and 4) managing collegial relationships with former peers (Patti & Austin, 1977). To capture the professional and psychological transformations that accompany the transition from direct service to management in human service organizations, where new managers seek to renegotiate their professional role and adjust their own self-perceptions, a conceptual framework is needed as illustrated in Figure 1. The framework identifies four stages that characterize the transition: 1) Emerging, 2) Becoming, 3) Acting, and 4) Thriving.

The first stage, *Emerging*, marks the period in which a specialist is identified as a prospective generalist for a role in management. Emerging managers, as well as their supervisors, often use this time to assess the fit between managerial work and the potential manager's knowledge, attitudes, skills, and interests (Gaynor, 2004; Hill, 2003). An "emergent manager" is one who is encouraged to: 1) reflect on past experiences and future goals, 2) seek stretch assignments, 3) ask questions and observe to get an accurate picture of managerial work, and 4) actively develop professional and support networks (Watson, 2001; Hill, 2003).

The second phase, *Becoming a manager*, often begins at the point of promotion and is marked by negotiating the role and re-constructing elements of identity. The five substantial identity-related shifts that characterize this phase include what Hill (2003) describes as: 1) moving away from technical or clinical mastery and toward generalist competencies; 2) shifting from the role of a specialist or an independent practitioner to that of an interdependent manager; 3) learning to adjust one's locus of responsibility from individual-level task completion to team-level success; 4) shifting from building credibility primarily with clients or customers to learning how to develop credibility with ones staff; and 5) letting go of the need to be personally *liked* and moving toward reliance
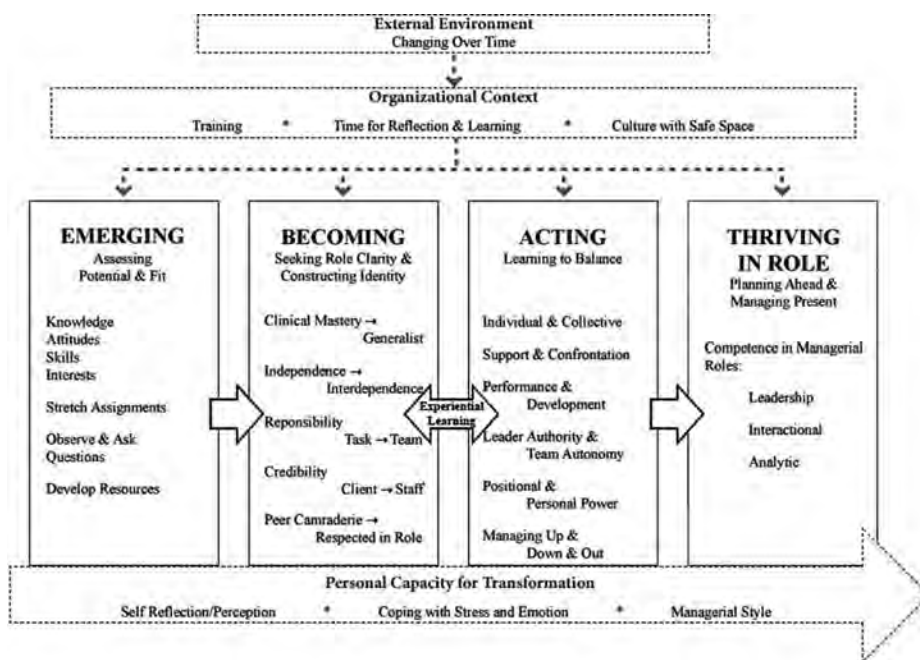
FIGURE 1 The Transition From Direct Service to Management.

on being respected in role—a shift that is often associated with the loss of peer camaraderie and a well-defined reference group (Barnes, 1981; Cohen, 2005).

As new managers gain role clarity and begin *Acting* in role, they are often confronted with competing demands. New managers continue to construct their managerial identity as they learn to balance the processes of: 1) managing individuals as well as an overall team (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2004, 2007); 2) offering support while developing an ability to effectively confront problematic behavior; 3) setting high expectations for performance as well as opportunities for growth and development; 4) acknowledging managerial authority while striving to empower team autonomy (Hill, 2003); 5) relying on personal power while recognizing their new positional power (Hitt, Black, & Porter, 2005); and 6) managing up and down, as well as out (both in the agency and the community) (Hopkins & Austin, 2004).

While this model depicts a linear framework, new managers often learn to "become" and "act" as managers simultaneously by thriving in one area and continuing to construct a managerial identity in another. New managers find themselves *Thriving* as they begin to move away from crisis management toward managerial leadership, marked by comfort and competence in planning ahead while effectively managing the present. In order to thrive as leaders in human service organizations, new managers are called upon to engage in the following managerial roles: 1) analytic roles that include leveraging resources, managing resources, creating and influencing policy, and evaluating outcomes; 2) leadership roles that include boundary spanning, future planning, aligning process and structure, team building and management, and coalition building; and 3) interactional roles that include facilitating, communicating, advocating, and supervising (Austin & Kruzich, 2004; Menefee, 2004). To maintain and renew their ability to thrive, managers need to engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection and continuous on-the-job learning (Hill, 2003, 2004; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; Watson, 2001).

An organization's culture and context can affect the ease with which new managers form a managerial identity. To begin exploring the application of issues related to identity formation and managerial roles highlighted in the conceptual framework, several findings from classroom observations and participant interviews (in the form of the following case vignette) are used to illustrate (in the context of grounded theory) the different ways that the transition from specialist to generalist is impacted by organizational culture and context (Austin et al., 2011).

CASE VIGNETTE

Emerging

Despite the fact that many of the training program participants had been in managerial positions for over five years, they had not yet acquired the time and/or support to engage in focused reflection on their identities and managerial roles. As noted in Figure 3, the importance of assessing the fit between a managerial role and a future manager's existing knowledge, attitudes, skills, and interests (prior to movement into a managerial role) is a key element in the *Emerging* stage. The responsibility for such an assessment rests with the future manager as well as the organization (Gaynor, 2004; Hill, 2003; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008). While the training participants had been promoted to managerial positions prior to the training program, it became clear that they were not comfortable in the role, despite the fact that they were selected for the training based on their motivation, learning readiness, natural talent, and initiative.

The clash in expectations between those who had done the promoting (agency directors) and those who were promoted was evident in the differences between the training goals identified by agency directors and those identified by the program participants. The primary training goals identified by agency directors included: 1) expanding the professional identities of participants to include leadership roles within their organizations; 2) helping participants build upon their personal identity and interpersonal skills to manage staff and develop the ability to step in and out of appropriate managerial roles; and 3) developing the perspectives needed to promote systems management (e.g., financial, information and human resources). The training goals identified by the participants were wide ranging and included improving work/life balance, increasing their managerial competence, developing the confidence and capacity in leadership roles needed to address organizational challenges, developing time management and prioritization skills, acquiring the tools to manage resources while maintaining staff morale, and increasing their capacity to look and plan ahead while managing day-to-day issues and commitments.

These different learning priorities made it clear that, while participants had been functioning in their jobs and were clearly seen as successful (by virtue of the fact that they had been selected to attend the program), they had different learning goals from those of their agency directors. While the executive directors who participated in the design of the program identified the skill sets they hoped participants would refine or acquire to become more effective managers and leaders, participants often joked about the organization's need for "warm bodies in the management positions" as the primary reason that they had been promoted, even if they were told that they showed considerable promise for assuming managerial roles. In the *Emerging* phase of managerial role identity, two factors are prominent in nonprofits. First, staff members are often critical of those in agency leadership positions and frequently conclude that they would be able to perform more effectively than the current incumbents of those positions. This perception does not necessarily lead to a comprehensive self-assessment of the strengths and areas for improvement among those in the pool of possible candidates for promotion. Neither does the relief from finding a 'warm body' to fill a vacant management positions create a firm foundation of organizational assessment needed to help a new manager become successful.

Making the shift from developing credibility with clients to developing credibility with staff is another important element of managerial identity formation. A self-shadowing exercise further indicated that participants did not feel comfortable in, and had not solidified themselves, in a management role. In this exercise, participants recorded their time and activities on a typical day, enabling them to reflect on how they spent their time, especially in the areas of crisis management and counseling with staff. Participants found themselves re-creating client experiences with their staff such as devoting extensive amounts of time to counseling them. While this may seem like an effective strategy to develop credibility among staff, participants were able to identify the ways in which this approach made it difficult for them to then step into their leadership roles when called upon to do so. New managers came to recognize the need to balance both support and confrontation when working with staff in order to manage effectively.

As participants admitted that they missed working with clients and had recreated their client experience in their approach to managing staff, they came to recognize their ambivalence about the managerial role. Although they liked the power and authority that came with managing, they found it difficult to be part of the administrative "hierarchy" and to use the related power and authority. Participants associated activities related to the organization's health (e.g., pitching the organization's mission to donors) as conflicting with their client-centered identity. As they recognized how this role conflict inhibited them from taking on organizational leadership responsibilities, they became more aware of the process of consciously stepping in and out of leadership roles while building upon their client-centered identities.

A self-shadowing exercise also helped participants to focus on the multiple roles involved in organizational leadership (the fundraiser, the financial manager, the public speaker, the human resource manager, the staff motivator and the program evaluator), and assess the barriers they faced when new roles conflicted with the identity that they had formed as human service workers (Austin et al., 2011). It helped them recognize the strain they experienced from continuing to resist various aspects of the manager's role. For example, one participant asked one of the instructors who was a veteran executive director how she handled the demands of "dressing-up, putting on heels, and going to a cocktail party" to raise funds? With disbelief etched across her face she asked, "Do you like it? How can you do it? Doesn't that put you in conflict with who you are and what you believe about serving poor people?"

Becoming

During a group simulation exercise participants began to experiment with the practice of stepping into and out of role. This experience helped participants to see that one's identity as a human service professional is not necessarily compromised by taking on a management role. They began to see how the managerial expectations for service accountability and cost-effectiveness could be balanced with their support for practitioner creativity and autonomy needed to meet the complex needs of clients.

A learning lab simulation helped participants explore organizational roles that featured aspects of: 1) their current workplace, 2) their organization's relationship to the community, 3) the involvement of other stakeholders in human service work, 4) ways of responding to the impact of systems and organizational structures on role, and 5) perceptions of their role and how others perceived their role (Austin et al., 2011).

Throughout the exercise, the training facilitator sought to shift the group's focus from a "person in role" to an "organization in environment" perspective. For example, in the systems analysis component, one participant was able to move from seeing herself as a manager "under siege" to recognizing that a shift in funding priorities was placing her program in a favorable spotlight as innovators and direction-setters for new programs. She then linked this "organization in environment" perspective to the experiences of participants in the simulation exercise. By picturing

themselves outside of their roles in their own organization, participants were better able to view their organizations with a big-picture lens.

As Hill (2003) indicates, it is a significant transition when a manager can shift from the perspective of an individual contributor to one who is responsible for the department or organization as a whole.

Acting

New managers in the 'acting stage' of development often struggle with balancing their personal and positional power. For example, the nonprofit managers found it extremely difficult to balance the need to exercise their authority as a manager with the need to feel helpful and supportive of staff, resulting in their ambivalence in exercising their positional power. While they liked the increase in authority, they did not feel comfortable being part of an organizational hierarchy and found it difficult to know how and when to use their power.

Once a manager begins to make decisions and take action to serve the organization's mission, it is inevitable that that there will be a combination of positive and negative responses. This is often a situation where managers need to confront the conflict between their personal desire to be liked and the expectations of the managerial role. Participants realized that as managers they needed to earn the respect of others in their new professional role since they could not rely on peer camaraderie or old friendships to become effective managers. Participants noted their struggle in assuming managerial leadership roles was often complicated by the negative attitudes toward senior management that are held by their staff members. This is particularly true in nonprofit human service organizations where authority is often viewed with suspicion unless it is being used to respond to the personal needs of clients.

Given the mission of nonprofits to respond to the changing needs of clients, a parallel process also seems to emerge for managers in terms of responding to the changing needs of staff. This norm of responding to staff can complicate the process of moving from a specialist to a generalist, especially when staff members display resistance or anger when managers seek to exercise their authority. For example, one manager in the training program was called upon by senior management to communicate the decision about salary cuts to her staff and was met with negative responses, especially from a staff member who was also a long-time friend. Following her development of greater role clarity, this manager was able to engage in a conversation with the employee/friend to describe the organizational salary boundaries and limitations that had been created. She was able to take up the role that best served the organization, as well as maintain her personal values of care and concern for this individual. At the same time she was able to tolerate the fact that this individual was angry about the decision, held her personally responsible, and sought to end the friendship. While she successfully traversed this challenge, this manager noted that the incident sent her on a return visit to her therapist. This example also highlights an essential difference between the identity development of a manager in a nonprofit organization and that of a manager in a for-profit organization. The literature makes it clear that the process of identity development in for-profits is a process of "professional or career" identity development with less attention to the "personal" identity. The reference to seeking therapy highlights some of the complexity in nonprofits of making the shift from specialist to generalist, where identity clarification operates at both the personal *and* professional levels.

The discussions of personal identity and leadership roles surfaced the following three major challenges that often require greater support when making the transition from specialist to generalist within the context of the organization as a whole: 1) an ability to tolerate negative projections in times when assuming a managerial leadership role does not make managers popular with staff; 2) the capacity to work with these negative projections in a way that helps staff understand organizational realities, and remain open to hearing their perceptions, recognizing that the manager's role requires

the ability to develop staff and build bridges/alliances within the organization; and 3) an ability to carry the negative projections and at the same time retain the manager's own standards of care and open-heartedness toward staff who often struggle with their own pain and disappointment over various management decisions, and then inadvertently conspire with other staff to undermine the role of the manager.

Through the use of the simulation and subsequent group and individual coaching, participants in this nonprofit leadership development program came to realize that in order to engage in effective managerial leadership, they needed to understand the roles they play within their own organizations and the ways in which others perceive those roles. Program participants who benefited most from the program were those most willing to explore their personal identity and values in relationship to the organizational roles of managing and leading.

Thriving

As highlighted in Figure 1, the "Personal Capacity" arrow runs through each of the stages in the model, indicating the interaction between personal capacity (i.e., for self reflection, coping with stress and emotion, and understanding personal style) and the transition into the manager role. By learning how to adapt their personal styles, participants became better able to engage in activities necessary for effective leadership, including maintaining boundaries and developing professional relationships. Participants recognized the need to allocate additional on-the-job time to the process of reflection and identified the following outcomes from their experience in the training program: 1) increased self-confidence in assuming a leadership role, especially in groups, 2) greater willingness to step outside of their comfort zone, 3) increased ability to depersonalize experiences related to the managerial role, and 4) expanded capacities in achieving a healthier work/life balance.

Participants also engaged in facilitated group and individual coaching that created a safe space for feedback and reflection needed for participants to engage in honest and candid self-assessment. Through peer learning and sharing, managers came to understand: 1) the many roles they take on in their organizations; 2) the roles that complement and conflict with their own sense of identity; and 3) how to pull from and, at times, compensate for certain aspects of their identity in order to assume the managerial role needed to improve their leadership within the organization. For example, one of the participants, who initially identified with her staff in rebellion against the existing organizational structure, ultimately came to build upon the existing organizational structure in order to make dramatic changes in her department. While this act increased her status as a leader, the participant also had to revisit aspects of her former managerial identity (that of a manager allied with her staff) and renew the relationships she had developed in her old role within a new set of boundaries. The clarity about this process and the willingness to find support both within the organization and from outside coaches provided the manager with a context for experiencing the managerial role with less strain than in the past. Two years later, this manager remains at her organization, clearly thriving in her managerial role. She has restructured her department and gained greater responsibility within the organization. She was able to reflect on her experience, recognize what she has learned and how far she has progressed, and was able to share her experiences with others.

DISCUSSION

The experiences of participants in the managerial leadership training program described above allow for further reflection on the role transitions highlighted in Figure 3. The framework provides increased clarity with regard to the key steps in establishing managerial role identity. The evidence presented by participants of a nonprofit leadership program illustrates some of the similarities between nonprofit and for-profit transitions from specialist to generalist. However, there is

little in the literature about the relationship between and integration of personal identity formation and the organizational aspects of managerial role identity. Those who choose to work within non-profit human service organizations often create career paths based on a personal value system that shapes their personal identities. When they step into a managerial position and join the hierarchy of the organization, those personal values are often challenged, as evidenced by the manager who had trouble going to the cocktail party to raise money, or the manager who so easily slipped into leading her staff in a rebellion against the management of her own organization, or the manager who sought coaching when a colleague and friend could no longer sustain the friendship based on a managerial decision. It is not clear if the constant effort expended by some nonprofit managers to hold their personal identity in tact as they exercise their positional authority contributes to the high rate of burnout among nonprofit leaders. While new for-profit managers may "fail" in their role as managers, they do not seem to burn out. In the case of the nonprofit manager, however, it is highly likely that the clash between personal identity and role identity makes a significant contribution to burnout.

Recognizing that this relationship may exist, nonprofit organizations need to acknowledge that the loss of a reference group used to support personal identity can occur within the transition to management. Those organizations that support their new managers with education and training that includes peer feedback may also be providing their managers with an opportunity to develop a new reference group.

From this analysis, it is clear that more research is needed in the area of nonprofit managerial leadership, especially since most of the research focuses on the for-profit sector. Additional research in the nonprofit sector is necessary in order to: 1) identify experiences that are unique to nonprofit human service agencies, as well as those that are consistent with the for-profit experience; 2) develop strategies to reduce turnover and burnout at this career stage; 3) identify and evaluate training models that address the development of a managerial identity; and 4) identify strategies to help managers make the transition from reactive crisis management to proactive leadership in nonprofit human service organizations.

REFERENCES

Austin, M. J. (1981). *Supervisory management for the human services*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Austin, M. J., Regan, K., Samples, M., Schwartz, S., & Carnochan, S. (2011). Building managerial and organizational capacity in nonprofit human service organizations through a leadership development program. *Administration in Social Work*, *35*(3), 258–281

Austin, M. J., & Kruzich, J. M. (2004). Assessing recent textbooks and casebooks in human service administration: Implications and future directions, *Administration in Social Work*, *28*(1), 115–137.

Barnes, L. B. (1981). Managing the paradox of organizational trust. *Harvard Business Review*, *2*, 107–116.

Charan, R., Drotter, S. & Noel, J. (2011). *The leadership pipeline: How to build the leadership-powered company*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Cohen, S. (2005). Smoothly transition from friend to manager. *Nursing Management*, 36(2), 12–13.

Crampton, S. M., Hodge, J. W. & Mishra, J. (1998). The informal communication network: Factors influencing grapevine activity. *Public Personnel Management*, *27*(4), 569–583.

Donovan, F., & Jackson, A. C. (1991). *Managing human service organizations*. Sydney, Australia: Prentice-Hall.

Dubouloy, M. (2004). The transitional space and self-recovery: A psychoanalytical approach to high-potential managers' training. *Human Relations*, *57*(4), 467–496.

Fleming, R. S. (2008). Survival skills for the new manager. *The Business Renaissance Quarterly 3*(2), 127–137.

Gaynor, G. H. (2004). *What every new manager needs to know: Making a successful transition to management*. New York, NY: AMACOM.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York, NY: Bantam Books

Hill, L. A. (2003). *Becoming a manager: How new managers master the challenges of leadership* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation.

Hill, L. A. (2004). New manager development for the 21st century. *Academy of Management Executive*, *18*(3), 121–126.

Hill, L. A. (2007). Becoming the boss. *Harvard Business Review*, *85*(1), 48–56.

Hitt, M. A., Black, S., & Porter, L. W. (2005). *Management* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Hopkins, K. M., & Austin, M. J. (2004). Defining the learning organization. In M. J. Austin & K. M. Hopkins (Eds.), *Supervision as collaboration in the human services: Building a learning culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Koonce, R. (2008). Promoted to fail? How executive coaching can improve performance in newly promoted executives. *The Conference Board Executive Action Series, 285* (Sept), 1–6.

Lowe, J. I., & Austin, M. J. (1997). Using direct practice skills in administration. *The Clinical Supervisor*, *15*(2), 129–145.

McCall, M. W., Lombardo, M. M., & Morrison, A. M. (1988). *The lessons of experience: How successful executives develop on the job*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books

McCall, M. W., Jr., & Hollenbeck, G. P. (2007). Getting leadership development right. *Leadership Excellence*, *24*(2), 8–9.

McCall, M. W., & Hollenbeck, G. P. (2008). Developing the expert leader. *People and Strategy*, *31*(1), 20–28.

Menefee D. (2004). The managerial roles of the supervisor. In M. J. Austin & K. M. Hopkins (Eds.), *Supervision as collaboration in the human services: Building a learning culture* (pp. 137–150). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Muson, H. (2008). Mid-market management trends: How CEOs turn themselves (and others) into true leaders. *The Conference Board Executive Action Series*, *259*, 1–8.

Patti, R., Diedrick, E., Olson, D., & Crowell, J. (1979). From direct service to administration: A study of social workers' transitions from clinical to management roles. Part I: Analysis. *Administration in Social Work*, *3*(2), 131–151.

Patti, R. J., & Austin, M. J. (1977). Socializing the direct service practitioner in the ways of supervisory management. *Administration in Social Work*, *1*(3), 267–280.

Patton, D. W., & Pratt, C. (2002). Assessing the training needs of high potential managers. *Public Personnel Management*, *31*(4), 465–484.

Pledger, C. (2007). Building manager effectiveness by combining leadership training and organizational development. *Organizational Development Journal*, *25*(1), 71–76.

Watkins, M. (2003). *The first 90 days: Critical success strategies for new leaders at all levels*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Watson, T. J. (2001). The emergent manager and processes of management pre-learning. *Management Learning*, *32*(2), 221–235.

APPENDIX A: DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF IN THE TRANSITION FROM SPECIALIST TO GENERALIST

I. Assessing One's Emotional Intelligence
- Acquiring the additional human relations skills within the context of adult learning styles to effectively supervise others (Patton and Pratt, 2002) using Goleman's (1995) five domains of emotional intelligence: 1) knowing one's emotions, 2) managing emotions, 3) motivating oneself, 4) recognizing emotions in others, and 5) handling relationships

II. Assessing One's Sense of Vulnerability and Isolation
- Identifying and addressing one's sense of vulnerability as new managers as well as identifying and building on one's strengths (Fleming, 2008) to acquire the five major qualities critical to developing a managerial style: 1) self-confidence, 2) a willingness to accept responsibility, 3) patience, 4) empathy, and 5) an ability to live with imperfect solutions (Hill, 2003).
- Dealing with a sense of isolation and the loss of their former specialist status (e.g., the technical challenge, the explicit goals, the clear standards of comparison, and the regular recognition; Hill, 2003), new managers need: 1) a new *reference group* by which to identify norms, values, and standards for success (Barnes, 1981), and 2) a way to re-conceptualize their past achievements and discover new ways to measure their contributions to the organization (e.g., informal peer feedback; Hill, 2003).

III. Utilizing the Perceptions of Others in the Assessment Process
- Experiencing the threat of failure, often for the first time, can heighten the stress and loss of control associated with the transition (e.g., psychological and/or physical symptoms) when combined with a reluctance to discuss the emotional impact, leading to feelings of

being overwhelmed, trapped in the present, and often unable to plan ahead (Hill, 2003). Heightened by the pace and type of work, new abilities are needed to quickly shift priorities, accept imperfection, deal with ignorance, manage contradictions, negotiate conflicts, manage risk, put egos on the line, and come to terms with the power they hold (Hill, 2003).

- Given the new manager's reluctance to ask for support or guidance, current bosses are rarely seen as resources based on a fear of being penalized if insecurities, mistakes, or challenges are disclosed (Hill, 2003, 2007). The resources needed to maintain a work-life balance and time for self-care can be found in executive coaching (Koonce, 2008).

APPENDIX B: MANAGING ROLE TRANSITIONS IN THE TRANSITION FROM SPECIALIST TO GENERALIST

I. Seeking Role Clarity
- New managerial role needs to be defined, as well as "clarified," "communicated," and "understood" throughout the organization, especially for former peers or when replacing a poorly performing manager (Cohen, 2005; Fleming, 2008).
- Increased clarity about roles and responsibilities relate to: 1) the purpose of the work group, 2) upper management's expectations of the group, 3) the group's competencies, 4) the level of expected inter-organizational collaboration, 5) expectations for accountability and responsibility, 6) budgetary parameters, 7) organizational philosophy, 8) protocols for formal communication, 9) opportunities for training and ongoing learning, and 10) limits of formal authority (Gaynor, 2004).
- Discrepancies between the expectations of the constituencies and those of a new manager require negotiating relationships with superiors, peers, or external stakeholders, especially the reliance of subordinates on the support of their manager and the reliance of senior managers on the new manager's ability to protect the organization and demonstrate leadership by building relationships, communicating effectively, motivating and gaining commitment from others (e.g., managing people, not tasks) (Hill, 2003).

II. Managing Ambiguity
- As new managers gain role clarity, they need to: "Embrace individual differences while embracing a collective identity and goals; they must foster support and at the same time foster confrontation; they need to focus on performance, while focusing on learning and development; and they try to balance managerial authority with relying on their team members' discretion and autonomy" (Hill, 2003, p. 297).
- By demonstrating comfort with role ambiguity, new managers need the ability to make decisions about difficult trade-offs, a capacity to look ahead while managing the present, and a commitment to people, not just the work itself (Hill, 2003).
- In recognizing network-building responsibilities, new managers can become overwhelmed and stressed by: 1) their own uncertainty about how to simultaneously develop relationships with subordinates, peers, superiors, and external stakeholders; and 2) their place on the bottom rungs of the management hierarchy (e.g., dealing with office politics as well as external relations) (Hill, 2007).

III. Managing Down and Managing Up
- Demonstrating the ability to delegate responsibility, authority, and accountability by learning how to manage the needs of a group (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2003) to utilize its collective strength and sense of empowerment for teams to exercise their own authority to make decisions that reflect a commitment to team goals (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2004; Hill, 2007).

- Demonstrating the capacity to manage up as active change initiators, displaying the capacities to generate ideas *and* develop the skills to implement those ideas using the following change management principles: 1) recognize need, 2) establish goals, 3) diagnosis, 4) selection of change technique, 5) planning for implementation, 6) implementation, and 7) evaluation and action (Watson, 2001; Hill, 2007; Fleming, 2008).

IV. Balancing Managing with Leading
  - Developing leadership strategies beyond the use of formal authority (e.g., use of expert power over positional power) relies on building inter-dependent relationships based on trust at the team and organizational levels to develop the influence needed to get things done (Hill, 2007)
  - Establishing credibility based on the perceptions of others regarding motives, character, competence, and the ability of a manager to deliver the right thing at the right time calls for the capacity to control one's response to criticism by relinquishing the need to know everything, refrain from interpreting disagreement with a subordinate as a challenge to their authority, develop "thick-skin," and deliver both positive and negative news effectively (e.g., differentiating between being *respected* and being *liked* and between *trust* in the professional role and fostering *friendship*) (Hill, 2003; Crampton, Hodge, and Mishra, 1998).

SELECTED ARTICLES:
ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH

The Changing Relationship Between Nonprofit Organizations and Public Social Service Agencies in the Era of Welfare Reform

Michael J. Austin
University of California, Berkeley

The implementation of welfare reform in the United States provides another opportunity to assess the relationship between nonprofits and public social service agencies. The primary goal of this analysis is to identify the major forces affecting the county social services agencies as they sought to implement welfare reform and how these forces can affect the agency's relationship with community-based nonprofit service providers. The internal and external dimensions of the organizational change process are assessed in terms of the central concepts of devolution, privatization, and community building.

Keywords: *nonprofits; public social services; welfare reform*

Most of the attention during the first 5 years of welfare reform (1996-2001) in the United States has focused on reduced caseloads and the role of an expanding economy, but little attention has been given to the organizational changes in social service delivery, especially at the local levels (Lurie, 2001). As Gais, Nathan, Lurie, and Kaplan (2001) have noted in their assessment of the early years of welfare reform implementation, "we see a broader movement toward complex combinations of diverse institutions drawn from both the public and private sector" (p. 43). It is this complex combination that frames this article.

The primary goal of this analysis is to identify the major forces affecting the county social services agencies as they sought to implement welfare reform and how these forces can influence the agency's relationship with community-

based nonprofit service providers. The internal and external dimensions of the organizational change process are assessed in terms of the central concepts of devolution, privatization, and community building. Based on a literature review of the research on the contractual relationship between public agencies and nonprofit community service providers, the analysis concludes with a set of implications for managing the relationship.

PRIVATIZATION AND DEVOLUTION

The management of publicly funded social services has evolved during the past 50 years in the United States through a set of decisions related to either expanding government-based services or contracting out those services to community-based organizations. Similar decisions are made in the for-profit sector by purchasing needed services or materials (outsourcing) or building internal capacity by expanding the organization's human and physical resources (in-house development).

In the United States today, the new forces of privatization and devolution are affecting the relationship between nonprofit and public social service agencies. These forces converge around the implementation of welfare reform. The 1996 national welfare reform legislation and policies have led to the devolving of authority and responsibility downward from the national government to local governments and ultimately to nongovernmental organizations. As Liebschutz (2000) noted that

> although devolution to the states is featured in describing welfare reform [legislation], the real federalism story of welfare reform is local, [referred to as] a movement called "second-order devolution" . . . [which is] manifested in two principal ways: a) heightened discretion for local governments or local offices of state agencies and b) more extensive, complex, local service provider networks. (p. 9)

The most dramatic, but atypical, form of this devolution can be seen in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where the county chose to contract out nearly the entire welfare-to-work program to nonprofit organizations. This pattern can be found, to a lesser degree, in 8 out of 72 Wisconsin counties, but the vast majority of counties operate their own county-administered welfare-to-work programs (Kaplan, 2000).

The contractual relationship between county social services and nonprofit community-based organizations has a substantial history during the past several decades. As Wolch (1990) commented on the extensive privatization era of the 1980s, nonprofit organizations were becoming a "shadow state," which she defined as nonprofit organizations receiving government funds and operating outside the political system but still subject to some state control. From her political-economy perspective in 1989, Wolch could foresee the 1990s as a

time when government policies would become "more directive, more insistent upon specifying accounting, management, personnel, and service delivery evaluation as they become more reliant on voluntary (organizations) to meet statutory objectives" (p. 19).

From the experiences of the 1990s, it is clear that this relationship between nonprofits and government has become more complicated, particularly in the light of implementing welfare reform. The contractual relationship between nonprofits and public social service agencies includes a new set of expectations related to welfare reform. For example, a community-based nonprofit organization could be expected to provide neighborhood-based service delivery to include job development and outreach programs, colocated employment and training programs, employment retention programs, and linkages with community college programs (Svihula & Austin, 2001). As Salamon (1995) has so aptly noted from his studies of the nonprofit sector,

> For better or worse, cooperation between government and the voluntary sector is the approach this nation [United States] has chosen to deal with many of its human service problems. . . . This pattern of cooperation has grown into a massive system of action that accounts for at least as large a share of government-funded human services as that delivered by government agencies themselves, and that constitutes the largest single source of nonprofit-sector income. . . . This partnership [combines] the superior revenue-raising and democratic decision-making processes of government with the potentially smaller, more personalized service-delivery capabilities of the voluntary sector. . . . The partnership has deep roots in American history, testifying to its fit with basic national values. (p. 114)

Although Salamon (1995) noted the "romanticism about [the] inherent purity" of nonprofits as well as their "distinctive virtues" and abilities "to produce significant change in people's lives," he cautions us to look more closely at nonprofits. He sees them as afflicted with some of the same limitations as bureaucratic institutions,

> especially as they grow in scale and complexity; [namely] unresponsive, cumbersomeness, routinization, [and] lack of coordination . . . [and an inability to confront the tensions] between flexibility and effectiveness, between grassroots control and administrative accountability, between short-term responsiveness and long-term organizational maintenance. (p. 262)

With the exception of the few large nonprofit human service organizations found in most urban American cities, such as faith-based social services and residential treatment organizations, many nonprofits operate as small community-based organizations, relying heavily on service contracts to help sup-

port their underresourced organizations. La Piana (2001) has characterized these organizations today as (a) lacking strong management capabilities and limited fund-raising capabilities; (b) possessing limited access to "best practices" due to their survival mode and isolation; (c) operating in organizational structures that reflect the founders' interests, which may no longer be relevant; and (d) promoting very high and unrealistic expectations for what services can be effectively managed.

Given this brief history of the relationship, the challenge for local governments is to find new ways to support nonprofits in order to prevent them from becoming the "weakest link in the chain" of service delivery. The focus, therefore, needs to be on enhancing the infrastructures of nonprofits and their ultimate sustainability. Before exploring these issues in more detail, it is useful to frame the discussion within the context of welfare reform in the United States.

THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM

Welfare reform in the United States as reflected in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (U.S. Congress, 1996) and the various state legislative acts passed in the wake of the federal legislation have had a profound impact on the mission and structure of social service agencies at the state and local levels. The legislation focuses on moving former recipients from welfare to work with policies to address barriers to work as well as opportunities to sustain employability. Former *recipients* of the income maintenance program (Aid to Families With Dependent Children) became *participants* in the program of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) that promoted workforce development services that were often contracted out to community-based nonprofits. All of this change was implemented in a policy environment of time-limited benefits and sanctions for noncompliance.

From the perspective of the public social service agency, the changes have been most apparent in the mission of the agency as it transformed its income maintenance programs from client eligibility determination to client employability enhancement. This change required extensive organizational restructuring, cultural change, and staff training (Carnochan & Austin, 2002; Hagen, 1999). At the same time, county social service agencies began to actively promote more community outreach and collaboration. These efforts led to promising innovations in service delivery, community partnerships, and organizational change (Prince & Austin, 2001; Svihula & Austin, 2001).

Social service agencies are in transition from operating as public bureaucracies preoccupied with accounting for taxpayer funds to functioning as community-building institutions that provide leadership in partnership with others (Austin et al., 1999; Carnochan & Austin, 1999). The organizational changes involve the agency's mission, location of services, and the role of staff as highlighted below:

Nonprofits and Public Social Services

- First of all, welfare reform required a new operating philosophy and mission. The philosophy includes a social development approach to investing in community resource development in order to develop a career-resilient workforce able to move permanently from welfare to work and self-sufficiency. For example, new ways for social service agencies to invest in human resource development include helping the low-wage working poor learn new skills through specially developed community college programs or learning how to save by using individual development accounts. Modifying the mission statement also required confronting the tensions built into the welfare reform legislation where county social service agencies, as well as community nonprofits, struggled to deal with the short-term goals of reducing welfare caseloads and the long-term goals of preparing low-income program participants for self-sufficiency. Many feared that the legislation would simply relabel low-income welfare recipients with the term *working poor* and not substantially add to the resources or capabilities of the least advantaged in our society.
- Second, it required an expanded agency mission that creates a public forum and consciousness about promoting a civil society and open dialogue about future public policy directions. This change requires the social service agency to serve as a catalyst for private action to ensure that communities address the needs of its most disadvantaged members; for example, welfare reform in California (the federal TANF program is known as CalWORKS) called for needs assessment strategies to document and address local needs and community-wide meetings where much debate took place.
- Third, there needed to be a shift from a preoccupation with the individual to a focus on the family and neighborhood in the form of neighborhood-based family support services. For example, there were renewed efforts to explore ways to decentralize governmental services into neighborhood offices, often colocated with other nonprofit service providers, with renewed attention to such family support services as child care, transportation, and the promotion of affordable housing.
- And fourth, the transformation of the social service agency included changing roles for agency staff in order to acquire more community-building knowledge and skills, as well as actively transforming public social service agencies into learning organizations. For example, the increased flexibility in the use of federal and state funding has allowed local county social service agencies to develop new services with nonprofit organizations that more effectively meet the needs of the working poor.

In contrast to the public sector, the nonprofit sector continues to expand and is undergoing its own transformation. The pressures for change emanate from increased competition and government accountability. Nonprofit orga-

nizations are paying more attention to marketing, changing political environments, assessing the viability of collaborative programming, and strengthening internal operations. Funding for community-based services is increasingly attached to requirements for interdisciplinary and multiservice community programs. At the same time, the public social service agencies are seeking to decentralize their operations into neighborhood service centers. This adds to the pressure for nonprofits to co-locate their contracted services. All of these pressures have led to increased interest, especially among nonprofits and foundations, in mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures, and consolidation of "back-office functions" (management information systems, financial and human resource management, facilities management, etc.). All these changes produce an increasingly complex environment in which to manage community-based nonprofit organizations.

Up to this point, the context for the relationship between nonprofits and government has been described in terms of the expansion of privatization, the devolution of public policy authority, and the impact of welfare reform on both the public and private sector. These changes provide an important foundation for identifying the major lessons learned, during the past several decades, from service contracting.

FROM CONTRACTING TO PARTNERSHIP

The increased use of community-based nonprofits in the era of welfare reform provides an opportunity to assess lessons learned from past experiences with service contracting. The extensive literature in this area[1] identifies the increasing reliance of public social service agencies on nonprofit service providers. To date, the advantages appear to outweigh the disadvantages. The advantages for public social service agencies include the ability to (a) fulfill legislative mandates, (b) increase efficiency, (c) gain flexibility in service start-up and termination, and (d) improve service quality as nonprofits extend the public sector's service capacities and access to special services. Some of the disadvantages include (a) insufficient competition among nonprofit service providers, (b) difficulty in measuring performance and accountability, and (c) increased transaction costs related to human resources (contract monitors) and information systems. Some of these dilemmas have been addressed by extending the time and providing more information on costs and caseloads to respond adequately to bids, use of timely cost reimbursements and financial incentives, and providing assistance to nonprofits in adopting new management information systems and handling new fiscal requirements.

Service contracting also has significant advantages for nonprofits. They can gain increased financial resources and legitimacy that enhance their community reputation and increase access to other funding sources. Some of the disadvantages they experience include (a) unrealistic funding to cover actual costs and limited resources to address reporting demands, (b) increased

pressure to employ costly professional staff, and (c) providing contracted services that may not address current community needs or the agency's historical mission. Because of high start-up costs, unanticipated increases in service costs, and delays in contract reimbursements, nonprofits experience cash flow problems that contribute to staff turnover and the recruitment of less expensive staff. The successful strategies used by nonprofits to address these issues include (a) increased use of political advocacy to get their messages heard by public social service agencies as well as through community networks, (b) organizational restructuring to reduce overhead and administrative costs, and (c) entrepreneurial capacity building related to fund-raising, expanding board competencies and contacts, and using the technical assistance provided by local consulting organizations.

Despite all these factors, successful contracting seems to depend more on the quality of the long-term relationship between the partners than on technical performance issues. Yet, the relationships are negatively affected when public social service agencies do not have enough staff with experience in collaborative contract negotiations and/or monitoring. A similar negative impact results when nonprofits suffer from high staff turnover. Within the context of welfare reform, there is a growing interest among public agencies in facilitating ongoing partnerships with community-based nonprofits. This includes the public sector's provision or funding of technical assistance to nonprofits (Wynn, 2000) along with the use of multiyear funding contracts designed to address and stabilize the fiscal uncertainties experienced by nonprofits. Social service agencies have begun to define the select group of nonprofits as "core agencies" or "central" to the mission and operations of the public agency. The relationship is more of a partnership than a traditional "low-bid contract service provider." It is not clear how effectively these newly structured partnerships will be in addressing the shared goals of the collaborators. Further research is needed to assess these new collaborative relationships. Based on the work of Mattessich and Monsey (1992), the key research issues include the assessment of (a) the mission and goals of the partnership, (b) the nature of facilitated collaboration, (c) the managerial leadership requirements of all partners, (d) the time commitment to building trust and promoting participatory problem solving, (e) the multiple levels of staff involvement required, (f) the use of interagency work groups, (g) the conflict resolution processes, (h) the start-up funding required, and (i) the adequacy of financial and human resources to carry out collaborative partnerships.

FROM DEVOLUTION TO COMMUNITY BUILDING

In the context of devolving the implementation of welfare reform policy down to the lowest level of government, the issues in the preceding section reflect less of the old principal-agent dimensions of privatization (Fleisher, 1991; Oliver, 1988; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Reitan, 1998) and more of the community-building and networking dynamics of partnership development

(Alter & Hage, 1993; Bardach, 1998; Fleisher, 1991; Gray & Wood, 1991; Provan & Milward, 1995). The emphasis is less on "bricks and mortar" and more on expanding the social capital and human capital of the community.

With the growing shift to multiyear contracting with community-based organizations, public social service agencies are viewing themselves increasingly as "one agency among many" in a community (i.e., not the old dominating public bureaucracy). The contracting process appears to be increasingly directed toward providing needed services through nonprofits and strengthening the infrastructure of community-based organizations. The goal of the contracting relationship then becomes service provision *and* community building.

Weil (1996) defined community building as activities, practices, and policies that support and foster positive connections among individuals, groups, organizations, neighborhoods, and geographic and functional communities. This process definition suggests, for example, that county social service agencies need to orient their programs and operating style to make community partnerships central to their service delivery agenda. Kingsley, McNeely, and Gibson (1997) used community-building concepts of shared values, planning, and networking. These concepts can be applied to the changing partnership between nonprofits and public sector agencies in the context of welfare reform.

From the perspectives of Kingsley et al. (1997), strengthening the public-private partnership involves the reinforcement of shared values whereby trust building and interagency networking (building social capital) are complemented by staff learning new ways to communicate and collaborate over time (building human capital). This approach involves moving from the old "auditor" model of contract compliance activity to the new "partner" model of shared values, expectations, and outcomes. In addition, the partnership needs to reflect sufficiently broad participation by staff in both agencies (public and nonprofit) to foster a high level of ownership and self-reliance. This participation can be greatly enhanced when the partnership demonstrates the capacity to actively use and benefit from outside help (e.g., third party consultants brought in to address or help resolve difficult issues).

When placing the public-private partnership within the context of community building, it needs to take into account the role of planning, strategy development, and entrepreneurial processes. Kingsley et al. (1997) noted that successful community building includes comprehensive assessment and planning; strategic visioning related to opportunities and priorities; and the entrepreneurial approach to quickly creating results, however small, to build confidence and capacity. The assessment and planning involves the thorough documentation of the assets (skills and ideas) of the public and nonprofit agencies as well as the communities in which they are located. The strategic visioning is based on face-to-face interactions among staff members in both agencies in order to build trust and ongoing networks of collaboration. The entrepreneurial process involves identifying early successes ("picking the

low-hanging fruit") as well as annual service evaluation and contract monitoring.

And finally, Kingsley et al. (1997) noted that community building involves the expansion of partnerships into networks of collaboration with the goal of "consciously changing institutional barriers" through the use of organizational development and conflict resolution skills that address concrete outcomes. In essence, successful community building involves the use of outside help in order to continuously reflect on the unfolding process of partnership development as well as the recurring need to address small and large conflicts that are bound to emerge in the collaborative process.

There are multiple examples of community building emerging from the implementation of welfare reform (Austin, 2002). For example, when it comes to removing barriers to workforce participation, county social service agencies have contracted with nonprofits to provide transportation services for TANF participants and train them as drivers for future jobs in transit systems. In other situations, contracted services with nonprofits were contingent on co-locating nonprofit mental health services with the public TANF services to create one-stop neighborhood-based service centers. In another example, community building involved the collaboration of three public agencies (social services, mental health, and public housing) with a community non-profit to create wrap-around family services for formerly addicted TANF mothers and their children in housing on a former army base. In contrast to these service delivery examples, other community-building programs include a family loan program (involving local banks, a foundation, and a social service agency), an adopt-a-family program (to connect middle-class families with low-income families to provide support and community involvement), and a community hot line (managed by a nonprofit agency under contract with the public social service agency to assist current and former TANF participants with parenting, personal counseling, workplace issues, and access to community resources). Community building can also be found in the establishment of new organizational partnerships. Some examples include partnerships between public social service agencies and local community colleges for TANF job training, coalitions of nonprofit service providers with the support and involvement of the public social service agency, and the merger of county employment and social service agencies into a new integrated human services agency.

To link the *community-building* aspects of partnership development with *privatization* in the form of contracting and *devolution* in the form of transferring policy implementation downward, Figure 1 has been constructed to capture some of the forces (Factors A, B, and C) that reflect the interactions between these key dimensions. The forces of privatization (Factor A) continue to call for accountability with respect to the use of public funds and the need for carefully documented outcomes. These pressures affect community building in ways that call for increased understanding of different frames of reference used by the public sector contract monitor and the nonprofit sector
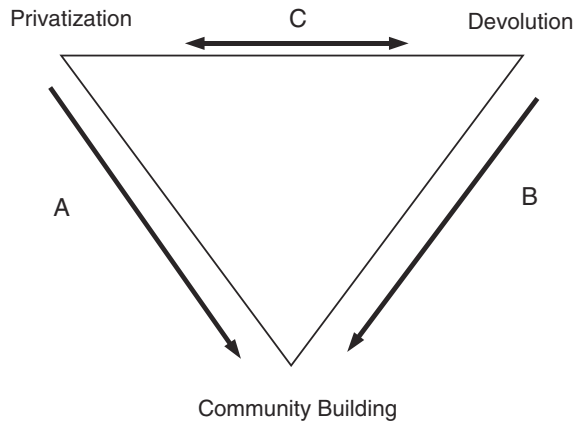
Figure 1.   Sociopolitical Forces Affecting the Relationship Between Nonprofits and the Public Sector

service provider. The forces of devolution (Factor B) involve the sharing of authority as public agencies seek to share the authority and responsibility for meeting the needs of TANF participants with their community-based service providers. Responsibility sharing also places unique pressures on community building, whereby working together requires increased investments in mechanisms that promote trust, collaboration, interdisciplinary understanding, and the centrality of empowering clients and communities to achieve self-sufficiency. And finally, the interaction between privatization and devolution (Factor C) suggests that there is a unique political and economic dynamic to service contracting. The challenge is to empower those closest to the problem (neighborhood-based service delivery) through the devolution of public policy authority and responsibility while, at the same time, addressing the accountability attributes of privatization. The liberal (empowerment) and conservative (accountability) philosophies underlying these two forces now need to be redirected away from the old "business as usual" approach (where there is a dominance of one philosophy over the other at different points in time) toward a new focus on community building. Because both philosophies include the shared goal of fostering self-sufficiency, the staff members who hold these views need to redirect their energies and creativity toward the goals of community building. This will clearly involve "new ways of doing business," especially when it comes to using outside third parties to facilitate team building, trust, organizational learning, and ongoing collaboration.

The discussion, up to this point, has focused on the changing nature of the relationship between nonprofits and public social service agencies within the

context of welfare reform. With this foundation, it is now possible to explore the implications of these changes and developments for future practice.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE IN NONPROFITS

Numerous practice implications flow out of this analysis. Issues of leadership, communications, problem solving, facilitating, and evaluating call for new or expanded skill sets on the part of existing line staff and managers. Some of the facilitating and problem-solving challenges could be addressed through the use of outside or third party technical assistance that respects the different ways in which nonprofits and public agencies might choose to foster "real collaboration."

Although focusing primarily on collaboration between nonprofits, La Piana (2001) noted that "real collaboration" needs to be distinguished from "marriages of convenience" if it is to (a) foster trusting relationships (often quite difficult to do in a frenetic service delivery environment where funding is at stake); (b) focus on substantive issues requiring extensive interaction and engagement, especially to manage conflicting points of view that may require painful processes to resolve; (c) emphasize the voluntary aspects of collaboration and reduce the coercive aspects associated with gaining or losing funding; and (d) promote a commitment to finding the time needed to nurture the collaborative process.

There are also skill sets needed by line and management staff. As Salamon (1995) has noted, managers of nonprofit organizations need to refine their skills related to marketing, personnel management, strategic management, and advocacy. Marketing refers to monitoring market trends, especially consumer demand and competition from other service providers, as they use "industry analyses" and market surveys to define and maintain a suitable market niche. Personnel management refers to the pressures of both controlling staff salaries as well as raising them, minimizing supervisory hierarchies to maintain solidarity with line staff, and maintaining the tradition of volunteerism, given the potential for tensions between paid staff and volunteers.

Strategic management in the nonprofit arena involves the challenge of maintaining "a distinctive sense of organizational mission" that binds all stakeholders together. The internal and external tensions need to be managed in such a way as to ensure that new resources/contracts do not distort the historical values and priorities of the organization. Salamon (1995) identified the need to preserve the advocacy role of nonprofits, especially their strength in serving as social critics of government policies and market sector forces, as well as innovative thinking in policy development. Becoming enmeshed in the marketplace and bottom-line considerations will make it difficult for managers of nonprofits to find the time and incentives for continued advocacy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

In contrast to the non-profit sector, the public sector social service agencies are also under immense pressure to upgrade and refine the skills of line staff, especially as they make the transition from bureaucratic eligibility determination to community-based employability assistance. Outreach to the business community requires new approaches to networking. Tracking information inside and outside the agency requires new skills in using information systems. Promoting the interests of program participants involves the new use of group work skills in forming job clubs as well as advocacy skills in the community. All these changes require staff to become more adept at managing change, becoming more self-reflective practitioners, engaging in interdisciplinary teams, helping to define realistic workloads, and participating in transforming the agency's bureaucratic culture into a learning organization.

The challenges for public social service managers are equally daunting. They include changing the culture of the agency from a "rule-bound" bureaucracy to a catalytic partner in collaboratively addressing the needs of the community. This can take the form of extensive community needs assessment activity using public forums and interagency task forces. It also involves the decentralization of services into neighborhood service centers, co-locating services with other service providers, and developing new partnerships. Internally, considerable attention needs to be given to restructuring the agency, such as integrating separate programs, while at the same time encouraging the decentralization of service delivery into the neighborhoods. Calling for increased teamwork is one thing, but actually restructuring the organization to foster interdisciplinary teamwork using matrix management strategies is something else. Similarly, it is also difficult to help staff increase their capacity to engage in data-based planning and evaluation when many service activities are new and require new skills. The shift in emphasis from counting clients to assessing service outcomes can be a major undertaking.

All of these managerial changes related to welfare reform also involve a process of redefining the relationships with nonprofit service providers. The transition involves the shift from the privatization perspective of seeking the highest quality services at the lowest price to the devolution perspective, where nonprofits are seen as partners in addressing community problems with the support of welfare reform public policy. The devolution process includes the expansion of contracts with long-term service providers based on their past efforts to successfully address the client needs of public social service agencies. To maintain their contract service provider status, smaller nonprofits are being pressured to either expand their infrastructure capabilities to monitor client information and program finances, merge with others to strengthen their managerial capacities, or go out of business.

The implementation of welfare-to-work programs refocuses the attention of public social service agency managers on the infrastructure problems of small nonprofits. Some examples include collaboration with other funders in

the community (e.g., United Way and local foundations) to compare notes on current funding levels and the potential for shared goals, as well as providing grants to nonprofits to address infrastructure needs including hardware, software, technical assistance, and training.

The managerial skills needed to address all these changes in the partnership between public and nonprofits organizations parallel those skills needed to transform the internal operations of the public agency as a result of welfare reform. These include enabling the partnerships to engage in data-based planning and evaluation with an emphasis on service outcomes, use of teamwork skills to problem solve in contrast to the old contracting relationship focused only on fiscal accountability, and engaging in more culturally competent cross-cultural communications. Given the pace and magnitude of change, little time has been devoted to educating each other about the different organizational cultures and capacities reflected in community-based nonprofits and county-based public social service agencies. The evolving partnership between public social service agencies and nonprofit service providers has begun to open the door to the use of technical assistance, either by the staff of the public social service agency or by third party consultants specializing in management assistance.

In reviewing the skills sets needed by the staff in public agencies and nonprofits, it is clear that they share the need for skill enhancement to maintain an effective partnership. The common skills needed include managing time for collaboration, using outside technical assistance, managing conflict, assessing service outcomes, fostering effective interagency communications, managing scarce fiscal and human resources, and enhancing the community-building process.

CONCLUSION

This journey through the land of changing relationships raises more questions than it answers. It is clear that the implementation of welfare reform in the United States has had a substantial impact on the role of nonprofit service providers as well as on their partners in the public social service agencies. The journey began with the realization among public social service agency directors that the extensive public policy changes related to the welfare-to-work programs required a new way of doing business. In the early days of implementation, it was not always clear what those new ways would be. The changing partnership needed to take into account the history of collaboration. As a result, our journey needed to include an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages during the past several decades of public-private collaboration. It is clear that future research questions and practice challenges need to be framed to help chart future directions. We need to expand our understanding of the partnership between nonprofits and public social service agencies in some of the following areas: (a) more research on the administrative

leadership needed to promote successful partnerships and the mutuality of the goal-setting and evaluation process; (b) more attention to staff training needed to promote successful collaborations, effective communications, and creative management of financial and human resources; and (c) more evaluation of the technical assistance processes used to assist nonprofits and public social service agencies in managing the complexities of their ongoing relationships.

The early returns of the evaluation of welfare reform implementation suggest a complex picture of implementation with implications for both public social service agencies and nonprofits. As Gais et al. (2001) have noted,

> The most striking findings from the early implementation of TANF are the size and scope of the opportunities and challenges, and the need for time and stability to allow states and localities to work them out. These systems cannot adapt well to instability with respect to money or policy. The administrative structures involved are complex, often involving hundreds, even thousands, of contracts, memoranda of understanding, and informal agreements among a wide variety of public and private agencies at all levels of government. . . . Making these systems work demands enormous investments in staff training, information systems, and contract negotiations, as well as informal adjustments and the building of trust among diverse state agencies, different levels of government, service providers, and community organizations. (p. 63)

The challenges ahead will require administrative creativity and perseverance. The leadership of both public social service agencies and community nonprofits will need to include individuals who have absorbed the institutional memory of welfare reform implementation. This memory will be needed to sustain relationships over time in order to maintain systems that truly address the needs of low-income TANF participants and those who have left the rolls but are still in need of assistance to achieve self-sufficiency. This is a major challenge for a society with a short "attention span" on the issues of poverty and a perpetual desire to move on to other problems confronting America and the world at large.

Note

1. Adams and Perlmutter (1995); E. R. Alexander (1995); J. Alexander (1999); Alliance for Redesigning Government (1997); Alperin (1992); Bartik (1995); Bernstein (1991); Brown, Pitt, and Hirota (1999); Craig, Klik, James, and Shamin (1998); Crittenden (2000); DeHoog (1984); Dina (1993); East Bay Management Assistance Partnership Project (2000); Eggers and Ng (1993); Ferris and Grady (1986); Golensky and DeRuiter (1999); Gooden (1998); Gronbjerg (1991, 1993); Gronbjerg, Chen, and Stagner (1995); Harlan and Saidel (1994); Hasenfeld (1983); Hess, Mintun, Moelhman, and Pitts (1992); Kettner and Martin (1994, 1996); Kohm, La Piana, Vergara-Lobo, and Gowdy (2000); Kramer (1994); Kramer and Grossman (1987); Kramer and Terrell (1984); La Piana

(1997); Liebschutz (1992); Light (2000); Lipsky and Smith (1989); Mann, McMillin, Rienzi, and Eviston (1995); Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations (2000); McMurtry, Netting, and Kettner (1991); National Commission for Employment Policy (1989); Nightingale and Pindus (1997); O'Brien and Collier (1991); Ostrander (1987); Peters and Masaoka (2000); Saidel (1991); Saidel and Harlan (1998); Salamon (1987, 1997); Sclar (2000); Scott and Meyer (1991); Singer and Yankey (1991); Smith (1989); Smith and Lipsky (1993); Sosin (1990); Stein (2000); Stone, Bigelow, and Crittenden (1999); Tuckman (1998); U.S. General Accounting Office (1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b); Wolch (1990); Wynn (2000); Yates (1997a, 1997b, 1997c).

References

Adams, C., & Perlmutter, P. (1995). Leadership in hard times: Are nonprofits well-served? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *24*(3), 253-262.

Alexander, E. R. (1995). *How organizations act together: Interorganizational coordination in theory and practice*. New York: Gordon and Breach.

Alexander, J. (1999). The impact of devolution on nonprofits: A multiphase study of social service organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *10*(1), 57-70.

Alliance for Redesigning Government. (1997). *Labor leaders voice reinvention goals*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Public Administration.

Alperin, D. (1992). Family service agencies: Responding to change in a conservative decade. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, *73*(1), 32-39.

Alter, C., & Hage, J. (1993). *Organizations working together*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Austin, M. J. (Ed.). (2002). *Innovative programs and practices emerging from the implementation of welfare reform*. Berkeley: University of California, School of Social Welfare, Bay Area Social Services Consortium.

Austin, M., Martin, M., Carnochan, S., Berrick, J. D., Goldberg, S., Kelley, J., & Weiss, B. (1999). Building a comprehensive agency-university partnership: The Bay Area Social Services Consortium. *Journal of Community Practice*, *6*(3), 89-106.

Bardach, E. (1998). *Getting agencies to work together: The practice and theory of managerial craftsmanship*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Bartik, T. (1995). *Using performance indicators to improve the effectiveness of welfare-to-work programs* (Upjohn Institute Staff Working Paper 95-36). Kalamazoo, MI: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Bernstein, S. (1991). *Managing contracted services in the nonprofit agency*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Brown, P., Pitt, J., & Hirota, J. (1999). *New approaches to technical assistance: The role of coach*. Chicago: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children.

Carnochan, S., & Austin, M. (1999). *Supporting low-income workers in the 21st century: An evolving BASSC vision statement*. Berkeley: University of California, School of Social Welfare, Bay Area Social Services Consortium.

Carnochan, S., & Austin, M. (2002). Implementing welfare reform and guiding organizational change. *Administration in Social Work*, *26*(1), 61-77.

Craig, C., Klik, T., James, T., & Shamim, N. (1998). *Blueprint for the privatization of child welfare*. Boston: Institute for Children.

Crittenden, W. (2000). Spinning straw into gold: The tenuous strategy, funding, and financial performance linkage. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *29*(1), 164-182.

DeHoog, R. H. (1984). *Contracting out for human services: Economic, political, and organizational perspectives*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Dina, R. P. (1993). Toward a new nonprofit structure: Lessons from the past. *Nonprofit World*, *11*(4), 37-41.

East Bay Management Assistance Partnership Project. (2000). *East Bay MAPP online*. Oakland, CA: Author.

Eggers, W., & Ng, R. (1993). *Social and health service privatization: A survey of county and state govern-ments*. Los Angeles, CA: Reason Foundation.

Ferris, J., & Grady, E. (1986). Contracting out: For what? With whom? *Public Administration Review, 46*(4), 332-344.

Fleisher, C. S. (1991). Using an agency-based approach to analyze collaborative federated interorganizational relationships. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 27*(1), 116-130.

Gais, T. L., Nathan, R. P., Lurie, I., & Kaplan, T. (2001). Implementation of the Personal Responsi-bility Act of 1996. In R. M. Blank & R. Haskins (Eds)., *The new world of welfare* (pp. 35-69). Wash-ington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Golensky, M., & DeRuiter, G. L. (1999). Merger as a strategic response to government contracting pressures: A case study. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership, 10*(2), 137-152.

Gooden, V. (1998). Contracting and negotiation: Effective practices of successful human service contract managers. *Public Administration Review, 58*(6), 499-509.

Gray, B., & Wood, D. J. (1991). Collaborative alliances: Moving from practice to theory. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 27*(1), 3-22.

Gronbjerg, K. (1991). Managing grants and contracts: The case of four nonprofit social service organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 20,* 5-24.

Gronbjerg, K. (1993). *Understanding nonprofit funding: Managing revenues in social services and com-munity development organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gronbjerg, K. A., Chen, T. H., & Stagner, M. W. (1995). Child welfare contracting: Market forces and leverage. *Social Service Review, 69,* 583-596.

Hagen, J. (1999). Public welfare and human services: New directions under TANF? *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 80*(1), 78-90.

Harlan, S., & Saidel, J. (1994). Board members influence on the government-nonprofit relation-ship. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 5,* 173-196.

Hasenfeld, Y. (1983). *Human service organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Hess, P., Mintun, G., Moelhman, A., & Pitts, G. (1992). The family connection center: An innova-tive visiting program. *Child Welfare League of America, 71*(1), 77-88.

Kaplan, T. (2000). Wisconsin Works. In S. Liebschutz (Ed.)., *Managing welfare reform in five states: The challenge of devolution* (pp. 103-121). New York: The Rockefeller Institute Press.

Kettner, P. M., & Martin, L. L. (1994). Purchase of service at 20: Are we using it well? *Public Welfare, 52,* 14-19.

Kettner, P. M., & Martin, L. L. (1996). The impact of declining resources and purchase of service contracting on private, nonprofit agencies. *Administration in Social Work, 20*(3), 21-38.

Kingsley, G. T., McNeely, J. B., & Gibson, J. O. (1997). *Community building: Coming of age*. Washing-ton, DC: The Urban Institute.

Kohm, A., La Piana, D., Vergara-Lobo, A., & Gowdy, H. (2000). *Strategic restructuring: Findings from a study of integrations and alliances among nonprofit social service and cultural organizations in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children and Strate-gic Solutions.

Kramer, R. (1994). Voluntary agencies and the contract culture: "Dream or nightmare." *Social Ser-vice Review, 68*(1), 33-60.

Kramer, R., & Grossman, B. (1987). Contracting for social services: Process management and resource dependencies. *Social Service Review, 61*(1), 32-55.

Kramer, R., & Terrell, P. (1984). *Social services contracting in the Bay Area*. Berkeley: University of California, Institute of Governmental Studies.

La Piana, D. (1997). *Beyond collaboration: Strategic restructuring of nonprofit organizations*. San Fran-cisco: The James Irvine Foundation and the National Center for Nonprofit Boards.

La Piana, D. (2001). *Real collaboration: A guide for grantmakers*. New York: Ford Foundation.

Liebschutz, S. (1992). Coping by nonprofit organizations during the Reagan years. *Nonprofit Man-agement and Leadership, 2*(4), 363-380.

Liebschutz, S. (Ed.). (2000). *Managing welfare reform in five states: The challenge of devolution*. New York: The Rockefeller Institute Press.

Nonprofits and Public Social Services

Light, P. (2000). *Making nonprofits work: A report on the tides of nonprofit management reform*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute and the Brookings Institution Press.

Lipsky, M., & Smith, S. R. (1989). Nonprofit organizations, government, and the welfare state. *Political Science Quarterly*, *104*(4), 625-648.

Lurie, I. (2001). Changing welfare offices, Policy Brief No. 9. In *Welfare reform and beyond*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Mann, E., McMillin, J., Rienzi, B., & Eviston, L. (1995). Implementation research on contracting for social services delivery: Testing some assumptions in a county substance abuse services program. *Public Administration Quarterly*, *18*(4), 383-415.

Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations. (2000). *Management innovation project technical assistance services*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

Mattessich, P. W., & Monsey, B. R. (1992). *Collaboration: What makes it work?* St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

McMurtry, S., Netting, F., & Kettner, P. (1991). How nonprofits adapt to a stringent environment. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, *1*, 235-252.

National Commission for Employment Policy. (1989). *The long term employment implications of privatization: Evidence from selected U.S. cities and counties*. Washington, DC: Author.

Nightingale, D., & Pindus, N. (1997). *Privatization of pubic social services*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

O'Brien, J., & Collier, P. (1991). Merger problems for human service agencies: A case study. *Administration in Social Work*, *15*(3), 19-31.

Oliver, C. (1988). The collective strategy framework: An application to competing preconditions of isomorphism. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *33*, 543-561.

Ostrander, S. (1987). Elite domination in private social agencies. In G. Domhoff & T. Dye (Eds.), *Power elites and organizations*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Peters, J. B., & Masaoka, J. (2000). A house divided: How nonprofits experience union drives. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *10*(3), 305-317.

Powell, W. W., & DiMaggio, P. J. (1991). *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Prince, J., & Austin, M. (2001). Innovative programs and practices emerging from the implementation of welfare reform. *Journal of Community Practice*, *9*(3), 1-14.

Provan, K. G., & Milward, H. B. (1995). A preliminary theory of inter-organizational network effectiveness: A comparative study of four community mental health systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *40*, 1-33.

Reitan, T. C. (1998). Theories of inter-organizational relations in the human services. *Social Service Review*, *9*, 285-309.

Saidel, J. (1991). Resource interdependence: The relationship between state agencies and nonprofit organizations. *Public Administration Review*, *51*(6), 543-553.

Saidel, J., & Harlan, S. (1998). Contracting and patterns of nonprofit governance. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *8*(3), 243-259.

Salamon, L. (1987). Partners in public service. In W. Powell (Ed.), *The nonprofit sector: A research handbook*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Salamon, L. (1995). *Partners in public service: Government-nonprofit relations in the modern welfare state*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Salamon, L. (1997). *Private action/public good: Maryland's nonprofit sector in a time of change*. Baltimore: Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations and Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies.

Sclar, E. (2000). *You don't always get what you pay for: The economics of privatization*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Scott, W., & Meyer, J. (1991). The organization of societal sectors: Propositions and early evidence. In W. Powell & P. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (pp. 108-140). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Singer, M., & Yankey, J. (1991). Organization metamorphosis: A study of eighteen nonprofit mergers, acquisitions and consolidations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, *1*(summer), 357-369.

Smith, S. (1989). The changing politics of child welfare services: New roles for the government and the nonprofit sectors. *Child Welfare*, *68*(3), 289-299.

Smith, S. R., & Lipsky, M. (1993). *Non-profits for hire: The welfare state in the age of contracting*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sosin, M. R. (1990, December). Decentralizing the social service system: A reassessment. *Social Service Review*, *64*(4), 617-636.

Stein, D. (2000). *Privatization of human services: Is it the best choice for children?*. Washington, DC: National Association of Child Advocates.

Stone, M. M., Bigelow, B., & Crittenden, W. (1999, July). Research on strategic management in nonprofit organizations: Synthesis, analysis, and future directions. *Administration & Society*, *31*(3), 378-423.

Svihula, J., & Austin, M. (2001). Fostering neighborhood involvement in workforce development: The Alameda County neighborhood jobs pilot initiative. *Journal of Community Practice*, *9*(3), 55-72.

Tuckman, H. P. (1998, Spring). Competition, commercialization, and the evolution of nonprofit organizational structures. *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management*, *17*(2), 175-194.

U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. (1996). *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996: Conference report to accompany HR 3734* (Rep. No. 104-725). 104th Cong., 2nd sess., July 30, 1996.

U.S. General Accounting Office. (1996). *Child support enforcement: Early results on comparability of privatized and public offices* (GAO/HEHS-97-4). Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. General Accounting Office. (1997a).*Managing for results: Analytic challenges in measuring performance* (GAOHEHS/GGD-97-138). Washington DC: Author.

U.S. General Accounting Office. (1997b). *Privatization: Lessons learned by state and local governments* (GAO/GGD-97-48). Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. General Accounting Office. (1998a). *Privatization: Questions state and local decision-makers used when considering privatization options* (GAO/GGD-98-87). Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. General Accounting Office. (1998b). *Social service privatization: Expansion poses challenges in ensuring accountability for program results* (report to the chairman, Subcommittee on Human Resources, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, House of Representatives GAO/HEHS-98-6). Washington, DC: Author.

Weil, M. O. (1996). Community building: Building community practice. *Social Work*, *41*(5), 481-499.

Wolch, J. (1990). *The shadow state: Government and voluntary sector in transition*. New York: Foundation Center.

Wynn, J. (2000). *The role of local intermediary organizations in the youth development field*. Chicago: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall for Children, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

Yates, J. (1997a). *Managing the contracting process for results in welfare reform*. Washington, DC: Welfare Information Network.

Yates, J. (1997b). *Performance management in human services*. Washington, DC: Welfare Information Network.

Yates, J. (1997c). Privatization and welfare reform. In *Issue Notes* (Vol. 1, pp. 1-3). Washington, DC: Welfare Information Network.

Michael J. Austin, Ph.D., is a professor of management and planning in the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley, and staff director of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium, an agency-university-foundation partnership in Northern California.

The Role of an Intermediary Organization in Promoting Research in Schools of Social Work: The Case of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium

Elizabeth K. Anthony and Michael J. Austin

The multifaceted role of research in social work education and practice requires innovation to respond to the broader mission of the university and the needs of the community. Building research capacity and supporting infrastructure for research thus demands new approaches to effective collaboration between stakeholders. Intermediary organizations such as the Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) respond to the directive to bridge research and practice in social service delivery. This article presents BASSC as an example of a modern intermediary organization, discussing in turn the development of the training, policy, and research agendas and the challenges associated with implementing and maintaining the collaboration. The article concludes with a discussion of the unique contribution of intermediary organizations such as BASSC to supporting the multifaceted roles of research in schools of social work.

KEY WORDS: *evidence-informed practice; intermediary organizations; mediating structures; research capacity; schools of social work*

Efforts to enhance the research capacity and infrastructure of schools of social work are linked to the research mission of the university as well as social work education and practice. Over the past decade there has been increased interest in connecting the evidence of service outcomes with the improvement or redefinition of practice. Evidence related to the design and outcomes of interventions seeks to validate existing interventions when appropriate, challenge and discourage ineffective interventions, and develop and test innovative approaches to service delivery.

Public and private universities and colleges are increasingly under scrutiny for their ability to remain relevant in a changing social, economic, and political climate. Challenges to the ivory tower reputation of the university and growing financial pressures urge university administrators to promote different approaches to traditional research. Responding to the research mission of the university thus requires a greater emphasis on community partners and collaborations that stretch faculty members to use new strategies to respond to changing community needs.

Social work research is often conducted in the interest of practice and yet a considerable divide exists between the research and practice communities. Agencies are increasingly at the mercy of funding sources and demands to demonstrate improved outcomes and yet capacity to measure progress varies from agency to agency. To complicate matters, the demands of daily practice do not lend themselves to addressing complex research questions that require immediate response. Certainly, the traditional research process does not proceed anywhere close to the fast pace of practice. In addition, dissemination and utilization of research that is most critical to practice often receives lower priority among researchers given the minimal rewards for work beyond peer-reviewed publications in the academic system (Shafer, 2006).

Innovative approaches to effective collaboration are needed to ensure that social work research is relevant to practice. Alongside efforts to increase

research infrastructure through federally funded institutes, effective partnerships with agencies enhance the research resources of schools of social work by diversifying funding sources and establishing relationships for shared research. Mediating structures, or intermediary organizations, can serve as models for facilitating collaborative relationships. Mediating structures or institutions can be viewed as platforms to bring together two or more sets of collaborators to address shared concerns to bridge the connections between research and practice as well as policy and practice (Austin et al., 1999).

Intermediary organizations have emerged in a variety of fields (for example, education; workforce development; and social services for children, youths, and families) to support individual and group empowerment and to avoid isolation so as to connect practice and policy (Wynn, 2000). Intermediary organizations may serve a variety of functions, including the following: engaging, convening, and supporting critical constituencies; promoting quality standards and accountability; brokering and leveraging resources; and promoting effective policies (Blank et al., 2003). Intermediary organizations further function as "change agents" to build capacity at individual, relational, and organizational levels (Lopez, Kreider, & Coffman, 2005).

Lavis (2006) suggested that intermediary groups may "work at the interface between researchers (that is, the producers of research evidence) and users of research evidence . . . to play critically important roles in knowledge translation, in addition to using research evidence to inform their own activities" (p. 37). In the United Kingdom and more recently in the United States, such groups have taken various forms. For example, both the Cochrane and the Campbell Collaborations operate as international nonprofit and independent organizations to promote the assessment and dissemination of research through the development of systematic reviews of health care and social service interventions, respectively. Now that a number of systematic reviews have been conducted, there is a growing interest in dissemination and utilization to make the reviews useful to practitioners and policymakers (Lavis, Davies, & Gruen, 2006).

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE BAY AREA SOCIAL SERVICES CONSORTIUM

The Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) represents an intermediary organization between universities, social service agencies, and foundations that is horizontal in its interorganizational relationships. Rather than brokering between the government and individuals, BASSC operates as a think tank that facilitates interaction between organizations with shared interests and diverse resources. As a result, BASSC is able to launch and sustain research, training, and policy projects that would be difficult for its members to accomplish on their own. A brief description of the history of BASSC frames the discussion of this unique intermediary organization.

A group of county social service directors in the San Francisco Bay Area met informally over lunch in the 1980s with the shared mission of improving policy and practice in the public sector. At the same time, Dean Harry Specht of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Social Welfare was reshaping the mission of the school to reflect a commitment to the public social services. Recognizing the need for collaboration, Dean Specht in 1987 facilitated a dialogue between agency administrators, university educators, and foundation representatives around the need for regional training programs. As a result of these early efforts to focus on in-service training for staff in public social service agencies, the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) was created in 1990 to address preservice social work education that was supported by foundation and federal training funds. CalSWEC is currently the nation's largest state coalition of social work educators and practitioners, serving California's 18 accredited graduate schools of social work in collaboration with county departments of social services and mental health as well as the California chapter of NASW and the California Department of Social Services.

In 1992, BASSC members began to define the role of the consortium as a think tank enabling initiatives in the three broad areas of training, research, and policy development. County human service directors, foundation representatives, and deans or directors of the graduate schools of social work began to meet bimonthly in day-long think tank sessions that provided the physical and mental space to discuss and strategize about pressing issues and possible responses. Over time, BASSC members have generated an array of approaches to some complex problems. For example, recognizing the need to recruit more women and minorities into senior management positions, BASSC developed a mul-

ticounty Executive Development Program (EDP) to foster talent from within the agencies. Promising upper and middle-management staff members participate in an innovative program that involves county directors as teaching faculty. The EDP is now 13 years old with more than 300 graduates.

In addition to addressing the pressing needs for senior management training, BASSC members pursued issues related to policy and research. BASSC's efforts in the policy arena reflect a commitment to analyzing current public policies, seeking alternatives to existing public policies, and deriving lessons learned from public policy implementation. The multiple challenges facing the county directors led to a continuous stream of BASSC policy reports as well as four policy groups composed of senior managers from each county that assist in policy development in the three primary service delivery areas of child welfare, adults and aging, and welfare-to-work. A fourth group, the Bay Area Human Resources Policy Group, emerged during the implementation of welfare reform from the concern around the retraining of staff (Farrar & Austin, 2007).

Alongside training and policy issues, BASSC members reflected a shared concern about the lack of in-house research capabilities in county social service agencies. As a result, BASSC launched the Research Response Team (RRT) in 1995 within the Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Social Welfare to respond to the research priorities of the county social service agencies.

BASSC currently consists of 11 Bay Area county human services agency directors (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, San Mateo, Solano, and Sonoma), five deans and directors of schools of social work (California State University, East Bay; California State University, Monterey Bay; San Francisco State University; San Jose State University; and University of California, Berkeley), and two foundation representatives (Van Loben Sels Rembe Rock Foundation and Zellerbach Family Foundation). In addition to the deans and directors and the principal investigator (PI), each year approximately three to five faculty members from the universities are involved as PIs, consultants, and collaborators on research projects. Finally, CSSR provides administrative oversight for BASSC and houses the research unit, which involves an additional five to six post doctoral-, doctoral-, and master's-level researchers each year.

Outcomes and Challenges of BASSC Research

The evolution of BASSC research can be captured in three major phases. During the first five years of the RRT, a series of county-specific exploratory studies was conducted in response to the priorities of individual BASSC counties. Early exploratory studies served the purpose of examining the complexities of county-specific issues in program development and service delivery. For example, one county conducted a homeless needs assessment and another examined service use and service needs among long-term Aid to Families with Dependent Children recipients. With the goal of increased collaboration and more rigorous research designs, the focus in the next five years shifted to multicounty exploratory studies of a shared topic such as the needs of foster children in public schools and child welfare and the courts. Multicounty studies acknowledged both the shared issues among urban and rural counties and the benefit of pooling resources to accomplish more together than was possible for any individual county. In addition to these obvious benefits, the research collaboration reinforced the think tank process of using research to identify the implications for modifying policy and practice.

An evaluation of the effect of BASSC exploratory research identified several factors related to the dissemination and utilization of research findings (Dal Santo, Goldberg, Choice, & Austin, 2002). First, staff involvement in the selection of the topic, collaboration on the scope of work, and involvement of an operational manager positively influenced research dissemination and utilization in the agencies. Second, the exploratory studies led to informed decision making, while also lowering the level of controversy around particular issues (for example, placing foster children with gay and lesbian parents). The integration of county staff into the BASSC research process was pivotal to promoting dissemination and utilization.

By continuing to respond to the changing needs of practice, the research focus shifted in 2004 to the pursuit of evidence for practice in the form of structured literature reviews on a variety of pertinent topics while maintaining integration of county staff. BASSC members found that many important research studies in the areas of child welfare and welfare-to-work programs were being conducted elsewhere in the country. Reports about these studies were piling up in the offices of
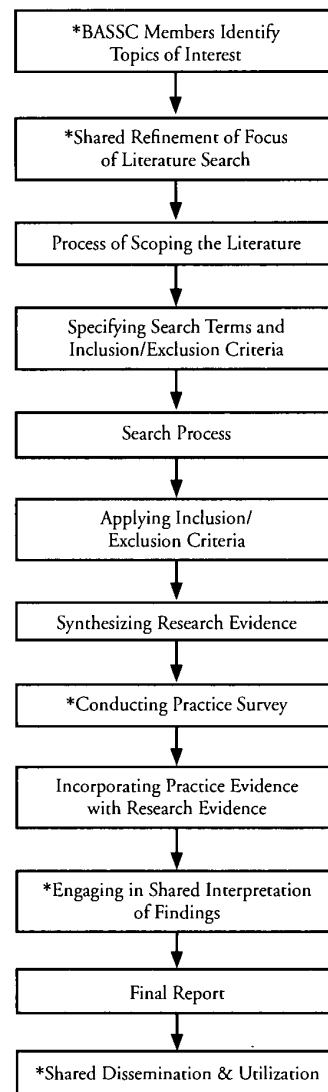
county directors, who had little time to read—let alone assess and disseminate—the findings and the implications. Rather than focusing efforts on small exploratory studies, BASSC members made the decision to annually examine the literature in three priority areas to identify implications for practice as well as dissemination and utilization. By maximizing agency resources for research, this approach allows agency directors to leverage money for research investigations on the basis of knowledge of the relevant literature and the areas for additional research. This shift in the research focus from exploratory studies to structured reviews of the literature led to an increased focus on evidence-informed practice at both the direct service and management levels of the organization.

The most significant difference in the research agenda for BASSC since 1995 is the increased focus on the dissemination and utilization of evidence for practice. A flowchart of BASSC's structured literature review process is provided in Figure 1. Unlike a narrative literature review, a structured review involves a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable process of obtaining and synthesizing empirical research. A structured review seeks to identify the "best evidence," a particular challenge in the child welfare field given the limited number of studies that have been based on randomized controlled trials. Clearly, funding for research in child welfare needs to be expanded to respond to the demands of evidence-based practice for rigorous methods (Austin, 2008).

Although researchers are skilled in the process of information gathering and synthesizing, BASSC recognizes the limited capacities of researchers to identify relevant implications for practice. Therefore, the research process includes consultation with practitioners to identify ways to integrate research findings into everyday practice. Research advisory groups composed of direct line workers and middle managers have been used by the BASSC research team to identify major implications, areas that needed further clarification, and suggestions for promoting dissemination and utilization.

Recognizing the increasingly demanding schedules of county representatives, the RRT began to use Web-based practice surveys on the basis of the process developed by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) (2004). A practice survey seeks to capture the perspectives of agency staff with respect to the issues identified in the literature review. Much

Figure 1: Flowchart of BASSC Structured Review Process

*BASSC Members Identify Topics of Interest

↓

*Shared Refinement of Focus of Literature Search

↓

Process of Scoping the Literature

↓

Specifying Search Terms and Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

↓

Search Process

↓

Applying Inclusion/ Exclusion Criteria

↓

Synthesizing Research Evidence

↓

*Conducting Practice Survey

↓

Incorporating Practice Evidence with Research Evidence

↓

*Engaging in Shared Interpretation of Findings

↓

Final Report

↓

*Shared Dissemination & Utilization

Note: BASSC = Bay Area Social Services Consortium. Asterisks denote shared activities between practitioners and researchers. Adapted from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (Coren & Fisher, 2006).

like the way that literature reviews are designed to synthesize current research, practice surveys seek to identify the views of practitioners related to current practice, customs, rationales for professional activity, information gaps in current practice, and gaps in the knowledge base of practice (SCIE, 2004). For example, the RRT recently conducted a Web-based

practice survey of Adult Protective Services staff and supervisors in 11 counties ($N = 90$) to obtain their perspective on items identified in a structured review of the literature related to elder abuse assessment tools. Depending on the nature of the research findings and questions identified by the literature review, other methods for gaining practitioners' views include focus groups and interviews with key informants. Findings from one or more of these methods are included with the literature review in the final report. In essence, the literature review seeks to capture the past, whereas the practitioner survey seeks to capture the present.

Dissemination and utilization have become the focal point of a growing initiative in the BASSC county human service agencies to promote the organizational changes needed to improve service delivery through the use of evidence-informed practice. Researchers publish online (http://www.bassc.net/) the lengthy full reports, which include detailed methodology and executive summaries, in addition to using traditional means of dissemination (for example, peer-reviewed journal publications and local, national, and international conferences). Agency directors and BASSC members share the executive summaries with colleagues and staff for the purpose of exploring implications and the potential for modifying current practices. Recently, the focus has been on transforming county human service agencies into learning organizations by using information from within the organization, such as administrative data, and information external to the organization, such as evidence for practice. Specifically, BASSC members are in the process of incorporating the principles of knowledge management into the process of promoting evidence-informed practice. Knowledge management seeks to capture tacit knowledge that exists in the minds of staff and explicit knowledge that has been captured and codified into manuals, procedures, and rules so that they can be disseminated (Nonaka, 1994).

A critical element of research dissemination is the organizational culture and its readiness and capacity to support evidence-informed practice. The challenge is to find ways to embed into practice the explicit knowledge derived from research with the tacit knowledge rooted in practice wisdom and experience. Knowledge management also requires increased collaboration between the knowledge producers in universities and knowledge users in agencies. As an intermediary organization between

universities, agencies, and foundations, BASSC and organizations like BASSC are ideally suited to help facilitate the transformation of public human services organizations from traditional bureaucracies to learning organizations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENHANCING SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

The current BASSC research and practice agenda reflects some of the advantages of an intermediary organization as it expands its regional platform for promoting change in the conduct of university research and agency practice. BASSC's ability to adapt as an intermediary organization requires considerable attention to the needs and resources of all members (university researchers, county directors, and foundation executives). As a result, it is important to reflect on the lessons learned over the past 12 years of collaborative research activity (funded by the 11 counties at $100,000 per year) and the implications for social work research and education.

As an intermediary organization, the BASSC influences research and practice by serving several distinct functions, including the following: enhancing research resources, using a network of relationships to promote creativity and innovation, and providing a regional forum to address statewide policy issues. By linking the existing resources within individual Bay Area counties, foundations, and universities, counties are able to combine their limited financial resources to conduct research that no individual county could afford to conduct on its own and to leverage for larger funds from other stakeholders. For example, alongside a BASSC structured review of the literature (Anthony, Vu, & Austin, 2008), a multicounty study was launched to investigate the characteristics and needs of children and caregivers in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (Speiglman, Bos, & Ortiz, 2007).

From the university perspective, research resources are enhanced by the relationships established by BASSC. Faculty members from participating universities engage in funded research activities that lead to scholarly productivity via peer-reviewed publications and opportunities for proposing larger studies with rigorous designs. Each year doctoral- and master's-level students are involved in the BASSC research studies as graduate research assistants, and their involvement exposes them to a unique research–policy–practice partnership that significantly complements their fieldwork and

course work experiences in addition to building publication records. Alongside the scholarly and academic rewards for funded research, faculty involvement also helps to bring practice issues into the classroom. This process can promote evidence-based curriculums related to current service delivery issues.

Another distinct function of BASSC is the use of a network to promote creativity and innovation. Like the pooling of financial resources, the think tank process brings together the intellectual resources, experiences, and values of its diverse membership drawn from the worlds of research and practice. Innovations that have emerged from think tank deliberations range from experimenting with new ways of delivering services (for example, welfare reform implementation), improving stakeholder communication with public officials (for example, redesign of child welfare services), and moving beyond the isolation associated with county-based social service delivery (for example, BASSC EDP) (Austin, 2004; Austin et al., 1999; DeMarco & Austin, 2002). Given the considerable influence of county-administered social services in California and the shared needs and interests of the social services community in the Bay Area region, BASSC plays a unique role in generating and sustaining creativity and innovation. As a network, BASSC encourages each constituent group to maximize its talents.

Finally, BASSC provides a regional platform to address statewide policy issues and to mobilize the resources of the members that exceed those of any individual. Since the beginning of BASSC, state and national policies have had a profound effect on the delivery of social services, and BASSC has served as a forum for assessing the implications of policy implementation. Although the Bay Area counties reflect different political climates and perspectives, BASSC members seek to find common ground on which to educate the public about major issues that affect services for children, adults, and families.

Modern intermediary organizations play a potentially important role in promoting the multifaceted role of social work research and enhancing research infrastructure. Stable support from the BASSC members for funded research activity enables faculty members and graduate students to conduct research that is relevant to daily practice and contributes to the growing knowledge base on public human services. In addition, county funds diversify the funding streams that schools of social work pursue

and can be used to leverage federal, state, and local stakeholders for funding.

The ability of intermediary organizations like BASSC to enhance research resources, promote creativity and innovation, and educate opinion leaders is critical to the sustainability of social work research. Ultimately, social work research seeks to improve practice through increasing knowledge about complex social problems and potential solutions. The growing interest and investment in evidence-informed practice by the social work profession suggests the need for innovative approaches to bridge the divide between research and practice. Intermediary organizations supported by schools of social work are a promising approach to engage in applied research that ensures the relevance of social work research in relationship to the changing needs of clients and practitioners. **SWR**

REFERENCES

Anthony, E. K., Vu, C. M., & Austin, M. J. (2008, March). TANF child-only cases: Identifying the characteristics and needs of children living in low-income families. *Journal of Children and Poverty, 14,* 1–20.

Austin, M. J. (Ed.) (2004). *Changing welfare services: Case studies of local welfare reform programs.* Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.

Austin, M. J. (2008). *Evidence for child welfare practice.* Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.

Austin, M. J., Martin, M., Carnochan, S., Goldberg, S., Berrick, J. D., Weiss, B., & Kelley, J. (1999). Building a comprehensive agency–university partnership: A case study of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium. *Journal of Community Practice, 6*(3), 89–106.

Blank, M. J., Brand, B., Deich, S., Kazis, R., Politz, B., & Trippe, S. (2003). *Local intermediary organizations: Connecting the dots for children, youth, and families.* Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.

Coren, E., & Fisher, M. (2006). *The conduct of systematic research reviews for SCIE knowledge reviews.* London: Social Care Institute for Excellence.

Dal Santo, T., Goldberg, S., Choice, P., & Austin, M. (2002). Exploratory research in public social service agencies: An assessment of dissemination and utilization. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 29*(4), 59–81.

DeMarco, A., & Austin, M. (2002). *Promising Bay Area practices for the redesign of child welfare services.* Berkeley: University of California, Center for Social Services Research.

Farrar, L., & Austin, M. (Eds.) (2007). *BASSC at 20.* Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, Bay Area Social Services Consortium.

Lavis, J. N. (2006). Research, public policymaking, and knowledge-translation processes: Canadian efforts to build bridges. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions, 26,* 37–45.

Lavis, J. N., Davies, H. T., & Gruen, R. L. (2006). Working within and beyond the Cochrane Collaboration to make systematic reviews more useful to healthcare managers and policy makers. *Healthcare Policy, 1*(2), 21–33.

Lopez, M. E., Kreider, H., & Coffman, J. (2005). Intermediary organization as capacity builders in

family educational involvement. *Urban Education, 40,* 78–105.

Nonaka, I. (1994). A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation. *Organization Science, 5,* 14–37.

Shafer, M. A. (2006, January 30–February 2). *The role of intermediary organizations and knowledge communities in bridging barriers.* Paper presented at the 86th American Meteorological Society Annual Meeting, Atlanta.

Social Care Institute for Excellence. (2004). *Guidelines for preparing a practice survey.* Retrieved August 14, 2008 from http://www.scie.org.uk/opportunities/commissions/files/appendix3.pdf

Speiglman, R., Bos, H., & Ortiz, L. (2007). *Child-only CalWORKs study report #1: When adults are left out: CalWORKs child-only cases in seven counties.* Oakland, CA: Speiglman Norris Associates and Berkeley Policy Associates.

Wynn, J. R. (2000). *The role of local intermediary organizations in the youth development field.* Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago.

Elizabeth K. Anthony, PhD, *is assistant professor, School of Social Work, Arizona State University;* **Michael J. Austin, PhD,** *is Milton and Florence Krenz Mack Distinguished Professor of Nonprofit Management, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley. Address correspondence to Elizabeth K. Anthony, Arizona State University, School of Social Work, 411 North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, AZ 85004; e-mail: elizabeth.anthony@asu.edu.*

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Building Organizational Supports for Research-Minded Practitioners

MICHAEL J. AUSTIN, TERESA S. DAL SANTO, and CHRIS LEE
Bay Area Social Services Consortium and School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, California, USA

One of the biggest challenges facing human service organizations is the proliferation of information from inside and outside the agency that needs to be managed if it is to be of use. The concepts of tacit and explicit knowledge can inform an approach to this challenge. Tacit knowledge is stored in the minds of practitioners (often called practice wisdom) and the explicit knowledge is often found in organizational procedure manuals and educational and training materials. Building on this perspective, this analysis provides a preliminary definition of research-minded practitioners by explicating the elements of curiosity, critical reflection, and critical thinking. The organizational implications of developing a cadre of research-minded practitioners include the commitment of top management to support "link officers", evidence request services, research and development units, and service standards. The challenges include the capacity to identify/support research-minded practitioners, promote an organizational culture of evidence-informed practice, redefine staff development and training, redefine job descriptions, and specify the nature of managerial leadership.

KEYWORDS   Curiosity, critical reflexion, critical thinking

INTRODUCTION

In the process of building knowledge sharing systems in local, public sector social service organizations, it has become increasing clear that more attention needs to be given to an array of organizational supports for practitioners as well as to the identification and nurturing of research-minded practitioners (Austin, Claassen, Vu, & Mizrahi, 2008). This analysis addresses this new challenge for senior management by describing the emerging organizational context for evidence-informed practice, an evolving definition of the critical elements of a research-minded practitioner, a beginning framework for conceptualizing relevant organizational supports, and case examples of organizational supports provided by national organizations in the United Kingdom. It concludes with an emerging set of lessons learned and questions to guide practice and future research.

Organizational Context

In this age of service accountability in the United States and United Kingdom, increased attention is being given to measuring and assessing outcomes. This development has placed new pressures on managers and practitioners to specify service objectives and invest time and resources in measuring the outcomes of these objectives. The efforts to establish, expand, update, and refine information systems have been at the heart of this recent development. While there has been considerable investment in this type of managerial infrastructure, there has been much less attention given to the presentation, dissemination, and utilization of the results coming out of these information systems. Monthly or quarterly reports on services have focused over time on outputs (e.g., how many clients served, etc.) and less on outcomes (e.g., level of change or improvement in client conditions). Even when outcome data is available, it is rarely presented in a form that practitioners can either understand or utilize to improve their practice.

At the same time that outcome measurement is being stressed, practitioners are being called upon to identify how evidence, either administrative data emerging from their agency information systems or evidence emerging from research centers, is being used to inform their practice. For some staff, the language of evidence-informed practice is viewed as another mandate from top management that needs to be accommodated. For others, the elements of evidence-informed practice have challenged them to look for new ways and promising practices that they might assess and incorporate into their own practice. In addition to these internal organizational dynamics, there is a growing interest (especially in the United Kingdom) to incorporate the voices of service users and carers into the process of promoting evidence-informed practice. All of these new developments are creating a new climate

in which to reassess organizational-staff relations as well as organizational-client relations.

One of the biggest challenges facing human service organizations is the proliferation of information from inside and outside the agency that needs to be managed if it is to be of use. The for-profit sector has the most experience in the area of knowledge management, and the applications of this experience to the public sector is captured in the concept of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer (Austin et al., 2008). The essential elements of knowledge sharing are the use of tacit and explicit knowledge; namely, the tacit knowledge stored in the minds of practitioners (often called practice wisdom) and the explicit knowledge reflected in organizational procedure manuals and the textbooks developed to prepare practitioners.

The concept of knowledge transfer relates to the substantial investment made by organizations in the on-the-job training of staff and the capacity to transfer new learning back to the workplace. Both of the processes of knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer rely upon the capacities of intermediary organizations (e.g., universities, institutes, consortia, etc.) or intermediary units within organizations (e.g., research, policy, evaluation staff, or link officers) to effectively disseminate knowledge and promote utilization (Anthony & Austin, 2008). In light of the challenges presented by knowledge management, it is clear that very few of them can take place until human service organizations adopt the principles of a learning organization and reflect them in their mission, future directions, and practices modeled by senior management (Austin & Hopkins, 2004).

Defining the Research-Minded Practitioner

The definition of the research-minded practitioner depends on who does the defining. If educators do the defining, it usually focuses on becoming knowledgeable research consumers (sometimes referred to as appraisal training in the contest of agency training programs) and/or becoming a beginning social science researcher. If practitioners do the defining, it often includes aspects of the following: (a) an essential practitioner attribute, (b) a capacity to critically reflect on practice to develop researchable questions, (c) a capacity to be informed by knowledge and research related to social work values, and (d) capacity to understand research designs and related methodologies in order to theorize about practice (Harrison & Humphreys, 1998).

The growth and support of a research-minded practitioner is often assumed to emerge as a result of attending research courses while pursuing professional education at the undergraduate and/or graduate level of a college or university where practitioners gain an overview of research methods and are encouraged to conduct research projects. However, given the fact that most research courses are taught without much attention to practice, many practitioners acquire either a limited appreciation of research

or a negative perception of its relevance to practice. As a result, it often falls to the workplace and on-the-job learning experiences for practitioners to begin to value the use of data and see the value of research within an organizational practice context.

An example of a career trajectory of a research-minded practitioner is presented in Appendix A. There are several important processes buried within such a trajectory, one of which is *curiosity or interest* in finding explanations to practice dilemmas:

> I increasingly found myself in a process of exploring research and think-ing about methodological issues that were interesting, stimulating, and empowering ... the movement from being concrete to identifying pat-terns that are informed by previous knowledge and theories were very enlightening ... my mind had been opened up and I was seeing practice and service delivery in a new light ... (R. MacRae, PhD, Research and Development Director, Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, personal communication, August 21, 2008)

Have a capacity to engage in *critical reflection* of one's practice also emerged as an important process:

> My feeling is that this intellectual work, required for evidence-informed practice can be very challenging for practitioners as it requires time and support to reflect and make judgments. Perhaps most challenging, the process raises questions about what you are doing and why (this uncertainty, in the first instance, can be quite overwhelming but it is part of the learning process that many practitioners are not exposed to) ... (R. MacRae, personal communication, August 21, 2008)

In line with critically reflecting on one's practice, having a capacity to engage in *critical thinking* about available knowledge usually reflected explicitly in the research literature is another important process for research-minded practice:

> Making the transition from viewing individual clients as unique to seeing common patterns in their behaviors and searching for similarities and differences and speculating on the reasons why these patterns occurred ... I was questioning pretty much everything and my efforts to chal-lenge common practices probably threatened some of my colleagues ... of course the relationship between evidence and practice is not straight forward and implementing research findings is most challenging. (R. MacRae, personal communication, August 21, 2008)

These three elements are the focus of the next section, and examined fur-ther especially in relationship to facilitating research-informed practice (see Figure 1).
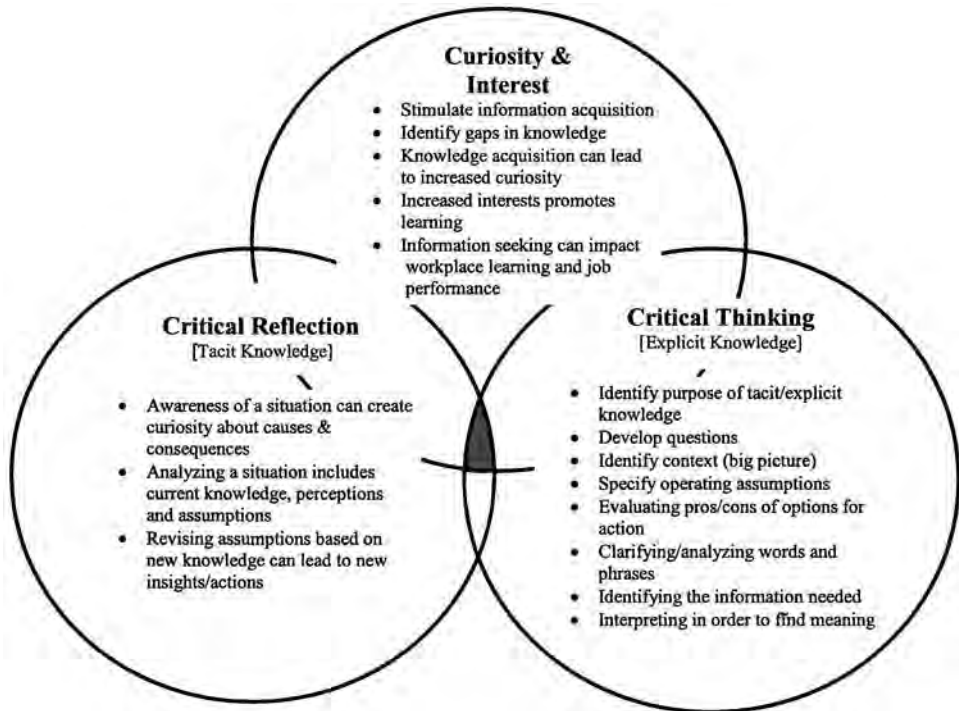
FIGURE 1 Key elements of the research minded.

EXPLORING CURIOSITY AND INTEREST

Curiosity is an approach-oriented motivational state associated with asking questions, examining/manipulating interesting images/objects, reading exhaustively, and/or persisting on challenging tasks. The function of curiosity is to learn, explore, and immerse oneself in an interesting topic/event. Curiosity also serves a broader function of building knowledge and competence.

In the process of defining curiosity, Kashdan and Silvia (2009) note that curiosity can include the recognition, pursuit, and intense desire to explore novel, challenging, and uncertain events. It is an innate characteristic of humans that varies in its level of intensity but is always present to some degree (Harvey, Novicevic, Leonard, & Payne, 2007). To truly appreciate the importance of curiosity in nearly every area of human activity, it is important to examine its fundamental attributes. According to Loewenstein (1994), curiosity is voluntary, intense, transient, immediate, stimulus-bound, and varying in satisfaction. It is caused when focusing on a gap in one's knowledge. Curiosity also can result from a motivation to increase one's competence related to mastering one's environment (Deci, 1975).

Over a century of psychological study has resulted in several different models of curiosity. Berlyne (1971; cited in Silvia, 2006, p. 33) proposed

that new, complex, and surprising things activate a reward system related to exploring novel things (externally stimulated) and identified four approaches to understanding curiosity: (a) *epistemic curiosity* (desire for knowledge), (b) *perceptual curiosity* (aroused by novel stimuli), (c) *specific curiosity* (desire for a particular piece of information), and (d) *diverse curiosity* (general seeking of stimulation). In Berlyne's research he identified situations that aroused curiosity as complex, novel, uncertain, and conflict-laden (Berlyne, 1954a cited in Silvia, 2006, p. 180).

Curiosity and interest have also been placed within the category of knowledge emotions (Keltner & Shiota, 2003) that are associated with learning and thinking as well as the building of knowledge, skills, relationships, and wellbeing (Kashdan & Steger, 2007). By connecting curiosity to interests, an appraisal model of curiosity can help to explain why people don't find the same things interesting, why interest changes dynamically over time, and why feelings of curiosity vary in response to similar events.

Kashdan, Rose, and Fincham (2004) further elaborated on curiosity as a knowledge emotion, proposing that curiosity is a "positive emotional-motivational system associated with the recognitions, pursuit, self-regulation of novel and challenging opportunities" (p. 291). This personal growth model of curiosity differs from motivation or cognitive models in that it assumes that curiosity stems from a person's interest in self-development. In this more recent area of research, Litman and Jimerson (2004) have proposed that individual differences in curiosity can reflect either curiosity as a feeling of interest or as a frustration about not knowing something. As an emotional-motivational state, curiosity is complex in that its arousal can involve positive feelings of interest associated with the anticipation of learning something new, as well as relatively unpleasant feelings of uncertainty due to a lack of knowledge (Litman & Jimerson, 2004). Curiosity is aroused by novel questions, complex ideas, ambiguous statements, and unsolved problems, all of which may point to a "gap" in one's knowledge and reveal a discrepancy between that which one knows and desires to know (Litman & Spielberger, 2003; Loewenstein, 1994). It has become increasingly clear that curiosity is influenced by both situation and disposition where situational interventions can stimulate a disposition to satisfy one's curiosity.

The model of situational and individual curiosity includes three types of curiosity: (a) individual interest is a *dispositional tendency* to be curious about a certain domain (individual differences in what people find interesting), (b) when someone with an individual interest encounters an activity relevant to the interest, *actualized interest* arises, and (c) *curiosity* is caused by external aspects of activities and objects that may involve complexity, novelty, uncertainty, conflict and/or inherently emotional content (Hidi, 1990; Hidi & Anderson, 1992; cited in Silvia, 2006, p. 184).

Lowenstein (1994) offers an intriguing theory of curiosity based on information theory. He proposes an information gap theory, which "views

curiosity as arising when attention becomes focused on a gap in one's knowledge'' (p. 86). Such information gaps produce the feeling of deprivation labeled curiosity. He notes, ''The curious individual is motivated to obtain the missing information needed to reduce or eliminate the feelings of deprivation'' (p. 87). Thereby, nurturing practitioners' curiosity may also facilitate the development of research-minded practice, with the following implications for the development of staff:

1. Curiosity requires a pre-existing knowledge base and the need to ''prime the pump'' to stimulate information acquisition in the initial absence of curiosity.
2. To stimulate curiosity, it is important to recognize/increase staff awareness of manageable gaps in their knowledge, helping staff ''know what they don't know.''
3. As staff gain knowledge in a particular area, they are not only likely to perceive gaps in their knowledge but those gaps will become smaller relative to what they already know. Staff members are likely to become progressively more curious about the topics that they know the most about.
4. The intriguing intersections of cognition and emotion suggest that interests promote learning (Schiefele, 1999; Son & Metcalf, 2000; cited in Silvia, 2006, p. 204).
5. Curiosity-induced behaviors such as information seeking can play a meaningful role in workplace learning as well as in job performance (Reio & Wiswell, 2000).

Ultimately, staff members who are curious are able to challenge their views of self, others, and the world around them as they seek out information, knowledge, and skills. This process can provide a pathway to the building of a meaningful work life that is supported by a focus on the present (mindful engagement, sense of meaningfulness) and the future (continuous search for meaning with minimal concern about obstacles).

CRITICAL REFLECTION

One of the specific contributions of workplace learning is the emphasis on informal and socially situated learning that focuses on the everyday ways that people learn within specific work situations (Argote, 2005; cited in Fook, 2008, p. 7). Hager (2004; cited in Fook, 2008, p. 8) argues that we need to view learning as a reflection process in which learners construct their learning in interaction with their environments. In this sense, reflection is more about the processes by which individuals think about their experience and learn about this in organizational context (Fook, 2008, p. 10). The process includes

the recapturing, noticing, and re-evaluating of their experience and "to work with their experiences to turn it into learning" (Boud et al., 1993, p. 9; cited in Fook, 2008, p. 24).

Reflection refers broadly to the intellectual and emotional processes by which individuals change their thinking in order to make meaning of and thus learn from experience (Fook, 2008, p. 33). This may involve many different activities and processes and many different changes in different types of knowledge. Reflection, therefore, can take many different forms, and be enacted in many different ways. According to Fook (2008), learning from experience is not prompted by the existence of experience per se, but by the disquiet or discomfort that some experiences entail and reflection is the key element in response to this disquiet. For example, reflection more specifically refers to the notion of discrepancies between professional practice as enacted and the need to expose the tacit assumptions inherent in enacted practice to resolve the discrepancies. Reflective practice therefore involves the unearthing of implicit assumptions by professionals in their own work.

While critical reflection refers to general thinking processes to make meaning from experience, there are several specific theories that differentiate those processes and changes. For example, "Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference . . . to make them more inclusive . . . and reflective as that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to take action" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7–8; cited in Fook, 2008, p. 35). Transformative learning is linked to critical reflection when it transforms "frames of reference within the scope of one's awareness through critical reflection on assumptions" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 190; cited in Fook, 2008, p. 35).

By recognizing and allowing the expression of the disquieted or emotional elements of professional practice, critical reflection may provide invaluable support in sustaining workers in difficult or anxiety-producing work situations. It also may assist in managing some of the organizational dynamics which are driven by emotions. For example, by understanding how power works (implicitly and explicitly) in an organization, critical reflection may help workers gain a sense of their own power and see different ways in which to create organizational changes (Fook, 2008, p. 39). For instance, critical reflection may be used as a form of dialogue which "involves learning how to learn from one's own experiences and learning how to learn from the experiences of others" (Schein, 1993, p. 82; cited in Fook, 2008, p. 40).

Critical reflection is a process which may be used to mine tacit knowledge and make tacit knowledge more assessable so it can be more organizationally acknowledged and changed. To quote Senge (1990, p. 12; cited in Fook, p. 40), "A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality and how they can change it." According to Fook (2008, p. 40) essential elements of the learning

process involve critical reflection processes that involve cognitive, emotional, and action elements throughout, and some of the following: (a) initial discrepant experience; (b) examination of discrepancy with regard to both past experiences and cultural contexts; (c) re-examination of past experiences/interpretations; (d) reconstruction of past and present experiences in this light; and (e) testing the resulting interpretations (in action).

Steps in the Critical Reflections Process

The reflective process includes several different stages or levels. Williams (2001) identified the following key stages: (a) awareness of an event or situation that creates puzzlement, surprise, or discomfort, (b) an analysis of the situation leads to an examination of current knowledge, perceptions, and assumptions, and (c) revised assumptions that lead to a new sense of balance.

Step #1: Creating awareness. Identifying the discomfort that some experiences entail is a key element of critical reflection. Reflective practice involves staff in exploring the implicit assumptions in their own work based on perceived discrepancies between a practitioner's beliefs, values, or assumptions and new information, knowledge, understanding, or insight. According to Stein (2000), the learning strategies designed to create awareness in individuals and work groups include dialogue journals (Kottkamp, 1990 and Meziro, 1990; both cited in Stein, 2000), diaries (Heath, 1998; Orem, 1997; both cited in Stein, 2000), action learning groups (Williamson, 1997, cited in Stein, 2000), autobiographical stories (Brookfield, 1995; cited in Stein, 2000), and sketching (Willis, 1999; cited in Stein, 2000).

Three additional techniques often used in critical reflection include critical incidents, diaries, and small group processes. Critical incidents are used in teaching critical reflection (Hunt, 1996; cited in Stein, 2000) as a way to critically examine one's beliefs and (Newman, 2000) positive or negative experiences. Creating a safe and structured climate can increase the willingness to share difficult experiences (Haddock, 1997; cited in Stein, 2000). Diary keeping or journaling involves recording events and reactions to events for later reflection (Heath, 1998; Mackintosh, 1998; Orem, 1997; and Williamson, 1997; all cited in Stein, 2000). The limitations of this approach may include the lack of writing skills and expressive skills, or the inability to confront comfortable assumptions (Heath, 1998; Orem, 1997; and Wellington, 1996; all cited in Stein, 2000). Using a small group process to share experiences, personal insights, and ideas among practitioners is another reflective strategy to develop ways of improving professional practice (Graham, 1995; cited in Stein, 2000). Using the concept of "externalization," Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995; cited in van Woerkom, 2004) place reflection in a process of social interaction between individuals devoted to the development of new explicit knowledge out of tacit knowledge.

Step #2: Analyses. Questioning is an essential component of critical reflection that is needed to make explicit assumptions explicit and to validate underlying premises. Brookfield (1988; cited in Clark, 2008) identified four processes for analyzing critical reflections:

- Assumption analysis—activity engaged in to bring awareness of beliefs, values, cultural practices, and social structures that regulate behavior in order to assess their impact on daily activities (making explicit the "taken-for-granted" notions of reality).
- Contextual awareness—identify how assumptions are created within specific historical and cultural contexts.
- Imaginative speculation—opportunities to challenge prevailing ways of knowing and acting by imagining alternative ways of thinking.
- Reflective skepticism—represents the combination of assumption analysis, contextual awareness, and imaginative speculation needed to question claims of universal truths or unexamined patterns of interaction.

Step #3: Action. The primary outcome of critical reflection is an increased ability to reflect and act on newly formed knowledge understandings based on reconstructing experiences in the light of new interpretations or areas for further elaboration (Stein, 2000). At the individual level, critical reflection can increase a practitioner's understanding of the need for change, the complexity of personal or interpersonal dynamics, and the prospects for future action by:

- Identifying and constructing shared meanings from critical reflection experiences.
- Identifying and developing ways in which this shared meaning can be supported at the colleague, group, and organizational levels.
- Identifying new ways to make tacit knowledge more explicit in the form of new organizational processes that link organizational learning with the development of a culture of learning that is essential for the growth of learning organizations.

Critical reflection provides an opportunity for managers and practitioners to learn from their own experiences as well as the experiences of others. Critical reflection contributes to a learning organization where staff can continuously discover how they create reality and how they can change it. Engaging colleagues in critical reflection allow practitioners and managers to examine differing views from their own. Understanding the views of practitioners is essential for building the trust that is critical for developing the creative tension need to encourage learning.

- When it comes to organizational supports for critical reflection, it is clear that management needs to provide a safe space where practitioners/

managers have the freedom to build their understanding of how their own experiences shape, and are shaped by, social conditions (Ecclestone, 1996; and Mackintosh, 1998; both cited in Stein, 2000). This process is based on the following assumptions:

- Power is both personal and organizational;
- Practitioners/managers participate in their own sense of being dominated;
- Organizational change is both personal and collective;
- Evidence is both empirical and constructed; and
- Dialogue and communication are essential in critical reflection.

In summary, with the appropriate organizational supports, the use of the steps in critical reflection (creating awareness, conducting analysis, and action) can lead to the following outcomes (Fook, 2008, p. 41):

- Increased understanding of the connections between individual and organizational identity (and ways of preserving individual integrity).
- Increased understanding of the need to acknowledge, express, and accept emotion in individual work and organizational dynamics, to both support workers and improve organizational processes and practices.
- Increased capacity to use an awareness of power (both personal and organizational) in helping staff to see different possibilities for change.
- Increased capacity to make sense of organizational issues.
- Increased capacity to "mine" the tacit knowledge (about both being and doing) related to individual and group/organizational practices in order to make these explicit and allow reformulation.

CRITICAL THINKING AND DECISION MAKING

Decision making is at the heart of social service practice (e.g., making and using client assessments for service planning and evaluation) (Gambrill, 2005). The quality of well-reasoned practice decisions depends precisely on the quality of the thought involved. If we want to think effectively, we need to understand the rudiments of a thought process (Elder & Paul, 2007). Several structures can be used to describe the critical thinking process. The eight-part structure developed by Elder and Paul (2007) is illustrated in Figure 1 and the process explained as follows:

> When we think, we think for a purpose within a point of view based on assumptions leading to implications and consequences. We use concepts, ideas, and theories to interpret data, facts and experiences in order to answer questions, solve problems, and resolve issues. These elements are interrelated. If you change your purpose or agenda, you change your questions and problems. If you change your questions and problems, you are forced to seek new information and data. (p. 5)

This eight-part structure (Elder & Paul, 2007) is used to outline the next sections and the outline is supplemented with material from Gambrill (2005, 2006).

Identify Fundamental Purpose

Several questions can be used to help determine the fundamental purpose of the social services practice decision. What exactly is the issue or pattern of behaviors that you want to understand or what data or information have you received or want to receive? What context can be used to clarify the issue (program changes or big picture concerns related to connecting personal trouble to social issues)? What am I trying to accomplish?

Develop Questions

A key step in critical thinking is translating practice and policy issues or concerns into specific, answerable questions and stating them as clearly and precisely as you can (Gambrill, 2006, p. 287). Different kinds of questions illicit different types of information and require different forms of analysis. Examples of different types of questions include the following (Gibb, 2003; Sacket et al., 1997; both cited in Gambill, 2006, p. 291): (a) For people recently exposed to a catastrophic event, what evidence exists to support brief psychological debriefing or doing nothing in order to avoid or minimize the likelihood of post-traumatic stress disorder? And (b) For adolescents in foster care, what is the evidence that early home visitation programs reduce the frequency of delinquency?

Experience may be a valuable source of ideas about what may be true, (Gambrill, 2006, p. 80). However, experience must be critically appraised using additional sources of information related to practice such as "what works, for what client, in what circumstances, and to what effect?" Are there other studies that support the findings? Do the findings apply across populations or only for certain populations? Also, some suggest that answerable questions need to be posed as part of critical thinking: (a) how can the population be described; (b) what interventions are relevant to address the need of the population; (c) how can the interventions be compared; and (d) what are the outcomes? (Sackett et al., 1997, 2000; as cited in Gambrill, 2005, p. 289). Gibbs (2003; cited in Gambrill 2005, p. 289) referred to these as COPES questions because they are client-oriented, have practical importance, can be used to search the literature, and can be used to identify outcomes.

Point of View

Critical thinking includes the search for the big picture to identify and make explicit underlying or opposing points of view (Gambrill, 2006, p. 30). In

everyday practice, it is often easy to forget about economic, political, and social context in which personal and social problems are defined (Gambrill, 2006, p. 31). Therefore, when thinking critically, it is important to clarify the influence of values and standards used in decision making. Values can be defined as the social principles, goals, or standards held by an individual, group, or society. Values reflect preferences regarding certain goals and how to attain them. They are used to support decisions at many different levels (Gambrill, 2006).

Problems are often socially constructed and defined differently at different times and receive more or less attention (Gambrill, 2006). In addition, resources available to address personal and social problems are related to larger structural variables (Gambrill, 2006). There are many organizational factors that influence a practitioner's decisions (e.g., large caseloads, lack of clear policy concerning priorities, contradictory demands from diverse sources, availability of resources, social and time pressures, perceived value of task, goals pursued, access to information, and agency culture) (Gambrill, 2006).

Operating Assumptions

An assumption is an assertion that we either believe to be true in spite of a lack of evidence of its truth or are willing to accept as true for purposes of debate or discussion (Gambrill, 2006). A recommended question for checking for assumptions is—What am I taking for granted?

Identification of bias is central to critically appraising the quality of research and decision making. Bias is a systematic "leaning to one side" that distorts the accuracy of thinking. For example, we tend to seek and overweigh evidence that supports our beliefs and ignore and under weigh contrary evidence (Nickerson, 1998; cited in Gambrill, 2006, p. 227) (i.e., we try to justify or confirm assumptions rather than to question them).

Oversimplifications can be based on biases about certain groups, individuals, or behaviors that influence our judgments (Gambrill, 2006). Generalizations influence what we do and what we believe. They are quick and easy and we do not have to think about all the ways in which a client, for example, may not fit pre-conceptions. However, if the degree of variability is underestimated, a chance is lost to identify clues about what a person is like or may do in certain situations. If we search only for evidence that supports a stereotype, we may miss more accurate alternative accounts (Gambrill, 2006).

Implications and Consequences

Different ways of defining problems have different consequences. Critical thinking requires an *evaluation of options*, taking into account the advan-

tages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting. What conse-quences are likely to follow from this or that decision?

Essential Concepts

Gambrill (2006) points out the importance of clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Practitioners use words to describe people and events, to describe relationships between behavior and events and to express evaluations, and language is used in posing and "thinking" about practice questions (p. 123). Language may compromise the quality of de-cisions through (a) carelessness, (b) lack of skill in writing and thinking, and (c) deliberate intent. Some common errors in clarifying and analyzing the meaning of words and phrases, include: (a) incorrectly applying labels, (b) assuming that a word has one meaning when words have different meanings in different contexts, and (c) using vague terms (p. 131). If terms are not clarified, different meanings may be derived.

What Information is Needed?

Observation is always selective and is influenced by our theories and related concepts. We are influenced by our own evolutionary history in how we see and react to the world as well as by the culture in which we have grown up. According to Gambrill (2006), we see what we expect to see. Therefore, we need to collect information carefully by asking such questions as:

- What data is most helpful in making evidence-informed decisions?
- How can such data be obtained?
- When has enough information been collected?
- How should contradictory data be handled?
- What criteria should be used to check the accuracy of data?
- How can inaccurate and incomplete accounts be avoided?
- Does the measure reflect the characteristic it is supposed to measure? (Gambrill 2006, p. 466)

What Does it Mean? Interpretation and Inference

Basic to deriving meaning is the critical discussion and testing of theories (eliminating errors through criticism). What is called scientific objectivity is simply the fact that no scientific theory is accepted as dogma, and that all the-ories are tentative and are continuously open to rational, critical discussion aimed at the elimination of errors (Popper, 1994, p. 160; cited in Gambrill, 2006, p. 103). Scientists are often wrong and find out that they are wrong by testing their predictions. In this way, better theories (those that can account for more findings) replace earlier ones. Unexamined speculation may result

in acceptance of incomplete or incorrect accounts of problems. Untested speculation can get in the way of translating problems into outcomes that, if achieved, would resolve problems (Gambrill, 2006). The kinds of inferences questioned in an evidence-informed assessment include the following: (a) frequency of a problem, (b) contextual factors, (c) accuracy of assessment measures, and (d) accuracy of different practice frameworks.

Additional analytic techniques that are used in critical thinking include: (a) identifying significant similarities and differences, (b) recognizing contradictions and inconsistencies, and (c) analyzing and evaluating arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories. Evaluating an argument is a classic critical thinking technique to understand a problem. An argument is a group of statements one or more of which (the premises) support or provide evidence for another (conclusion). An argument is aimed at suggesting the truth (or demonstrating the falsity) of a claim. A good argument offers reasons and evidence so that other people can make up their own minds. Argument is an essential form of inquiry. It provides a way to evaluate the accuracy of different views. Steps to analyze an incomplete argument include the following from (Nicerkson, 1986a, p. 87; cited in Gambrill, p. 74).

1. Identify the conclusion or key assertion,
2. List all the other explicit assertions that make up the argument as given,
3. Add any unstated assertions that are necessary to make the argument complete (Put them in parentheses to distinguish them from assertions that are explicit in the argument as given),
4. Order the premises (or supporting assertions) and conclusion (or key assertion) so as to show the structure of the argument.

In summary, critical thinking involves the careful examination and evaluation of beliefs, arguments, and actions by considering alternative views to arrive at well-reasoned decisions, for example, "paying attention to the process of how we think, not just the outcome" (Gambrill, 2005, p. 253).

In an effort to integrate all three elements of a research-minded practitioner, Figure 2 summarizes the elements and provides the conceptual foundation for the construction of training and course curricula.

DEFINING ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

The traditional forms of organizational supports are usually located in a range of professional development activities for practitioners. They include taking an educational leave to complete a degree program or a more time-limited certificate to workplace related activities that include learning from a performance evaluation, participating in induction or specialized training,
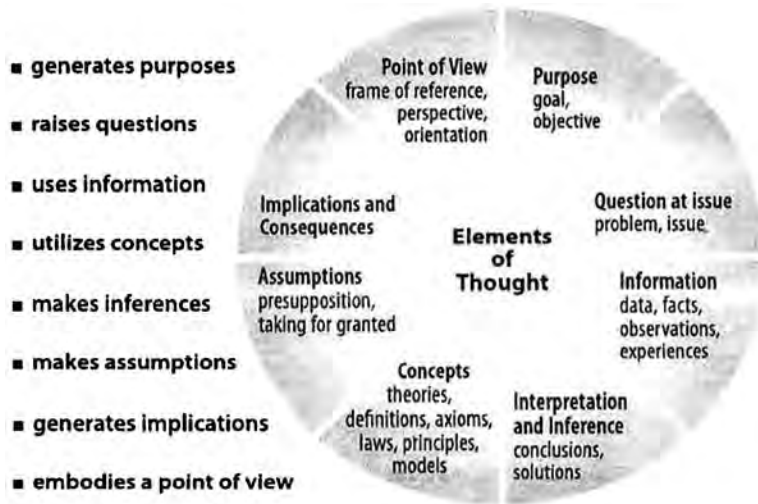
FIGURE 2 Eight basic structures of critical thinking (Elder & Paul, 2007).

effective supervision, and/or given a special assignment that involves new learning.

The newer forms of organizational support can be found in an array of examples from the United Kingdom where the implementation of evidence-informed practice has had a longer lifespan. The examples noted in this section include the role of top management, the use of link officers, the use of an evidence request service, the use of agency-based research and development units, the role of service standards (and accreditation), and the sharing/learning from other organizations.

Commitment of Top Management

Since the design and management of organizational support systems are often the responsibility of senior management, it is logical to start with the role of top management in supporting evidence-informed practice. According to Research in Practice (2006) in their publication entitled *Firm Foundations: A Practical Guide to Organizational Support for the Use of Evidence-informed Practice* (see Attachment 1 for abridged version), organizational support includes: (a) giving strategic leadership, (b) setting expectations, (c) supporting local research, (d) improving access to research, and (e) encourage learning from research. Setting directions and expectations involves bringing together and consulting with any staff interested in evidence-informed practice, often led by one or more senior staff members who can demonstrate how evidence-informed practice can be linked to both planning and review processes.

A second dimension of organizational support involves increasing staff competence related to evidence-informed practice through training and ongoing support. The support could include outcome measurement, opportunities to use data-based websites, leading focus groups with service users, and involving student interns. The roles of senior management related to research (modeling critical thinking, incorporating evidence into agency documents, and maintaining research partnerships with universities, institutes, and consultants) are identified in Appendix B.

Another approach for senior management is to identify the role of evidence-informed practice in the organization's mission statement. For example, Barnardo's in the United Kingdom has developed the following component for their agency's mission statement related to:

- Improving outcomes for children based evidence-informed decision-making: Service development and design are driven by evidence drawn from performance evaluation data derived from existing services and/or external research evidence.
- Practice decisions are based on the best available evidence (external research, views of service users, government service audits, program evaluations, and expertise of managers and practitioners).
- Practice is monitored, evaluated, and performance data generated to ensure that intended outcomes are being achieved and not causing harm.
- If staff is unsure about the effectiveness of an approach or intervention, pilot efforts are evaluated before full scale implementation.

While there are multiple staff barriers to achieving this mission (e.g., work pressures and lack of time, lack of research knowledge, lack of practical supports and resources, relevance of current research to practice, etc.), it is also recognized that senior management can help to address these barriers by:

- Demonstrating a clear commitment to the mission;
- Investing organizational resources in staff training and senior staff facilitation as well as Internet access;
- Build evidence-informed practice into ongoing organizational processes (e.g., supervision, team meetings, reading opportunities, Internet searching, etc.);
- Increasing communications devoted to sharing practice knowledge up and down as well as across the organization;
- Managing and sharing in-house (administrative) data and ensuring that information reaches the people who need it;
- Using evidence to inform (influence) public policy;
- Modeling reflective practice as an organizational norm by creating a learning organization that values curiosity, inquiry, and life-long learning; and

- Supporting communities of practice that bring practitioners in similar areas together on a regular basis to work on similar issues and share resources.

Link Officers

Another approach to creating organizational support for evidence-informed practice features the role and functions of staff members who serve as Link Officers (Research in Practice, 2006). The role can be carried out by a staff member or a group of staff working as part of a knowledge sharing team. While each organization can shape the role to meet its own needs, the link officer role often includes one or more of the following:

- Fostering relationships between agency and research organizations (e.g., universities);
- Helping staff use service evaluation research to improve services and outcomes;
- Identifying opportunities for special projects and partnerships;
- Contributing to the integration of evidence-informed practice in the agency;
- Participating in multi-county knowledge sharing projects when they benefit the agency;
- Coordinating learning events, disseminating materials, and encouraging the use of relevant websites.

The implementation of the link officer concept can include a wide variety of activities. If the role is shared with a group of key managers, it could include monthly meetings that involve: (a) sharing external reports with specific staff along with an overview of key findings and possible relevance for practice, (b) assessing the transfer of learning from various learning events, (c) sharing information on agency intranet site, (d) co-ordinating student research projects by including relevant staff members, (e) assisting staff with the conduct of small evaluation projects, (f) supporting staff with the presentation of in-house or outside research at staff meetings, (g) promoting research collaboration with local universities, (h) fostering greater service user involvement in evaluating services, (i) including content on evidence-informed practice in staff induction programs, and (j) promoting more staff training related to becoming a more research-minded practitioner.

Evidence Request Service

While senior management often has access to analysts or evaluators who have the skills and resources to engage in quick literature searches, this is often not the case for middle-management and line staff. It is clear that the research interests of top management are often different than those of line staff. As a result, the search for evidence is different. Senior management

tends to focus more on the issues facing populations being serviced (e.g., why are there so many children of color entering the child welfare system) while line staff tend to be more interested in learning about interventions or "what works" with specific types of clients.

One approach to address this dilemma is the development of an Evidence Request Service (ERS) by Barnardo's in the United Kingdom. Building upon the publications from a nationally funded project (What Works for Children, Economic and Social Research Council, 2001–2005), the ERS was launched in 2004 to improve staff access to relevant and reliable research evidence and to increase the use of research evidence in service planning and delivery. Based on specific requests from staff that are refined for data-based searching, the ERS operation (one full time researcher and an assistant) informs staff to existing research and information inside and outside the organization through the use of a comprehensive online search for the most rigorous and relevant research related to the topic under investigation. Staff members are then provided with a clear and easy-to-read summary (3–5 pages) that identifies some preliminary implications so that staff can meet to develop their own implications for practice. With a sufficiently refined search topic, the literature review summaries can be produced in up to eight weeks (at an average cost of $350 and an average time of 10.3 hours based on an hourly rate of $35 for skilled electronic database searcher, without costs associated with managing this service).

Some of the topics researched in the first several years of operation included:

- What is the best way to involve young fathers with children on the child protection register?
- What are the best counseling interventions for sexually abused children?
- What are the effects of abuse and neglect on brain functioning and cognitive development?
- What are the risk factors associated with sibling sexual abuse?
- What works with children of parents who abuse substances?
- What works in emergency and short-term foster placements?

Research and Development Unit

One of the most innovative forms of organizational support can be found in the local public social service agency in Helsinki, Finland. When staff members were unable to find relevant research related to their practice concerns, they needed a venue for engaging in small scale studies to build their own foundation for evidence-informed practice. When staff defined the research questions (in contract to those developed by academics, policy analysts, and/or senior management), a form of practice research was begun and needed a place to thrive. When the Helsinki department established an

agency-based Practice Research & Development Unit (R&D), it was created to help staff explore client and service delivery issues emerging from their practice.

The R&D Unit has several unique operating features: (a) staff can submit a plan for conducting a piece of exploratory research, provided that it relates to the strategic directions of the department, (b) if the topic is selected, they can be re-assigned to the R&D Unit for a period of time (a year or more) along with a small number of other staff working on different topics, (c) staff are supervised by a part-time researcher from the faculty of a local university social work department who rotate through the unit for a period of time (a year or more), (d) most approved research projects include multiple perspectives (staff, administration, service users, and faculty researchers), and (e) the research process includes weekly case presentations (internal staff or external experts), weekly journal clubs, involvement of students currently placed in the agency, and annual senior staff presentations. The outcomes of the R&D Unit include:

- Expanded number of research-minded practitioners;
- Increased faculty involvement in practice research;
- Increased agency capacity to identify and disseminate promising practices;
- Increased agency capacity to focus on service outcomes and improve service effectiveness;
- Increased opportunity to elicit service user perspectives;
- Expanded venue for agency–university collaborative research; and
- Enhanced in-house think tank capacity to engage in policy-relevant research.

Service Standards

As noted earlier, one of the strongest rationales for providing organizational support for evidence-informed practice can be found in the current pressure on social service agencies for increased accountability in the form of measuring outcomes. These new pressures often require a change in the culture of an organization that has been more concerned with serving as many clients as possible than with measuring service outcomes. As a result, senior management often finds itself searching for tools to use in communicating the importance of outcomes with staff. However, Research in Practice (UK) has developed a promising communications tool called Performance Pointers. These publications are designed for dissemination to staff and combine the following critical ingredients of outcome assessment:

- A full explanation of a service standard in terms of its policy origins and rationale (e.g., stability of placements of foster children in terms of

number of moves related to: (a) increasing choice of placements, (b) developing/supporting foster carers, (c) using multi-disciplinary treatments, (d) stabilizing placements of older children, and (e) stabilizing residential care);

- A synthesis of relevant research (selected, not comprehensive);
- An identification of promising practices related to the service standard (selected, not comprehensive);
- An identification of key questions for staff to explore in staff meetings; and
- A selected list of references for further inquiry.

LESSONS LEARNED: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Implications for Practice: Identifying the Research-Minded Practitioner

This analysis provides an opportunity to explore the processes needed to identify research-minded practitioners and the types of organizational supports needed to promote evidence-informed practice. As noted in Figure 2, the activities of a research-minded practitioner might include: the search for promising practices (curiosity) to address practice dilemmas, integrating critical reflection into one's daily practice, and regularly engaging in critical thinking about the available knowledge and research related to one's practice. One of the first steps toward identifying research-minded practitioners and enhancing their professional development may include consulting with staff to locate practitioners who display considerable curiosity about the services provided, critically reflect on their practice, and critically think about the impact of research on their practice. Supervisors and administrators are often in a position to identify critically thinking practitioners who use organizational data and knowledge to inform their practice as well as request or seek out specific research to increase their understanding of specific practice questions.

Conversely, senior level administrators may find less interest in research-mindedness where practitioners are resistant to learning how to use data, reading reports, or seeking out practice relevant research. It may be that the previous attempts of staff members to pursue their curiosities and interests were met with organizational challenges and barriers. In a similar way, the tools being used to convey knowledge and research may be incomprehensible and confusing for practitioners (e.g., complicated graphs and reports with little clarification).

Supporting research-minded practitioners, once identified, often requires the development of organizational supports to promote evidence-informed practice. These include focusing on staff and career development, revising

job definitions to include research learning, incorporating evidence into ongoing managerial decision-making, and creating a culture of curiosity. Developing a culture of curiosity within human service organizations may help bridge the link between organizational supports and nurturing the growth of research-minded practitioners.

Organizational Supports Promoting Evidence-Informed Practice

Culture of curiosity. The organizational culture of curiosity can be described in terms of goals, processes, and supports. The goals of such a culture could include efforts to create an organizational climate where there is room to be creative, where it is safe to question decisions and those in authority, and where there is a consistent message about pursuing new or better ways of doing business. The processes that would need to be visible in an organizational culture of curiosity include: (a) creating a sense of wonder about how things might be done better, (b) encouraging staff to ask why and to value the pursuit of more information, (c) encouraging the search for input from others at all levels of the organizations, and (d) clarifying boundaries for question-raising related to the rationale for work procedures and/or ways to improve them as they might relate to client outcomes. And finally, the organizational supports for a culture of curiosity might include: (a) increased recognition for those who develop new approaches, (b) encouragement of those who innovate by acknowledging their contributions, (c) increased attention to opening doors for staff to pursue ideas, and (d) providing resources for staff to search for alternatives and thereby cultivate individual and situational sources of curiosity.

Staff development and career development. The second crossover area between the research-minded practitioner and organizational supports relates to staff development in the form of learning/training events and career development in the form of project-based learning as noted in Appendix A. At least three core skills are needed to promote evidence-informed practice in an organizational environment of outcome assessment: (a) cultivating curiosity, (b) critical reflection, and (c) critical thinking. These three competency areas need to be reflected in all training programs and project learning opportunities, irrespective of their content.

Three primary connections need to be made in order to incorporate these areas into all practice learning opportunities. The first connection is between the *tacit knowledge* (stored in the head/experiences of all staff) and *the capacity to critically reflect* on their practice. Critical reflection capacities grow over time if they are nurtured and supported by peers, supervisors, and managers as part of life-long learning. The second connection is between *explicit knowledge* and *critical thinking*. Analyzing new social policies or recent research articles/reports involves critical thinking skills that are needed

for evidence-informed practice. While it is often assumed that these critical thinking skills are acquired in undergraduate and graduate programs, it is not clear that these skills are well developed and/or effectively transferred to the workplace. For many staff members, years of experience with trial and error efforts have contributed to their own skill development in critical thinking.

The third connection that needs far more attention in the workplace as well as on campus involves the *inter-relationship between practice skills and research skills*. Until staff and students fully recognize that engaging in practice is a form of research, it will be difficult to make this connection apparent to all. It means that practice and research need to be taught as two sides of the same coin and integrated on campus and in field work education. For example, efforts to assess client outcomes need to be integrated into all phases of case management practice. The challenges associated with this level of integration are beyond the scope of this analysis but call for considerable dialogue and creativity, especially since very few current training curricula, course outlines, or textbooks reflect this integration.

Job redefinition and research learning. In addition to the focus on a culture of curiosity, there are many implications for prioritizing organizational supports. For example, in the area of job descriptions, it is necessary to expand the definition of practice performed by line staff from worker–client facilitator and worker–supervisor facilitator to new collaborator roles "worker–evaluator" and "worker–policy analyst." The scope of practice needs to include the evaluator/researcher role as well as the policy practice role in order to help staff connect what they see in their caseloads with the broad policy dialogue about how policies need to be changed, enhanced, or created (Harris, Scott, & Skidmore, 2009). While some have noted that these multiple roles are part and parcel of generalist practice, they have rarely been integrated for students on campus or called for in agency practice.

Both agency senior management and university educators need to be able to articulate the theories of change that underlie practice and demonstrate how logic modeling can inform research on practice. In addition to educating knowledgeable research consumers on campus and in the agencies, practitioners need to be equipped and supported in the conduct of exploratory pilot studies of practice issues. This often requires an in-house research and development capability. In a similar way, senior management needs to find ways to support the career trajectories of their most research-minded practitioners through in-house research opportunities and outside learning opportunities at universities and elsewhere.

Managerial leadership and organizational support mechanisms. Organizational supports for evidence-informed practice need to be mainstreamed into ongoing managerial decision making (Reynolds, 1998). As noted in Table 1, systems of organizational support need to be built in the four areas of evidence requesting, evidence linking, evidence generating, and evidence

TABLE 1 Systems of Organizational Support for Evidence-informed Practice

	Practice wisdom (tacit knowledge)	Published research (explicit knowledge)
Evidence requesting	Survey promising practices	Search existing literature
Evidence linking	Convening staff to share	Routing and discussing relevant sources/citations
Evidence generating	Critical reflection for research questions	In-house research and development units (R&D)
Evidence monitoring	Case record review, case conferencing, and administrative after-action reviews	Administrative data and reports linked to national service standards

monitoring. Each of these can be described in terms of their relationship to tacit knowledge (practice wisdom) and explicit knowledge (published research).

First, evidence requesting involves the capacity to continuously scan the local, regional, national, and international environment for promising practice related to human service delivery. The same scanning is needed in the area of explicit knowledge through in-house and national databases, most frequently aided by experts in the field and on campuses. Second, evidence linking involves continuous efforts to convene staff to share in relationship to curiosity (e.g., raising questions), critical reflection (e.g., recent practice experiences), and critical thinking (e.g., issues raised in a Journal Club) as well as to learn from each other by the sharing of tacit knowledge and related practice wisdom. From the perspective of explicit knowledge, systems need to be created by senior management to enhance the routing, sharing, and discussing of relevant research publications, policy analyses, and other citations.

Third, the process of evidence generating involves efforts to support the translation of critical reflection questions emerging from staff into research questions to be addressed inside or outside the organization. In addition, the explicit knowledge generated by senior staff in the form of administrative data needs to be effectively disseminated in a form that all levels of staff can understand and ultimately utilize as part of service delivery decision making. Densely filled tables of numbers with little attention to the principles of effective dissemination and utilization are no longer effective evidence sharing activities.

Finally, the fourth dimension of organizational supports relates to evidence monitoring. The tacit knowledge dimensions of monitoring can be found in the processes of case record review, case conferencing, and after-action reviews where the tacit knowledge of staff can be shared, organized, and disseminated for future decision-making.

It is clear that developing a culture of curiosity involves special attention to staff/career development, job redefinition and research learning, and managerial leadership related to organizational support mechanisms. There are many challenges facing research-minded practitioners and senior managers engaged in creating organizational supports for evidence-informed practice. However, the opportunities to transform human service organizations into learning organizations that engage in data-based decision making at all levels are unlimited.

CONCLUSION

Evidence-informed practice continues to gain momentum as a framework for linking research and practice in human service organizations. Despite consistent offerings of research courses while preparing future social work practitioners during graduate school supplemented with much attention to evidence-based and evidence-informed practice in the field, integration of data and research into daily practice remains an elusive goal for human service organizations. Delving further into the mechanisms that may be influencing the integration (or lack) of evidence in practice, it is clear that many factors come into play. By nurturing aspects of curiosity, critical reflection, and critical thinking in front-line practitioners, those that are responsible for implementing evidence-informed practice may be more capable of seeking out, consuming, and applying the knowledge needed to support evidence-informed practice with clients. Simultaneously, putting in place organizational supports that promote the pursuit and application of information and knowledge is also needed for the research-minded practitioner to succeed. With administrators and managers leading the way, working to develop a culture of curiosity within their organizations, research-mindedness and evidence-informed practice can become the new norm needed to promote excellence in human service organizations.

REFERENCES

Anthony, E. K., & Austin, M. J. (2008). The role of an intermediary organization in promoting research in schools of social work: The case of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium. *Social Work Research*, *32*(4), 287–293.

Austin, M. J., Claassen, J. B., Vu, C. M., & Mizrahi, P. (2008). Knowledge management: Implications for the human services, *Journal of Evidence-based Social Work,* *5*(1), 361–389.

Austin, M. J., & Hopkins, K. (2004). *Supervision as collaboration in the human services: Building a learning culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Brechin, A. & Sidell, M. (2000). Ways of Knowing. In R. Gomm and C. Davies (Eds), *Using Evidence in Health and Social Care* (pp. 3–25). London, England: Sage Publications, Inc.

Clark, D. (2008). *Critical reflection*. Retrieved from http://nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/ahold/isd.html

Deci, E. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. New York, NY: Plenum.

Elder, L., & Paul, R. (2007). *The thinker's guide to analytic thinking*. The Foundation for Critical Thinking: Dillon Beach, CA. Retrieved from http://www.critical thinking.org/

Fook, J. (2008). Developing model(s) of critical reflection to contribute to organizational learning via case reviews in children's services: A scoping review of relevant concepts and frameworks. London: Social Care Institute for Excellence.

Gambrill, E. (2006). Evidence-based practice and policy: Choices ahead. *Research on Social Work Practice, 16*(3), 338–357.

Gambrill, E. (2005). *Critical thinking in clinical practice: Improving the quality of judgments and decisions*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley Sons, Inc.

Harris, J., Scott, S., & Skidmore, P. (2009). *Child sexual exploitation: A Barnardo's teaching case on the integration of practice, research, and policy*. Barkingside, UK: Barnardo's.

Harrison, C., & Humphreys, C. (1998). *Keeping research in mind*. London, England: Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work.

Harvey, M., Novicevic, M., Leonard, N., & Payne, D. (2007). The role of curiosity in global managers' decision-making. *The Journal of Leadership Studies, 13*(3), 43–58.

Kashdan, T., Rose, P., & Fincham, F. (2004). Curiosity and exploration: Facilitating positive subjective experiences and personal growth opportunities. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 82*(3), 291–305.

Kashdan, T., & Silvia, P. (2009). Curiosity and interest: The benefits of thriving on novelty and challenge. In S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of positive psychology* (2nd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Kashdan, T., & Steger, M. (2007). Curiosity and pathways to well-being and meaning in life: Traits, states, and everyday behaviors. *Motivation and Emotion, 31*, 159–173.

Keltner, D., & Shiota, M. (2003). New displays and new emotions: A commentary on Rozin and Cohen (2003). *Emotion, 3*(1), 86–91.

Lewis, J. (2002). The contribution of research findings to practice change. *Journal of Integrated Care, 10*(1), 9–12.

Litman, J., & Spielberger, C. (2003). Measuring epistemic curiosity and its diversive and specific components. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 80*(1), 75–86.

Litman, J., & Jimerson, T. (2004). The measurement of curiosity as a feeling of deprivation. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 82*(2), 147–157.

Loewenstein, G. (1994). The psychology of curiosity: A review and reinterpretation. *Psychological Bulletin, 116*(1), 75–98.

Newman, J. (2000, January). Action research: A brief overview. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 1*(1), Art. 17.

Reio, T., & Wiswell, A. (2000). Field investigation of the relationship among adult curiosity, workplace learning, and job performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 11*(1), 5–30.

Research in Practice. (2006). *Firm Foundations: A practical guide to organizational support for the use of evidence informed practice.* Dartington, UK: Research in Practice.

Reynolds, M. (1998). Reflection and critical reflection in management learning. *Management Learning, 29*(2), 183–200.

Silvia, P. J. (2006). *Exploring the psychology of interest.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Stein, D. (2000). *Teaching critical reflection: Myths and realities No. 7.* ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH. Retrieved from http://www.ericacve.org/fulltext.asp.

van Woerkom, M. (2004). The concept of critical reflection and its implications for human resource development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 6*(2), 178–192.

Williams, B. (2001). Developing critical reflection for professional practice through problem-based learning. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 34*(1), 27–34.

APPENDIX A: A CASE EXAMPLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS FOR ON-THE-JOB CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION*

1. Learning on the job following completion of professional education
   - Learning from other professionals through case conferences
   - Learning from a supervisor who encourages practitioners to be reflective about one's practice in order to identify future learning needs
   - Being given assistance in making conscious the impact of one's professional knowledge and practice experience on service users
   - Learning from other members of a service team
   - Being made aware of learning opportunities, formal and informal, that could be pursued or self-directed
2. Working in an organization that fosters learning by
   - Scheduling weekly staff development events in the form of an afternoon journal club, case discussion, in-house learning event, research presentation
   - Promoting links with local university research centers
   - Using case scenarios that simulate real cases and provide staff a safe place to unpack the service issues
   - Receiving special assignments to develop a program and search out resources electronically and through networks (small-scale literature reviews)
   - Receiving support for conducting a needs assessment related to a client population or participate in a program evaluation
   - Given opportunities to consult with researchers to find resources related to a client population

3. Providing support for pursuing further education (certificate or degree programs)
   - For example: "We were encouraged and coached to apply for a study fellowship through contacts with an academic researcher. I considered it because it was an exciting opportunity to work with researchers on a practice problem that I felt was important to our clients and for the opportunity to design a service that facilitated better client outcomes. Intellectually it was a huge opportunity and challenge as I increasingly found myself in a process of exploring research and thinking about methodological issues that were interesting, stimulating and empowering. I think it is interesting to reflect back on the links between my own intellectual curiosity, my practice concerns, the need for service design, my previous work experience, and exposure to critical and reflective thinking and the supportive organizational systems and structures. I'm not sure that if any of these elements were missing whether or not I would have found my way into the research arena. It was a very non-linear process that included a mix of several facilitative factors."
   - Reviewing literature fosters increased opportunities to reflect on one's own practice
   - The process of analyzing data in which one moves from concrete description to analysis of aggregated data can be challenging and provide for much learning
   - Making the transition from viewing individual clients as unique to seeing common patterns in their behaviors and searching for similarities and differences and speculating on the reasons why these patterns occurred.
   - For example: "This movement from the individual to the collective and the movement from being concrete to identifying patterns that are informed by previous knowledge and theories were very enlightening. My feeling is that this intellectual work, required for evidence-informed practice can be very challenging for practitioners as it requires time and support to reflect and make judgments. Perhaps most challenging, the process raises questions about what you are doing and why (this uncertainty, in the first instance, can be quite overwhelming but it is part of the learning process that many practitioners are not exposed to)."
   - Pursuing doctoral education does not mean a commitment to an academic career when there are numerous opportunities in an agency to promote evidence-informed practice
   - For example: "I was totally inspired by my academic supervisor but I never for a moment thought I would be able intellectually, practically or financially pursue a PhD. The issues of confidence and identity were pertinent here. In my mind at the time, someone who pursued a PhD was clever, had done well at the university, and was a good

student prior to university enrollment. When I got the "research bug," my mind had been opened up and I was seeing practice and service delivery in a new light. I was questioning pretty much everything and my efforts to challenge common practices probably threatened some of my colleagues. I wanted my work to impact on practice—directly and immediately—but of course the relationship between evidence and practice is not straight forward and implementing research findings is most challenging."

- For example: "After my PhD, which I found to the most stimulating and challenging of processes, I was driven to undertake research that had a relevance to and currency with practice. I took a job as a researcher in a social work research centre and worked there for 4 years as a contract researcher. However it continued to frustrate me that not enough of the research focused on practice. So when this position came up I saw it as a an opportunity to promote evidence-informed practice at strategic and operational levels by encouraging government to fund practitioners and managers to use research in a way that benefits their services and service users as well as expanding the use of technologies to increase access to knowledge and working with managers to see the value in it."

*Developed with the assistance of Dr. Rhoda MacRae, Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, Dundee, Scotland

APPENDIX B: ROLE OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN PROMOTING EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE (EiP)— BARNARDO'S NORTHERN IRELAND

1. Supporting and enabling critical thinking about practice and applying evidence to improve services for users
   - Exercises in critical thinking built into EiP training related to Research in Practice materials and searching electronic databases
   - Working with staff to define models of service user assessment and engagement
   - Evaluating services using surveys and focus groups of service users and service referral sources
   - Helping staff use appropriate research methods in evaluating service outcomes
   - Sharing logic modeling with staff
2. Generating and sharing evidence
   - Encouraging staff to write-up and share their evaluation results at conferences and online
   - Help staff prepare briefings for senior management and other staff
   - Encourage staff to participate in larger, multi-country studies

3. Modeling appropriate behaviors
   - Making sure that evidence is incorporated in annual reports, business plans, communication tools, and communications with funders
4. Creating strategic partnerships
   - Maintain relationships with other EiP organizations
   - Maintain university partnerships

APPENDIX C: FIRM FOUNDATIONS
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE USE OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE

1. USING RESEARCH EVIDENCE

What do we mean by research evidence?

Although few people would dispute that decision-making should be informed by the best available research evidence, there is still vigorous debate about what constitutes credible and robust research in the social science context. There has been much debate about the validity of different research methods—for example, the relative merits of studies based on experimental designs to determine the effect of an intervention (such as randomized control trials) versus studies using qualitative methods (concerned with people's experiences and opinions). It depends on the question you are seeking to answer as to which is the most valid or appropriate research method. But just as important as an appropriate research design is that the research has been soundly conducted so that the results are reliable.

How should research be used?

Research can be used in individual cases to inform the assessment or planning of services for children, young people and their families. It can also be used more strategically to inform policy, procedures and service developments. The ways in which research is used can be challenging because:

- The nature of research in social care is that it is often more about increasing background understanding, giving insights into the nature of problems, changing attitudes and beliefs, and generating ideas, rather than prescribing action. Child welfare research rarely provides strong, directive evidence or definitive answers that signpost what to do.
- Research findings cannot just simply be taken at face value and applied to any situation. Messages must be assessed for their relevance and transferability to the local context and circumstances (which might be a complex family situation with ill-defined, contradictory or competing goals and multiple stakeholders).

- Practitioners are not passive recipients of research. They have to make sense of research by reconstructing or synthesizing it with other sources of knowledge (such as professional experience and the views of service users).
- Research must also be melded with other (sometimes conflicting) factors that influence decisions about the way forward (such as the resources available or the risks involved).

According to Brechin and Sidell (2000), social care practitioners are likely to draw on 'different ways of knowing, moving in and out of them seamlessly or engaging in them simultaneously.' Such 'ways of knowing' include empirical knowing (where a practitioner uses research evidence), theoretical knowing (where a practitioner recognizes different ways of approaching a problem), and experiential knowing (a tacit knowledge based upon years of experience). All three are useful 'evidence' when reaching a decision.

So, research evidence should not (and cannot) drive decisions. Rather, the practitioner goes through a considered and thoughtful process where a range of factors (including research) influence the judgment or proposal made. It is this thoughtful process that we call evidence-informed practice (EIP). The evidence-informed practitioner carefully considers what research evidence tells them in the context of a particular child, family or service, and then weighs this up alongside knowledge drawn from professional experience and the views of service users to inform decisions about the way forward.

evidence-informed practice = research evidence

+ practice wisdom + user views

Evidence-informed practitioners: Adapted from Lewis (2002)

- ask challenging questions about current practice
- know where and how to find relevant research
- are aware of research about what is likely to improve outcomes for children and families
- consider the implications of research in different case contexts
- reflect on their experiences in order to learn
- measure the impact their work is having for users
- listen to what users have to say about services
- are explicit about how research, experience and user views have informed their conclusions, proposals and decisions
- share their knowledge and best practice with others.

It is because research evidence is just ONE of the factors that needs to influence practitioners' decisions and judgments that we think the term 'evidence-

informed practice' is much more appropriate than the more commonly encountered phrase 'evidence-based practice.'

Why using research is important

Social service staff members make significant interventions in the lives of children, young people and families, with possibly far-reaching and permanent consequences. It is the responsibility of professionals to do so only on the basis of the best available evidence of what is likely to help. Otherwise, their actions become nothing more than experiments in helping (and worse, may actually do some significant harm). It is not enough to mean well. Making proper, transparent use of the research evidence base will improve the likelihood of positive outcomes for children and families.

Every child has the right to expect that anyone involved in practice decisions about them and their family knows what is most likely to work—thereby increasing the likelihood of achieving positive results, and also making sure that time and money is not wasted on things that have little, no, or even a negative effect.

Are there other benefits to using research?

Apart from the obvious gain of better outcomes for service users (as discussed above), practitioners have also reported that making greater use of research evidence:

- makes work more rewarding by delivering better results and experiences for service users
- enables us to articulate why we think a particular course of action will produce effective outcomes
- helps us to explain to service users the rationale for our decisions and actions
- encourages a reflective and learning culture that prepares us to meet the challenge of the Every Child Matters change agenda
- ensures our precious time and resources aren't wasted on things that are less likely to work
- is a source of new ideas and innovation, which is motivating
- gives us a sense of professional confidence and identity
- provides a theoretical framework for our practice.

WHY IS ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT SO IMPORTANT?

Getting research into the bloodstream

Spreading the use of research into routine, mainstream practice requires your agency to take purposeful action to overcome barriers, create incentives and

make it easier for people to use research. This is what we mean by providing organizational support for evidence-informed practice.

Your agency will have a number of individuals (or maybe whole teams) who are research-minded. You can probably think of several staff members who are:

- committed to making sure they keep up-to-date with research in their field
- feel confident about their knowledge base actually use research to guide their decisions and explain their rationale.

The problem is that these committed enthusiasts are probably in rather isolated pockets around your agency.

For example, they will need:

- access to good-quality research (through journals, libraries, the internet or a budget to purchase materials)
- forums to discuss research with the authors themselves, and with their colleagues to debate the practice implications
- opportunities to develop their skills in finding and understanding research; the space to think about how research fits with their existing knowledge
- an expectation and encouragement from their managers to work in this way.

These facilities and opportunities depend on action being taken on an agency-wide basis, rather than by individuals or teams.

Research about how to achieve changes in any sort of behavior suggests that success depends upon people:

- knowing what they are expected to do **(what)**
- being committed to it **(why)**
- being enabled to do what's expected **(how)**.

Dissemination of research is clearly an important enabling action, but it's only one of the things staff need to help them do what's expected of them. And of course, focusing on dissemination alone fails to address both the 'what' (setting clear expectations) and the 'why' (winning hearts and minds).

What sort of organizational support is important?

The evidence indicates that these are the key ingredients of effective organizational support:

- senior leadership that clearly signals the importance of research as a source for new ideas, 'sells' the benefits and models EIP personally
- strategic oversight and effective co-ordination of efforts to take EIP forward
- credible 'champions' who act as catalysts in promoting integration of research into practice
- clear expectations about research knowledge and its use in job descriptions
- procedures which embed the use of research in working practices
- incentives to work in an evidence-informed way and to try new approaches
- a culture that rewards constructive challenge and values research-informed behaviors and decisions
- opportunities for reflection and to look for and read research
- adequate training to develop skills in finding research, reading it critically and applying the messages
- easy access to digestible research to promote and research literacy and awareness
- information and research support staff to offer expertise in finding, interpreting and using research
- time with researchers and colleagues to consider together the practice implications of research findings
- a local program of research studies, routine service evaluation and systematic consultation with users.

The five key foundations of organizational support

It's clear from the list above that a number of elements need to be in place to create the right infrastructure and climate for evidence-informed practice to thrive in your agency. As noted in Figure C1, we have crystallized into five key foundations the support that organizations need to put in place.
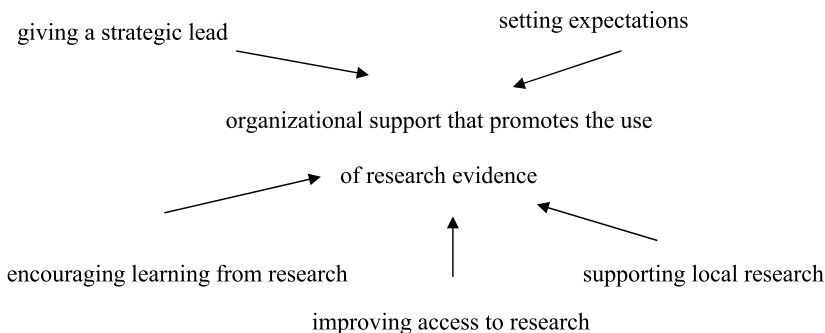
FIGURE C.1 Five key foundations of organizational support.

2. GETTING STARTED

How to use the organizational support audit tool

The self-assessment exercise has five sections—one for each of the key foundations of support described above—but it's not a test! Instead, think of it as a helpful tool that prompts you to stand back and reflect critically on what's going well, and what isn't.

We recommend that a group of people complete the self-assessment together, rather than one person doing it alone. This way, you are more likely to get a balanced view of the current state of support for EIP, gather a richer mix of ideas for improvement and start to build some ownership of the need for action. You might want to use an existing forum (such as a practice development group or research committee) or you might need to convene a special group. The group will probably need to meet twice—once to kick-off the audit, and once to share and discuss the results. In either case, make sure the group has cross-agency representation. It's important that you capture the perspectives of staff:

- who work in a range of children's services
- from different professional disciplines (e.g., social work, education, health)
- in front-line, higher and management grades
- in strategy and planning roles
- in support functions (like personnel, information and performance).

If these perspectives are not represented in the group, you may need to do some consultation as part of the audit process to make sure you build a balanced picture of what's going on. You might also like to think of inviting someone from outside your agency to offer an independent perspective and some new ideas perhaps a contact at your local university, or a colleague from another agency.

The group might want to work through the audit together, or you could allocate each section to one or more people to complete separately and report back. Encourage participants to do some digging to answer the questions. For example, consult some colleagues about internet access, or check out the current status of your research program.

For example, in the Organizational Support Audit (Figure C.2) you are asked to score each aspect of support using a four-point scale. The score you give should reflect not only how good your approach is, but also how consistently it is applied. In order to score '4,' your approach should be sound and applied widely across the organization (rather than being isolated in pockets of good practice). Are there particular services or staff groups

A. Giving a strategic lead

	1	2	3	4
1. There is a senior manager and steering group clearly responsible for supporting the development of EIP	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. There has been a debate about what evidence-informed practice means in reality, and a shared vision documented	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. There is a published action plan that sets out what steps will be taken to encourage greater use of research	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Practice development posts (e.g., senior SWs) are used to promote learning from research, consultation & evaluation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The extent to which research actually informs policy and practice decisions is monitored and formally measured	☐	☐	☐	☐

Key strengths	Key areas of improvement

B. Setting expectations

	1	2	3	4
1. Job descriptions, competencies & progression criteria state what is expected of staff in terms of research awareness & use	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Practitioners are expected to record how research evidence and user views have informed their assessments and plans	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Service strategies & plans are required to demonstrate how they've been shaped by research evidence & user consultation	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Managers understand their role to develop a research-minded culture and how to model EIP themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. There are incentives to work in an evidence-informed way and mechanisms to recognize and reward achievements	☐	☐	☐	☐

Key strengths	Key areas of improvement

FIGURE C.2 Organizational support audit. (*continued*)

where support for research use is stronger or weaker? If so, record them. The audit works best if you record the reasoning behind your scores (why you gave that rating) so that when you come to debate the results, you can more easily reach a consensus. However you choose to do it, make sure the group reviews the results together and agrees a consensus score for each question. But remember the discussion is more valuable than getting unanimous agreement about the final score. Use the chart in Figure C2 to plot your agreed results.

3. GIVING A STRATEGIC LEAD

Nominating a senior leader

- developing a vision of evidence-informed practice and communicating it
- giving strategic direction about how to get there
- bidding for any additional resources that might be needed

C. Encouraging learning from research

	1	2	3	4
1. In-house events for staff are often used to raise their research awareness & keep them abreast of developments	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Supervision & annual personal reviews are used to develop reflection & professional research-based knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. There are many examples of innovations, pilots and trials of new models & services which are formally evaluated	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. The research expertise, events and resources of partners, universities and professional bodies are fully exploited	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. There are regular opportunities to share professional expertise and good practice between teams	☐	☐	☐	☐

Key strengths	Key areas of improvement

D. Improving access to research

	1	2	3	4
1. Training and professional help is available on where to look for research and on getting, understanding & applying it	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. A library of agreed key research publications (e.g. journals, reports, bulletins, books) is available at each worksite	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. All managers and practitioners have access to the internet at work at a time and location convenient to them	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. There is a managed process for disseminating to target staff any new research publications and the practice implications	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The results of local research (e.g. projects. evaluations and consultation are shared with staff as sources of learning)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Key strengths	Key areas of improvement

E. Supporting local research

	1	2	3	4
1. There is a strategy to promote more effective consultation with all children, young people and families using services.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Services are supported to routinely evaluate the outcomes and impact of their work and how users think it could improve.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. The use of published scales and tests to measure the outcomes of interventions is common.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. A program of research work that explores priority issues and gaps in knowledge has been agreed and is resourced.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The projects undertaken by PQ students are shaped by the agency's research priorities and are centrally logged	☐	☐	☐	☐

FIGURE C.2 (*Continued*).

- motivating followers and building allies (both internally and with outside partners)
- monitoring progress and sustaining momentum.

Setting up a steering group

- debate what you actually mean by 'evidence-informed practice'

- develop a shared vision of how research should influence practice and policy decisions
- agree some realistic actions that will develop the necessary culture, systems and skills to support learning from research
- co-ordinate progress and ensure it is tied in to other related initiatives.

Setting objectives

- on giving a strategic lead time
- on setting expectations
- on encouraging learning
- on improving access to evidence
- on supporting local research

Action planning

Evaluating impact

4. SETTING EXPECTATIONS (see full report)

5. ENCOURAGING LEARNING FROM RESEARCH (see full report)

6. IMPROVING ACCESS TO RESEARCH (see full report)

7. SUPPORTING LOCAL RESEARCH (see full report)

8. REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING (see full report)

Source. Research in Practice (2006).

Redefining the Bureaucratic Encounter between Service Providers and Service Users: Evidence from the Norwegian HUSK Projects

Sarah Carnochan and Michael J. Austin

*Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services,
School of Social Welfare, University of California—Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA*

The HUSK projects, involving collaboration between service users, providers, educators, and researchers, coincided with the reorganization of national government services (NAV). The NAV reorganization brought together employment services, social insurance, and municipal social service benefits, and called for a service model where users would be empowered to influence the provision of services. In this analysis of the HUSK cases the authors focus on the relationship between the service user and the service provider, identifying themes in two broad domains: concepts of the individual that included the service user and the service provider and concepts of the relationship that included power, role, activity, interaction, and communication. Within each theme, the analysis highlights the transition from a traditional or historical state to a new or desired state and draws upon some of the classic literature that frames the encounters between service users and providers.

Keywords: Service user, street-level bureaucrat, bureaucratic encounter, dialogue

Given the unique dimensions of the Nordic welfare state and the HUSK projects designed to improve public social services in Norway, it is important to frame an analysis of the HUSK case studies within the context of social policy. As noted elsewhere in this volume, the local HUSK projects were based on the collaboration between service users, providers, educators, and researchers that also coincided with the major reorganization of national government services (NAV). The NAV reorganization brought together employment services, social insurance, and municipal social service benefits for the purpose of making welfare services more efficient. The NAV reform was intended to address poverty and social exclusion by providing work incentives to help with the transition from benefits to gainful employment. Work-oriented services were required to be based on a comprehensive assessment of service user experiences and expertise as well as active service user involvement in activities that maximized choice and individual initiative.

This form of Norwegian "welfare reform" also called for a service model where each user or user group needed to be, to a greater degree, empowered to influence the provision of services by inserting their experiences and needs into service delivery decision making (Kildal & Nilssen, 2011). This transition from passive receipt of monetary assistance to active engagement in employment services raised questions about the difference between user participation and user involvement.

User participation often focuses on policy development related to a social contract that includes specifying user rights and entitlements as well as duties and responsibilities. User involvement, on the other hand, often refers to policy implementation that features the availability of integrated, geographically accessible services. As Julkunen and Heikkila (2007) note, the processes of user involvement can be viewed as part of a continuum "from weaker to stronger or from more passive forms towards more active forms of involvement" (p. 89). The strongest or most active stage of the process features users as *service definers/managers* of their own programs, the next stage involves user *influence* (independent and competent to assess service quality), followed by user *involvement* (contributing to changes in service delivery), and finally user *participation* (advisers and informants, often related to the development and/or evaluation of public policy).

The empowerment of service users relies heavily on the normative foundations of the Nordic welfare state. As Kildal and Kuhnle (2005) note, the normative foundation in Norway includes a commitment in legislation to broad and universal protection and centralized administration using a complex set of regulations (sometimes leading to long delays in processing claims and negative stereotyping of people who are dependent). They identify the three essential features of the welfare state as: (a) a comprehensive social policy, (b) institutionalized social entitlements as social rights, and (c) social legislation in support of universal welfare for all citizens. They also identify the elements of universal welfare in Norway as including the following:

- Community-building and social inclusion ("pension as people's insurance," p. 21)
- Protection against social risks leading to social rights and prevention ("we are all in the same boat," p. 22)
- Support for human dignity to counter social exclusion—removing the humiliating loss of social status and self-respect ("no longer the worthy or unworthy poor as a public burden," p. 23)
- Economic and bureaucratic efficiencies ("no more selectivity or discrimination based on moral or economic grounds," p. 24)

The historical origins of universal welfare in Norway can be traced to the role of citizens directing their welfare demands toward government, the emergence of egalitarian social structures rooted in preindustrial peasant society, the cultural homogeneity of the society (ethnic, religious, and linguistic), and the extra-ordinary crisis of World War II that brought political opponents together to form a "broader common values platform" (Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005, p. 20).

In this analysis the authors focus on issues in the relationship between the service user and the service provider reflected in the HUSK cases. As highlighted in Figure 1, the cases can be categorized in terms of dialogical processes, social work education, and service innovation. In the next section, a brief review of classic works that examines the service user–service provider relationship identifies central dilemmas and dynamics in the encounters between users and providers. The cross-case analysis that follows represents a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that is informed, but not limited, by this literature. In the concluding section, we reflect on questions and lessons emerging from the HUSK cases.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much attention has been given in the social work literature to the relationship between service users and service providers in the context of public social services. This selective review focuses first on the provider experience articulated by Lipsky (1980; 2010) in his street-level bureaucrat (SLB) framework. It then turns to the analyses of service user experiences outlined by Hasenfeld and others (Hasenfeld, 1985; Hasenfeld, Rafferty, & Zald, 1987; Hasenfeld & Steinmetz, 1981). Last, counterbalancing these largely critical views of the relationship, more optimistic perspectives offered by Goodsell (1981), Hupe and Hill (2007), Lefton (1970), and Seikkula, Arnkil, and Ericksson (2003) are highlighted.

Dialogue

Individual Perspectives

1. Traces of User Participation: User Perspectives on Conversations between Social workers and Users (HUSK Agder)
2. A Researcher's Experience with Service User Involvement: A self-reflective essay of participating in a Course for Changing Attitude

Group Perspectives

1. Dialogue Seminars in Baerum (HUSK Oslo Region)
2. The Evolution of the HUSK Dialogue Group (HUSK Mid-Norway)

Social Work Education

1. The University Clinic in Social Work in the NAV Sagene District Office (HUSK Oslo Region)
2. User Involvement in Social Work Education (HUSK Agder)

Service Innovation

Service Users

1. Courses for Changing Attitudes (HUSK Oslo Region)
2. Users Experiences with the Social Services (HUSK Stavanger Region)
3. The Meeting Place (HUSK Stavanger Region)

Service Providers

1. Professional Text: Documenting Professional Work (HUSK Mid-Norway)
2. The Conceptual Project (HUSK Agder)

FIGURE 1   Selected HUSK cases.

The pioneering research of Lipsky (1980, 2010) sought to identify the discretionary components of the work of service providers whom he called SLBs. As Lipsky (2010) notes, when exploring different concepts of work, service provider discretion is needed given the complexity of service needs and the sensitivity required to address them. Lipsky (1980) articulated a framework in which the conditions of the street-level bureaucracy shape the exercise of discretion by the SLB. The conditions impacting the use of discretion include uncertain policies and goals, inadequate resources, and the need to exercise human judgment in order to carry out the SLB role. In response to these conditions, SLBs develop work routines and beliefs about the client that allow them to manage work responsibilities; however, while these routines and simplifications assist them in managing complexity, they are frequently subject to bias and the objectification of the service user (Lipsky, 2010). Beliefs about the client include views about the role of the clients in assuming responsibility for their troubles and about their capacity to exercise choice or judgment about their own lives. There is an ongoing tension between the bureaucratic model of detachment and resource limitations and the human relations model of recognizing the humanity in each person and being equipped to respond to specific needs (Lipsky, 2010). Commenting in an updated edition, Lipsky (2010) notes the importance of strategies for increasing client power "for their potential contribution to changing street-level relationships" (p. 193), including demystifying bureaucratic policies and practices, instituting practices to strengthen accountability to clients, and developing mechanisms allowing client participation in agency governance.

While service providers represent the welfare state in their role as SLBs, service users assume the role of applicant while engaging in a wide range of bureaucratic encounters. Hasenfeld (1985) defines bureaucratic encounters as including the following elements: (a) a form of exchange relationships involving the transfer of resources between clients and service bureaucracies, (b) the client obtaining services at minimal personal cost, (c) the organization obtaining resources needed to operate and minimize costs, (d) the power-dependence relationship between clients and SLBs determining the outcome, (e) client dependency proportional to the client's needing services (the poorer the client, the greater the impact of the SLB), and (f) bureaucracies dependent upon the client for achieving their mission.

In an effort to focus on the power dependency associated with the bureaucratic encounter in public assistance organizations, Hasenfeld and colleagues (1987) focused on such organizational factors as the client's limited awareness of service availability and eligibility criteria, administrative controls reflecting service scarcity, low levels of professionalization despite high levels of discretion, and the existence of stigmatizing norms and perceived unfair policies and procedures. They found that service users experience bureaucratic encounters with a sense of powerlessness, low expectations for satisfaction, and low rates of utilization due to reluctance to exercise their rights based on the stigmatizing aspect of disclosing private problems to public officials and experiencing the bureaucratic encounters as demeaning. In particular, they noted that "the bureaucratic encounter is both an information exchange and a negotiation of a conflict management process through which the applicant's normative framework and expectations are brought in line with the organization's" (p. 402). In essence, they observed that "welfare state bureaucracies use their power advantage (over the applicant) to structure the bureaucratic encounter in a manner that buttresses their political economies" (p. 405).

Hasenfeld and Steinmetz (1981) found that client-official encounters are shaped by the forces inside and outside the organization that result in a set of tactics used in the bureaucratic encounter by both parties. The tactics used by service users include: (a) sustaining persistence in the face of discouraging obstacles, (b) exercising persuasion regarding need and service eligibility, (c) managing appearances in order to "pass" as higher social status (dress, appearance), (d) gaining familiarity with bureaucratic procedures and language, (e) using threats, and (f) participating in collective organizing (client advocacy groups). In contrast, the tactics used by service providers when dealing with service users include: (a) ignoring the impact of waiting time, (b) using discouraging or abusive language, (c) controlling communications (completing questions on intake form), (d) selectively disseminating information (limited transparency of policies and procedures), (e) labeling or defining client identities for the purpose of organizational processing, and (f) engaging in incomplete or insufficient communications due to differences in culture and/or class.

Lefton (1970) provides an alternative to the primarily negative depictions offered by Lipsky, Hasenfeld, and others. Using the concepts of laterality (client's biographical space) and longitudinality (time dimension of service), Lefton (1970) notes that client-serving organizations are as influenced by the behaviors of clients as they are by the behaviors of staff members and other stakeholders. In defining a high degree of organizational responsiveness to client needs, Lefton (1970) developed the concept of "plus laterality" in which "a client-serving organization takes the 'whole' person into account in its efforts to effect given social, psychological or physical change" (p. 19). Based on the view of organizations as social psychological systems of interacting parts (e.g., service users and providers), he viewed "plus laterality" as a way to democratize bureaucracies.

Similar to Lefton, Goodsell (1981) found in his research on service providers and users in a public assistance organization a form of bureaucratic encounter that he called "positive discrimination." Goodsell (1981) defines positive discrimination as "the granting of personal favors in the form of extra-attentive behaviors to individual clients (not categories of them) who are for some reason personally appealing (worthy)" (p. 771). This form of bureaucratic encounter involves a more open manner in the face-to-face client encounter where interest is shown in the ongoing events in the life

of a client (e.g., health, children, etc.) as well as sharing limited aspects of the worker's life (children, etc.) as a form of power-sharing and humanizing dialogue. The benefits of "positive discrimination" include increased service user comfort based on receiving extra attention, temporary service provider relief from exhausting routines and enhanced self-image as a valued professional helper, and an increased sense of job satisfaction experienced by service providers based on the exercise of personal power and empowerment achieved by resisting bureaucratic constraints.

Citing Lipsky (1980) and Hasenfeld and Steinmetz (1981), Hupe and Hill (2007) acknowledge the traditionally asymmetrical relationship between the service provider and the service user resulting from the non-voluntary status of service users and the service provider's discretion over resources. They offer a typology of accountability regimes in which the public administrative type is characterized by conformity to standard operating procedures and rule-bound relationships between users and providers. In contrast, they propose a model of participatory accountability involving "shared goal and standard setting" between SLBs and service users (Hupe & Hill, 2007, p. 294). In this model, accountability occurs within a relationship of trust that emphasizes service user voice and is focused on whether shared outcomes have been achieved.

Recent efforts to understand the bureaucratic encounter can also be seen in the work of Seikkula and colleagues (2003) who conceptualize "zones of subjective worry" (small worries, growing worries, and great worries). The zones can be captured on a continuum from *no worries* (1) to *slight worries* (2) to *repeated thoughts of worry* (3) to *growing worry that diminishes confidence* (4) to *marked worry resulting in reduced resources* (5) to *strong and constant worry that reduce energy and resources* (6), and finally to *very deep and strong worry that exhausts capacities and leads to danger or harm*. Since worries are shared by all humans, Seikkula and colleagues contend that the concept of "zones of subjective worry" provides for a more equal "playing field" for building and maintaining the service user–provider relationship. Exploring "zones of subjective worry" involves: (a) separating "talking" from "listening" in order to make room for inner dialogues, (b) finding a safe place to address unexpected questions that provide opportunities to think aloud and engage in thought experiments, and (c) approaching the present situation by focusing on the future where many worries reside (Seikkula et al., 2003).

This brief review of the literature provides multiple perspectives to inform analysis of the HUSK cases. Figure 2 summarizes the key concepts that characterize the traditional bureaucratic encounter as described by Lispky, Hasenfeld, and others, including power dependence, stigma, and unilateral disclosure on the part of the service user, contrasted with power, resources, and discretionary assistance on the part of the service provider, with communication constrained by bureaucratic requirements.

METHODS

Following close reading and discussion of the HUSK cases, the authors developed an initial analysis with reference to Lipsky's (1980, 2010) SLB framework, drawing additionally upon Hupe and Hill's (2007) related work defining participatory accountability. In this analysis, a set of preliminary codes were created and used by the authors and a research assistant to code the set of cases using the comment function in Microsoft Word to perform coding. The codes developed for this first stage of the analysis included participatory accountability, power sharing, coproduction of services, reciprocity, choice, asymmetrical relationships, objectification of service user and provider, role of place, conceptions of work, and goals.

After reviewing the first draft of the cross-case analysis, a decision was made to broaden the analytical approach in order to integrate an inductive coding strategy using a line-by-line emergent coding process. This process generated a set of codes that retained revised versions of some of the original SLB concepts, added new codes, and restructured the relationship between codes. A list of code frequencies was generated in order to identify high frequency codes both within and across
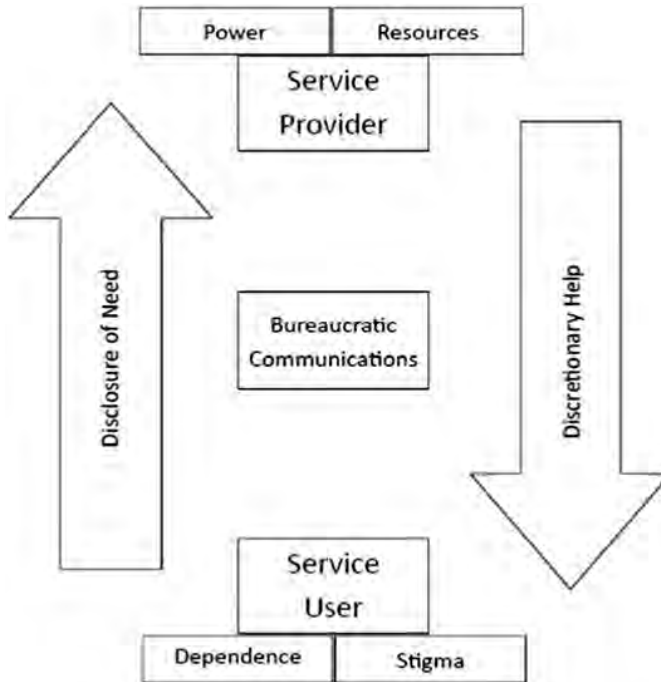
FIGURE 2   Traditional bureaucratic encounter.

cases. At the same time, the authors engaged in additional reading in the literature on bureaucrat encounters in the social services. Drawing upon this literature and with reference to the code frequency analysis, the codes and related excerpts were reviewed by the authors, and an expanded thematic framework was developed as summarized in Figure 3. Each concept was represented in multiple cases ranging from three (e.g., Activity) to nine (e.g., Service User Conceptualization). In the cross-case summary that follows, a purposive selection of examples from the cases is used to illustrate the themes.

SUMMARY OF THE CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

As summarized in Figure 3, the cross-case analysis identified themes in two broad domains: concepts of the individual that included the service user and the service provider and concepts of the relationship that included power, role, activity, interaction, and communication. Within each theme, the analysis focused on the transition from a traditional or historical state to a new or desired state. The following discussion briefly describes and illustrates each theme.

Concepts of the Individual: Toward Partnership and Shared Expertise

Participants spoke of the traditional conceptualization and roles of the service provider and service user in the Norwegian welfare state and described ways in which these were changed within some of the HUSK initiatives. As one participant in the Users Experiences with Social Services case noted, both *providers and users approach the relationship with biased views* about their counterpart:

Concept of Individuals: Toward Partnership and Shared Expertise

Service Provider:

Expert Helper ────────────────▶ Participant/Partner

Service User:

Passive Recipient ──────────────▶ Expertise and Worthiness

Concept of Relationship: Toward Equality and Authenticity

Power

Asymmetry ──────────────▶ Voice/Rights

Role:

Helper and Helped ──────────────▶ Reciprocal Disclosure

Activity:

Bureaucratic Encounter ──────────▶ Shared Dialogue Activity

Interaction:

One on One ──────────────▶ Group

Place:

Office ──────────────▶ Shared/Safe Space

Communication:

Formal ──────────────▶ Informal

Problems ──────────────▶ Worries

FIGURE 3   Themes emerging from cross-case analysis.

I learned that both the social worker and the user enter the service relationship with their own prejudices; namely, my views as a social worker of service users, and the users views of both social workers and the system they represent. (p. 41)

In the case on Courses of Changing Attitudes, participants noted the importance of reducing biased views by developing understanding between providers and users with regard to the "skills, personal qualities, and personal experiences of the other" (p. 11).

Concept of Welfare State Bureaucrat: Toward Partnership

Comments by participants in some HUSK cases reflect the concepts of the traditional and transformed service provider. For example, a social worker involved in the HUSK Mid-Norway Dialog Group described her previous work experiences in the 1990s, highlighting the effect of high case loads and absence of oversight that contributed to the traditional conceptualization of service provider as "helper" and service user as "passive recipient." She explains:

Under such conditions I struggled to get good conversations and build relationships, where I could become familiar with the particular man or women in front of me. This created frustration in my daily work . . . . I was the *good helper* who knew best, while the client was and would still be the *passive recipient.* (p. 29)

As the concept and role of the service provider changed in profound ways in the HUSK Dialog Group, some staff welcomed the transition, while others resisted, stating:

Not all staff members were comfortable with *working side-by-side with service use*rs, especially left (sic) alone to share a meeting room with them. It was strange to go from conversations at the office behind a closed door to casual and informal conversations with ordinary people. Many staff members noted that they got energy and strength when they worked closely with people who often felt powerless. (p. 30)

The Meeting Place case captures the difficulties and benefits associated with a changed concept of the service provider and service user. In this case, the provider's expert knowledge is *challenged* by the user's knowledge derived from experience as follows:

Practitioner's expert knowledge as the norm is being challenged with the meeting with users. The knowledge is based on the users' own experiences and how they feel about being dependent on the system. When the practitioners are present within a users' area of comfort, they can help to break down the boundaries that are there. (p. 34)

A social worker involved in the Users Experiences with Social Services case spoke to the reframing of provider *expertise and its relationship to power asymmetry* in the relationship:

Those of us who worked in the HUSK projects were probably more open than was usual in the social services. Social workers are used to being the experts and being in control so when the user is in need of help, we are the helpers. An equal partnership clearly challenged this view. The staff found it strange that they should deal with people whom they suspected would be very critical of the social services department. (p. 41)

Concept of Service User: Toward Worthiness and Expertise

To an even greater extent, the HUSK cases reflect changes in the conceptualization of service users. The following five interrelated concepts emerge across the cases: recognition, worthiness, expertise, individuality, and responsibility.

Recognition. In many of the cases, recognition (i.e., hearing and seeing the service user as a human being) was an important aspect of the experiences reported by participants. Without this basic experience of recognition by the service provider, a service user in the Users Experience case described the following loss of sense of self:

They do not think about the person. You mean nothing, and I was very preoccupied about it; don't they see me? Is it really true that I almost do not exist? I then feel that they do not care, I do not mean anything. I feel like I literally slip away. (p. 38)

In the Traces case, the experience of being recognized and taken seriously is captured in the following:

The youth explains that user participation is about taking people seriously, and not avoiding their issues . . . . The youths say that social workers must take them and what they say seriously if participation is to take place. They say the social workers, as professionals, must be able to understand them, especially beyond what is explicitly expressed. (p. 58)

For service users to be heard, service providers needed to listen beyond the spoken words in order to interpret what is known about the individual user.

Worthiness.   Many of the HUSK initiatives reflect a central concern with transforming the view of the service user from unworthy to worthy. Participants in the Dialog Group initiative described the following sustained shift in the perceived status of service users:

> We all had the same social status, everyone were [*sic*] equal. The group developed a feeling of togetherness, where you could be yourself without fear of being looked down upon. You did not need to feel ashamed. It made it easier to try new things and face new challenges that might not have been considered in the past. (p. 31)

These participants reported a related shift in the relationship between service user and service provider when "the user is no longer in the role of seeking help, but is a person with resources" (p. 29). In the Traces case, youth participants noted the connection between self-worth and individual change, as one described how her social worker challenged her to do new things: "I am very much a person who believes she can't do anything. It has been important to show what I can do. I can't do that. Or . . . I have to be pushed to do it."

User expertise.   The changes in perceptions of service user worthiness were related to increased recognition of user expertise in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services and the education and training of new social workers. For example, in the Meeting Place case, it was noted that the emphasis on service user expertise challenged the traditional model of "practitioner's expert knowledge" by focusing on "the users' own experiences and how they feel to be dependent on the system" (p. 34). The Dialog Group case described challenges in helping service providers and users understand that user participation:

> . . . was important because their knowledge and experience was needed to develop the new space. We needed to develop a culture where everyone felt comfortable to participate and where the experiences of everyone were equally important, regardless of background and education (p. 30).

The experiences of service users contributed to the education of nonuser members:

> All members of the Dialog Group had their experiences which they brought with them. While no one in the group had a social work degree, everyone had many years of experience with the 'system.' You could say that everyone in the group acquired an informal education about the experiences of service users. (p. 32)

Individuality.   Perhaps implicit in the theme of recognition is the focus on individuality that appeared in some of the cases. For example, in the Dialog Seminars, a proposal that emerged in the third seminar related to the design of individualized measures for assessing user progress: "Measures must be tailored to the users so that they fit the user—and not vice versa. We need to find non-traditional solutions that suit the user" (p. 24). Similarly, the aim in the Professional Text case was to provide a guide for documentation that would help the provider "become familiar with the client's situation, needs, resources, and perspective" (p. 63).

In contrast, a social worker participant in the Dialog Group described her struggles in traditional social work settings to "become familiar with the particular man or woman in front of [her]" (p. 29). Similarly, in the Conceptual Project, participants were "concerned about how *categorization* of users could represent an obstacle to capturing the uniqueness of each individual situation" (p. 68):

> In NAV labor (employment services), the users were considered as ordinary job seekers but in NAV social insurance (services) the users were considered as disabled and needed follow-up. I think we've had very different views of exactly the same users, due to the type of (service or) benefit they received" (p. 68). With respect to the reforms, one provider noted the need to be more concerned about how we treat each other and said: "We must not treat everyone in the same way: If you are not like this or like that, then you are not interested in getting a job. It's not like this. (p. 69)

Responsibility. The recognition of the worthiness, expertise, and individuality of the service users was accompanied, in some cases, by changes in how user responsibility is viewed and exercised. For example, service users in the Meeting Place case assumed considerable responsibility when they were:

 . . . hired to do a job; they are responsible for when the house is open, for purchasing and serving, cleaning and practical tasks, such as maintenance . . . . It is the host's responsibility to organize the day, determine what is to be served and how long and how often the facility should be open. (p. 33)

In the Traces of User Participation case, youth participants noted the value of their own initiative and action. For example, one participant "emphasized that it was his own efforts that gave him the job" (p. 57). As the author explains:

The youth's reflections show that they see user participation as part of being active in promoting the changes that have taken place. This activity goes beyond their interaction with their social worker, and relates to more options than those the social worker can offer. They present themselves as proactive individuals who do not settle for suggestions or activities that they are dissatisfied with. They appear as autonomous individuals who take control and do not want their days filled—at least not for the long run—with what other people fill them with. (p. 57)

However, the author goes on to point out that while the youth view themselves as acting autonomously, the youth's goal of being engaged in activities is consistent with the overall goals of the program.

Concept of Relationship: Toward Equality and Authenticity

Power: Toward Voice and Rights

A number of the HUSK cases involved efforts to make the transition from power asymmetry to less asymmetry and more equality between service users and providers. The leaders of the Dialog Seminars who were service users envisioned a project in which they would "work equally with practitioners towards common goals" (p. 19) and led a change process that they referred to as the "coup" (p. 20). After demanding equal user control of meetings (including the agenda and minutes), they reported that "[w]e felt we had accomplished something, a balance of power was created" (p. 20). However, these efforts faced considerable resistance from service providers, who explained:

The user representatives realized their desires, but not without resistance and after several rounds of negotiations. Such a process is in line with the essence of empowerment where you have to expect resistance when it comes to the redistribution of power. (p. 22)

The user-led group went on to establish a series of Dialog Seminars that "made it possible to achieve a redistribution of power in the way that user representatives gradually took more responsibility . . . [giving] them the opportunity to meet the staff in a more equal position, where they in partnership can collaborate to improve the services" (p. 25). However, subsequent experiences of user participants with respect to power symmetry were very different. Two who went on to work as employees of KREM reported: "As project managers with user experiences, we experienced powerlessness, rather than the power and influence (we developed) in the work at HUSK Baerum" (p. 27).

The Dialog Group also sought to empower service users. Reflecting on the power relations when she worked in a traditional social service office in the 1990s, one of the social workers noted:

When I decided to study to be a social worker, I had a hope to enter into a partnership with human beings on an equal arena. I wanted to engage in joint efforts that could lay the foundation for change and a better life for the clients, however, conversations with clients were either in the reception or in the office

behind closed doors. No one could monitor what we said, (how we) behaved, or how we exercised our power. . . . The power structure was evident, and those clients who needed our help were completely at the mercy of our reviews. (p. 29)

In contrast to this earlier experience, the Dialog Group was "user-driven" and designed to allow service users to express their opinions on services where "we all had the same social status, everyone was equal" (p. 31).

Role: Toward Reciprocal Contributions

Accompanying efforts to balance power in the service user–service provider relationship were changes in the roles played by these individuals in service delivery and decision making. For example, the Dialog Group emphasized a shift in role for service users, from help-seeker to active resource contributor. In the case on Changing Attitudes, service users were trained as coaches for other participants and acted as role models for current service users. In the Dialog Seminars, user representatives served as process advisors, led the seminars, and engaged in data collection. The case author concludes that "The users are a resource and should contribute, and the (official) 'helpers' should not help, but collaborate." The author goes on to highlight individual challenges in assuming new roles, often relying on personal characteristics as well as past practices and experiences that call for reflecting on these roles to plan further work and how the tasks should be allocated.

In the Meeting Place case, users were hired as hosts and performed tasks that included "purchasing and serving, cleaning, and practical tasks, such as maintenance" (p. 33), as well as deciding "how they will organize the day, what to serve and how long, and how often they should be open" (p. 33). As in the Dialogue Seminar case, this role transformation presented challenges for service users and service providers, as it required "new ways of understanding equal collaboration" (p. 34).

Activity: From Bureaucratic Encounter to Shared Dialogue Activity

Several of the HUSK projects featured new types of shared activities that differed from the typical bureaucratic encounter that focuses on eligibility determination, needs assessment, or service referrals. In the Changing Attitudes case, the participants hiked, climbed, and explored the local town in Turkey where the course was held. They used these outings as an opportunity to share issues and get to know each other. As the participating researcher noted, it was essential that all participated equally in the storytelling and other activities, so that all could feel confident sharing. The participant researcher explained:

I shared many things about myself in the group that I would not tell to (almost) anyone because I developed a sense of full confidence in the group. The confidence was there *because everyone did the same sharing*—it was not only one party that would "confess" to another where the other is [a] professional worker. I gained such a strong feeling when I could see/hear that others understood what I was saying and what I was feeling. (p. 16)

In the Dialog Group case, service users and providers shared meals together in a common meeting space that provided an opportunity for informal dialog and cooperation, representing a substantial change from common practices. The change was described as ". . . quite a contrast from communicating in a public office, and this new idea met with considerable resistance. Not all staff members were comfortable with working side-by-side with service users, let alone sharing a meeting room with them" (p. 32).

Some service users also struggled with feeling comfortable in this new shared activity: "Some (service users) sat with their bowl of food in a corner or in another room until it became comfortable to join the rest of the group at the table" (p. 32).

One of the initial events in the Meeting Place case involved service users and managers traveling together to Copenhagen to visit a similar project. The trip enabled them to walk and talk together so that

they "got to know each other as persons," contributing substantially to the level of respect, cooperation, and trust among participants (p. 33). The development of the Meeting Place itself provided further opportunities for shared activities, "both practical and organizational" (p. 33). Participants noted that shared activity led to a sense of shared ownership: "the facility renovation was an important part of the partnership, and was performed by the participants in the project ... (where) the practical work and effort from all parties gave everyone a sense of ownership of the house" (pp. 33–34).

Interaction: Toward Group Processes

Group processes were a common feature of the HUSK cases that provided a number of benefits. For example, in the case on Changing Attitudes, the group provided emotional support and an experience of equality for participants. "When the participants were asked to read their stories to the group (only as a voluntary act), the fairy tales elicited emotional responses in an environment where the service users, researchers, educators, students and practitioners were all equal" (p. 10). The group process also contributed to the development of a shared understanding between service users, practitioners, students, educators, and researchers and provided a venue to identify changes at the level of individual and system relationships.

In order to design the User Involvement Project, a group process was developed to involve service users, a student, representatives of service user organizations, and an educator. After regular meetings and discussions of user involvement and user expertise, a decision was made to employ service users as mentors to students, with the mentoring itself to be provided in a group format. While the user representatives felt the need to acquire specific training in group methods, the educator sought to reassure the service users that they were fully equipped to engage in dialogue that emphasized "reflection as the basis for learning" (p. 50). Group membership was an important factor, such that the planning group decided to exclude teachers and supervisors in order "to give students a space where they would not be evaluated (when it came to sharing) their own practical experiences" (p. 52).

Place: Office to Shared/Safe Space

The multiple HUSK projects highlighted the importance of place, particularly settings outside of the social service offices. These alternative service locations were seen as contributing to shared understandings, authentic relationship building, and the empowerment of service users. For example, the Changing Attitudes case took place in a small rural town in Turkey where the foreign location amplified "the impact of the experience of service users, service practitioners, students, and academics working together to develop a common understanding of what is needed to achieve a better relationship and cooperation, both at the individual and on the system level" (p. 11). The participating researcher highlighted multiple benefits, stating:

> It was clear that the venue made a difference in terms of its remoteness, privacy, intimacy, and feeling of being in another world. The climate of Turkey made it possible to be outside for large parts of the day, both on adventure tours of nature and the sea as well as for small group meetings. (The process of) being so close to nature gave me new energy and many others expressed the same reaction. (p. 14)

However, some raised the question of whether changes achieved in a new and distant location could be sustained upon return to a familiar environment to work with a social worker who had not participated in the course (p. 16).

With respect to the impact of place, the Dialog Seminars represented contrasting experiences. The seminars identified a desire on the part of users and staff for "a meeting place outside the office, where they can share experiences and information, and how they can work together more informally" (p. 25). In a contrasting reference to place, two service users hired as project managers experienced striking exclusion from the NAV/social service offices, explaining:

> After a while we got an office with a good size for the two of us, where we could work and have meetings. The office was not part of the NAV or social services, but physically nearby, just across the hallway. The office had no access to toilets, water or canteen. ... When we finally got the key to the social services office, it felt like we did not belong there, that we had snuck in and we were followed, and sometimes even stopped by the employees. (p. 26)

In the Meeting Place case, communal meeting spaces were created where service users and providers could engage in very different kinds of interactions and conversations. The Meeting Place was designed as a "big room in the middle of the house owned by the municipality and used by various nonprofit organizations" (that provided) a place to meet for informal discussions over a cup of coffee where facilities were shared. The rooms were used equally by participants and staff. We got feedback that it was nice to gather there and one participant noted, "Here, I know that they are happy together. There are no conflicts hanging on the walls. Here you can talk together like normal people" (p. 30).

By moving the interactions out of the social services agency and into the community, the Meeting Place provided a different physical context for interaction that helped to challenge the "actors' perceptions and stereotypes of each other" (p. 33). The conversations between users and providers were altered and became more "informal and not about results or writing minutes" (p. 34). Summarizing the lessons of the project, the author wrote that "it is important to have a venue to meet, not necessarily to come up with solutions or answer of questions, but to talk and find support in each other, and to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations" (p. 34).

In the University Clinic case, social work education experiences were moved out of the university and into the agency in order to facilitate collaboration with practitioners and service users. This experience helped to challenge student stereotypes about the agency:

> For many students, it is their first experience in a NAV office, while others have experience as former NAV service users. The students really appreciated this orientation to practice as it made a positive impression on them, especially given the negative media coverage of the NAV reorganization reforms and scandal. (p. 45)

The NAV office became a classroom that reflected "situated learning" within a "community of practice" (p. 47). Similarly, the User Involvement case makes the point that student mentoring by service users is provided in the workplace, helping to further distinguish this experience from the university-based guidance they receive (p. 51).

Communication: Toward Authenticity

Finally, the HUSK cases involve substantially different kinds of communication between service users and practitioners, based on dialogue involving storytelling, reciprocal disclosure, and informal conversations, with the potential to transform the relationship between individuals with different backgrounds and experiences. The Traces case focuses intensively on the individual communications between youth and social workers, highlighting the central role of dialogue in social service encounters. Communications between social workers and youth were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed by the participants, who were then interviewed about their perception of the conversation. The youth participants emphasized "the importance of talking together to clear things up. In conversations, they could exercise influence, and could be influenced" (p. 57).

In the case on Changing Attitudes, fictional storytelling using fantasy figures, metaphors, and symbols was used to help participants "create meaning in their lives through the stories they tell about themselves" (p. 10). Through this exercise, using a very different kind of language than the bureaucratic language of assessment or case planning, "service providers and users are given the opportunity to develop a common understanding of each other's experiences and perspectives, meeting the person 'behind the mask' and exploring the process of redefining relationships in social service settings" (p. 11). The researcher who participated in the course explained that while social

workers typically do not self-disclose in their professional interactions with service users, she viewed it as appropriate to "be more personal than is usual for a social worker or researcher" (p. 14), allowing participants to "connect with each other as human beings and get to know each other as a humans" (p. 15), through a process "founded on reciprocity and trust" (p. 17).

In the Dialog Group and Meeting Place cases, participants also highlighted the different kinds of communication in which they engaged, including informal discussions. A Meeting Place participant praised these informal encounters that allowed people to "talk together like normal people" (p. 30). While it felt strange for some to "go from conversations at the office behind a closed door to casual and informal conversations with ordinary people" (p. 30), the authors report that "social workers gained considerable experience by engaging in informal conversations with participants in this new space" (p. 30). This project further focused on communications by creating the Dialog Group to develop "an easier way for service users to present their views on things they found to be a problem as well as what seemed to be working well" (p. 31). The topics were selected by group members, based on their importance, often leading to "engaged and heated discussions" (p. 31). As one participant explained, the Dialog Group was a setting where authentic communication was made possible: "The Dialog Group was a place where you could drop the social mask that you normally use to hide the fact that you are a social services user. In the Dialogue Group, we all had the same social status, everyone was equal" (p. 31).

DISCUSSION

The HUSK projects reflect efforts to redefine the nature of practice within public assistance programs, with particular attention to transforming the relationship between service users and providers. Figure 4 highlights key aspects of the redefined encounter between users and providers that emerged in the HUSK cases.

Central to the HUSK reforms was the recognition of the equal worth of service users that is in stark contrast to the traditional stigma described by Hasenfeld and colleagues (1987). The discretionary nature of the activities carried out by SLBs (Lipsky, 1980) made it possible to expand frontline practice to include increased power sharing within the bureaucratic encounter. In line with Lipsky's later prescription for increased client power (Lipsky, 2010), multiple approaches to power sharing provided both the service provider and user with an opportunity to reflect upon and share their own perspective as a way of making explicit their tacit knowledge. Power sharing served to humanize the discretionary power of the service provider and empower the service user, maximizing both experience and expertise relevant to managing the bureaucratic encounter. This focus on service user expertise from experience provided a way to increase client resources, thereby, decreasing the dependency on the provider that Hasenfeld (1985) described. Rebalancing the power between service users and providers facilitated role transformations in which their contributions to the exchange relationship were more equal, though not identical.

As illustrated in the HUSK cases, shared activities provide a form of intervention when both service users and providers are engaged in meal preparation and meeting planning. While this form of activity may be common in residential human service organizations where both users and providers are in sustained contact with one another, it is less common in community-based services where various forms of individual bureaucratic encounters are the dominant activity. Shared service evaluation activities were also important, reflecting a more participatory accountability model as outlined by Hupe and Hill (2007). In addition to these shared activities, the location of service was also significant in a number of cases. Moving out of government offices to locales that foster communications proved to be another important finding from the HUSK cases. The shift in the communications environment from formality to informality increased the potential for power-
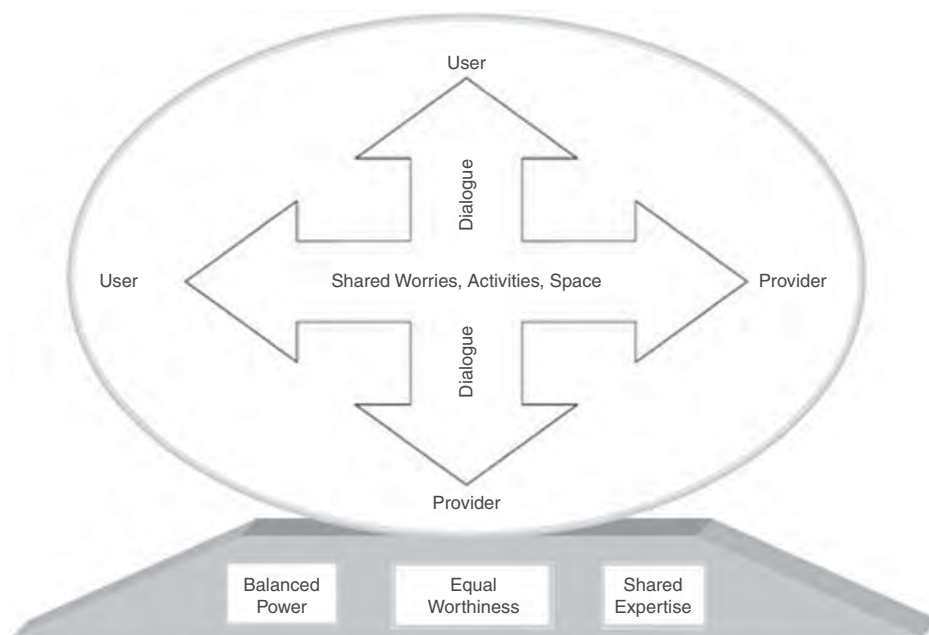
FIGURE 4   Redefining the bureaucratic encounter.

sharing and more open, candid relationships reflecting both "positive discrimination" as noted by Goodsell (1981) and "plus laterality" as noted by Lefton (1970).

Another example of power sharing can be found in the language used for discussion of services and goals between service users and providers. As service providers shift their focus from "helping to address service user problems" to joint engaging in an exploration of self, it becomes possible to amplify the volume and clarity of service user voices as well as rebalance the traditional hierarchical, power-dependent relationship between two human beings. As the content of communications between service users and providers shifted away from the information exchange related to user problems described by Hasenfeld and colleagues (1987) and toward authentic and reciprocal disclosure, the stigma associated with unilateral disclosure of personal problems to public officials was reduced and, in some cases, removed.

The emphasis in the HUSK cases on dialogical communications (Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006) illustrates the importance of "removing masks" through dialogical meetings as a way to open up communications within unequal power relationships. Seikkula and colleagues (2003) point to the need in the service provider–user relationship to move from a predominant focus on objective facts (e.g., limited job skills, inadequate work histories, etc.) to subjective worries in order to capture what service providers see subjectively and what service users experience subjectively. The focus in the HUSK cases on listening in order to fully recognize the uniqueness of human beings engaged in the service provider–service user relationship can be informed by the worry zone framework outlined by Seikkula and colleagues (2003), where listening and thinking out loud are critical aspects of communication.

The pioneering efforts of the HUSK projects raise many questions for future practice and research, and a few are noted below:

(1) How can future social work practitioners learn the power-sharing skills associated with this form of redefined practice and use them effectively in bureaucratic settings?
(2) Is there evidence that the use of these skills leads to improved outcomes for service users?

(3) What are the implications of shifting the focus of dialogue between service providers and service users from "problem solving" within the context of the bureaucratic encounter to the articulation of "shared worries" within the framework of "zones of subjective worries?"

(4) To what extent are the practice issues of shared activities, alternative meeting places, and authentic communications relevant to different fields of practice beyond public assistance services?

(5) What types of organizational and managerial supports are needed in a wide variety of human service organizations to help staff engage in new forms of practice?

(6) To what extent can government policy and funding support future innovations as illustrated in the HUSK projects?

In reflecting on the role of helping and helplessness, Gummer (1979) nearly 35 years ago commented on the structure of discretion in the American welfare system by noting:

> that the social work profession, because of its history, assumes an orientation to its clients that flows from a conception of the client as intrinsically dependent and thus with limited abilities to participate in the process of service provision. Social workers must seriously reappraise their positions as more and more clients demand to be treated in ways that require severe limitations on the prerogatives traditionally claimed by professionals. The issue of professional and administrative discretion gets to the heart of one of the most pressing of modern concerns; namely, the way in which people's behavior should be regulated. (p. 225)

To what extent does this perception of dependent service users and dominant service provider continue to exist in today's welfare systems? While some will argue that there has been little change, others will note that our colleagues in Norway and elsewhere in other welfare states are taking promising strides in the direction of transforming practice and redefining the bureaucratic encounter.

REFERENCES

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*, 77–101.

Goodsell, C. T. (1981). Looking once again at human service bureaucracy. *Journal of Politics*, *43*, 763–778.

Gummer, B. (1979). On helping and helplessness: The structure of discretion in the American welfare system. *Social Service Review*, *53*, 214–228.

Hasenfeld, Y. (1985). Citizens' encounters with welfare state bureaucracies. *Social Service Review*, *59*(4), 622–635.

Hasenfeld, Y., Rafferty, J., & Zald, M. N. (1987). The welfare state, citizenship, and bureaucratic encounters. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *13*, 387–415.

Hasenfeld, Y., & Steinmetz, D. (1981). Client-official encounters in social service agencies. In C. Goodsell (Ed.), *The public encounter: Where state and citizen meet*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Hupe, P., & Hill, M. (2007). Street-level bureaucracy and public accountability. *Public Administration*, *85*, 279–299.

Julkunen, I., & Heikkila, M. (2007). User involvement in personal social services. In R. van Berkel & B. Valkenburg (Eds.), *Making in personal: Individualizing activation services in the EU* (pp. 87–103). Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

Kildal, N., & Kuhnle, S. (2005). *Normative foundations of the welfare state: The Nordic experience*. London, UK: Routledge.

Kildal, N., & Nilssen, E. (2011). Norwegian welfare reforms: Social contracts and activation policies. In S. Betzelt & S. Bothfeld (Eds.), *Activation and labour market reforms in Europe: Challenges to social citizenship* (pp. 218–242). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lefton, M. (1970). Client characteristics and structural outcomes: Toward a specification of linkages. In M. Lefton & W. R. Rosengren (Eds.), *Organizations and clients: Essays in the sociology of service* (pp. 17–36). Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lipsky, M. (2010). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services* (30th anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Seikkula, J., & Arnkil, T. E. (2006). *Dialogical meeting in social networks*. London, UK: Karnac.

Seikkula, J., Arnkil, T. E., & Erikson, E. (2003). Postmodern society and social networks: Open and anticipation dialogues in network meetings. *Family Process*, *42*, 185–203.

The Impact of the Great Recession on County Human-Service Organizations: A Cross-Case Analysis

Genevieve Graaf, Evelyn Hengeveld-Bidmon, Sarah Carnochan, Peter Radu, and Michael J. Austin

Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services, University of California–Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA

ABSTRACT

This exploratory qualitative study examines the experiences of eleven county human-service agencies as they worked through the budget reduction process during the Great Recession (2008–2013). The principles and values that guided decisions are identified retrospectively through an analysis of 46 individual interviews with members of the senior management in each organization. The findings include decision-making strategies that include the engagement of stakeholders as well as the tactics employed for balancing the budget. The study informants reflect upon the success of their actions and upon the environmental and organizational factors that facilitated and constrained managerial decision making. The study concludes with implications for practice and future research.

In the fall of 2008, Lehman Brothers, a global financial services firm, filed for bankruptcy, marking the beginning of a global financial crisis that disrupted the U.S. economy and global markets. Individuals and families across the nation were losing their jobs and their homes, and were turning to county human-service organizations (HSOs) for help. Applications for public assistance programs increased substantially, and the need to process and determine eligibility for an unprecedented number of applicants stretched organizational resources. The circumstances surrounding the budget reductions for human services from 2008 to 2012 were unprecedented with many fearing a repeat of the Great Depression of the 1930s. When searching for prior experiences with substantial budgetary cutback strategies for social services, the major examples of budget reductions were in response to a change in federal legislation during the Reagan era in the 1980s. While these reductions to social welfare budgets created serious challenges, they occurred during a time of relative economic expansion in the United States.

In order to inform current managerial practice and to lay groundwork for further empirical examination of the Great Recession, this qualitative empirical study captures and describes the principles and factors that guided HSO leaders in reducing budgets while expanding public social services. This analysis begins with a description of the environmental conditions leading up to and surrounding the HSO budget reductions in California during the Great Recession and reviews the literature on cutback management in public organizations during the late 1970s and 80s. Within the context of qualitative research methods and their limitations, key findings describe how organizational leaders engaged with stakeholders to capture shifting organizational priorities and use these formalized priorities, agency data, and financial modeling to reduce the HSO's reliance on county funds and maximize their federal funding through the use of innovative organizational and programmatic restructuring and increased partnerships. The decisions of organizational leaders and

managers were often shaped by the size and structure of the organization and by the nature of relationships with the elected board of supervisors, the offices of the county administrator and the relationships with labor unions. The discussion reflects on current and historical differences in environmental resources and stressors that may contribute to variations in cutback approaches. The article concludes with implications for further research and practice principles for addressing significant budget reductions.

The Great Recession

The 2008 collapse of the financial markets led to negative growth in the U.S. gross domestic product in 2008 and 2009, and the national unemployment rate jumped to over 9% (Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, 2014). The federal budget, already with a deficit of over one trillion dollars, took a battering during this time as income tax revenues fell drastically and expenditures increased for unemployment claims, food stamps, and other safety net programs (Ruffing & Friedman, 2013). Substantial decreases in income tax and sales tax revenues, combined with increasing enrollment in state-subsidized safety net programs, decimated state budgets. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), a federal economic recovery package intended to shore up the consumer market, funneled substantial assistance to state budgets, mostly in the form of increased Medicaid funding and a "State Fiscal Stabilization Fund" (Oliff, Mai, & Palacios, 2012).

In California, unemployment reached an all-time high of almost 12% in 2009 (California Budget Project, 2009), and there were successive multimillion- or billion-dollar annual deficits, including a 15 billion dollar budget shortfall in 2013. The state was forced to reduce services in public health, cut funding for the children's health insurance program, and reduce services supporting HIV/AIDS patients. California eliminated all funding for the state's domestic violence shelter program as well as maternal, child, and adolescent health programs. Aid to disabled and elderly populations was capped or reduced, childcare subsidies were reduced, and the state eliminated cost-of-living adjustments for cash assistance programs. The state also cut its public workforce significantly, forcing furloughs and pay cuts for state employees (Johnson, Oliff, & Williams, 2011).

California social services are administered through the counties, and county human-service agencies are responsible for child welfare and foster care functions, employment services, adult and aging services and for eligibility determination for all forms of economic assistance, including Medicaid, general assistance, and food stamps. Many counties supplement human-service funding with county general fund dollars that are generated through county property taxes. When the housing bubble burst, property values plummeted, and property tax revenues dropped drastically in 2008 and 2009. Owing to major reductions in state allocations and to shrinking county general funds, counties faced budget reductions ranging from 15% to 30%, resulting in the elimination of hundreds of millions of dollars from their operations. Administrators and managers were being forced to address the reduction or elimination of state allocations for safety net programs. In the context of significant budget reductions and increased demand for services, the choices made by county human-service-agency leaders shaped the services available in their counties during the financial crisis.

Literature highlights

Beginning with economic stagnation in the 1970s and the ensuing reductions in domestic spending during the 1980s Reagan administration, "cutback management" became a familiar term among government administrators as scholars began to examine the phenomenon. Early scholarship on the subject was largely theoretical as illustrated by Levine's (1978, 1979) theoretical framework for understanding public-sector retrenchment related to legislative and judicial program funding mandates and to the realities of term limits and turnover of legislators (Levine, Rubin, & Wolohojian, 1982). Levine posited that the causes for organizational decline can be classified into four quadrants,

"divided along two dimensions: (a) whether they are primarily the result of conditions located either internal or external to the organization, or (b) whether they are principally a product of political or economic/technical condition" (Levine, 1978, p. 318). In addition, political considerations dominated the specific decisions of managers (Edwards & Mitchell, 1987; Jick & Murray, 1982; Levine, 1978) and the process for allocating cuts within an organization (Bigelow & Stone, 1995; Levine et al., 1982; Murray & Jick, 1985; Reisch & Taylor, 1983). Given the unique constraints of this environment, cutback-management scholars have offered a range of suggestions for successfully navigating public retrenchment. These are illustrated in Figure 1.

Pandey (2010) points out that the structure and processes of public organizations affect the strategies and tactics that can be accessed when dealing with budget reductions. For example, public organizations can expect and rely on a steady flow of resources that allow them to function in a relatively stable operational environment. However, in a public organization, leaders are limited regarding what actions can be taken to increase resources. In addition, Pandey (2010) notes that the goals of public organizations are often appealing and well-supported by employees and the public because they are designed to serve community needs. As a result, the organization has less input in setting goals and "compromises among competing interests in the political arena filter down" to goals that are multiple, conflicting, and vague (p. 566).

I.   **Revisiting organizational mission**
  - create a mission-based strategic plan that both informs cutback implementation and allows for adaptive shifts to new funding sources (Austin, 1984; Behn, 1980, 1988).
  - engage in mission redesign, in order to:
    o prioritize essential services (Flynn, 1991; Goplerud, Walfish, & Apsey, 1983; Goplerud, Walfish, & Broskowski, 1985; Jerrell & Larsen, 1984; Partnership for Public Service, 2011)
    o guide where to make cuts (Nakamoto & Altaffer, 1992)
    o identify ways to compete for limited resources (Goplerud, Walfish, & Apsey, 1983)
    o build relationships with influential people, through an influential board member, or directly oneself (Goplerud, Walfish, & Apsey, 1983; Goplerud, Walfish, & Broskowski, 1985; Packard et al., 2007; Pawlak, Jeter, & Fink, 1983).

II. **Engaging governance structures**
  - develop relationships with key policy makers and constituencies (Austin, 1984; Behn, 1988); engaging in innovation (Behn, 1988; Biller, 1980; Glassberg, 1978; Levine, 1978)

III. **Engaging in systematic decision-making**
  - engage in the difficult process of systematically prioritizing which services to cut and which to spare (Austin, 1984; Behn, 1980, 1988; Levine, Rubin, & Wohojian, 1982)
  - create incentives and rewards for successful downsizing (Behn, 1988; Biller, 1980; Levine, 1979; Levine, Rubin, & Wohojian, 1982)
  - focus attention to either long-term or systematic planning (Goplerud, Walfish, & Broskowski, 1985; Jerrell & Larsen, 1984, 1985; Murray and Jick, 1985).

* Bigelow & Stone, 1995; Levine, Rubin, & Wolohojian, 1982; Murray & Jick, 1985; Reisch & Taylor, 1983

Figure 1 Lessons learned from the 1980s for navigating the retrenchment of public programs.*

Overall, however, empirical investigation into public sector cutback management remains limited, with only a handful of studies on the topic being published since the topic's "zenith" in the first half of the 1980s (Bozeman, 2010, p. 558). To encourage more contemporary thinking about the nature of cutback management in public organizations, Bozeman (2010) notes that research into public-sector cutback management largely fails to examine the effects of budget reduction on organizational structure and design. These studies tend to focus more on strategies for dealing with decline than on examining cutback processes within the context of organizational recovery. Bozeman points to the need to examine public cutback processes in the context of long-term strategic management, in which organizations can expect to deal with decline but also plan for recovery or expansion (p. 560).

This study seeks to respond to Bozeman's critique of the literature by examining modern strategies for addressing budget reductions, the impact of such strategies on organizational structure and programmatic design and the relationship between organizational and environmental features and managerial strategies. The current study provides an empirical examination of modern public-sector cutback management and was designed to inform current and future HSO managers by addressing the following research questions:

(1) What contextual factors influenced decision making by organizational leaders and managers?
(2) What principles guided organizational leaders in the process?
(3) What strategies were used for decision making?
(4) What tactics were utilized to reduce the budget?
(5) What were the most critical lessons reported by leaders and managers?

Methodology

This qualitative study examines the cutback strategies of 11 California county human-service agencies located in the San Francisco Bay Area. A qualitative approach was used as a means of capturing detailed, in-depth descriptions of the budget-reduction experiences of county HSO leaders and staff related to the interorganizational and intraorganizational challenges emerging from the Great Recession. During the economic stagnation between 2008 and 2013, all bay area HSOs experienced substantial reductions in their annual funding from federal and state sources. Many of these counties, with politically liberal voters and elected boards of supervisors, heavily supplemented human-services funding with county general-fund dollars generated through county property taxes. When property values in the bay area plummeted in 2008 and 2009, property tax revenues dropped dramatically (California County Annual Report, 2014), increasing the severity of budget reductions faced by county HSOs.

County demographic characteristics

The 11 county HSOs differ in population size and include one small rural county with fewer than 300,000 residents, three medium-sized suburban counties with between 300,000 and 700,000 residents, and seven large urban counties with between 700,000 and 2,000,000 residents. Counties also range in physical size, from less than 47 square miles to over 3200 square miles. Though all 11 counties are considered to be metro areas by the U.S. Census Bureau, the population density across the counties varies widely, from 17,000 people per square mile to 127 people per square mile. Income level and distribution in these counties also varies greatly; between 2008 and 2012, median household income ranged from $60,000 to $91,000, while persons living below poverty level ranged from 7.5% to slightly more than 16% (U.S. Census Bureau State and County Quick Facts, 2014).

Organizational characteristics

The size of county HSOs also varies with the size of the county. Three agencies in the sample have fewer than 800 employees, four have between 800 and 1,500 staff, and four agencies have over 1,500 full-time staff. Three of the 11 county organizations are integrated health and human service agencies, providing public health and behavioral health services in addition to public assistance, child welfare, employment services, and senior services.

Sampling/data collection

Participating HSOs provided a diverse organizational sample in terms of organizational structure and size, budget size and required reductions, and staffing resources. The diversity of these characteristics provided leaders with different levels of flexibility or resources to influence budgetary decision making.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with three to six executive team leaders in each participating HSO. All interviews were conducted by the second author over the course of 4 months. Purposive sampling was used to identify the participants by asking each HSO director to participate in an interview and to identify other informants in his or her organization that could provide insight into the budget reduction process and experience. High-level leaders in organizations were selected because of their comprehensive understanding of all the factors that went into the decision making and the budget-reduction process. Front line or middle-management staff had less access to the various factors that contributed to making decisions, designing implementation strategies, and the technical fiscal tactics used to address budget reductions.

A total of 46 interviews lasting 60–75 minutes were conducted in 11 counties, and all but two of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Two individuals declined to be recorded, but detailed notes were taken. The interview guide was semistructured to elicit the experiences and observations of expert informants. Interview topics were drafted by the research team and were reviewed, revised, and finalized in collaboration with participating HSO directors to ensure coverage of key subjects that included (1) planning and implementation issues (e.g., scope of reductions, implementation processes, organizational priorities, mission and guiding values, resources) and (2) organizational strategies (e.g., innovative strategies, structural changes, programmatic or service delivery change and changes to the use of technology and staffing).

Data analysis

The analytical approach involved multiple inductive-coding cycles to create holistic single-case studies for each county HSO (Saldana, 2013; Yin, 2003). The case studies were then analyzed in a multicase-study approach (Stake, 2006). Creation and comparison of individual cases, joined by several characteristics, lends external validity to findings observed across multiple cases. Though important findings in one case may be context bound, the emergence of similar findings across cases can begin to confirm that the observation is credible (Stake, 2006). Credibility increases when the analysis is conducted by a single analyst, with input from the research team, in combination with supporting evidence across cases.

All coding schemes were developed and applied by the first author using descriptive and focused coding that was validated through discussions with the primary interviewer, agency directors, and other members of the research team (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). Pre-coding and first- and second-cycle coding were carried out manually, while third- and fourth-cycle coding was conducted in Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software platform. During the fourth coding cycle, organizations and all coded excerpts from those organizations were tagged with descriptors cataloguing the organizational characteristics—for example, organizational size (small, fewer than 800 employees; medium, 800–1,500 employees; and large, over 1,500 employees); union involvement

(high, moderate, minimal); range of support from elected boards of supervisors; and type of agency (either only human services or integrated health and human services). These descriptors were created and applied because they emerged in the first two cycles of coding as important recurrent themes in the data, were discussed in a variety of contexts and with a wide array of impacts on organizational processes.

Following the fourth and final coding cycle, Dedoose was used to validate theme recurrence within and across cases, confirming the frequency of the themes discussed by informants and verifying the key concepts described in the findings. Once coding and analysis were complete, findings were presented to the HSO directors to gauge accuracy and to explore the implications of the findings. In this group, several executive directors (EDs) had participated in interviews and a few were new to the position or to the organization. Feedback from this group was collected and recorded and highlights from the discussion were incorporated into the final reporting of the data.

Limitations

There are limitations to this exploratory study with respect to sampling strategy, timing of data collection, and interview design. The county sample is relatively small and may represent issues unique to HSOs in the San Francisco Bay Area. The sample of interviewees was selected by agency directors and only includes senior staff. As a result, dissenting views and the perspectives of line staff and middle managers are not represented. Respondent recall limitations may have affected the validity of findings, since interviews were conducted in 2013 regarding experiences beginning in 2008. However, the retrospective design enabled respondents to assess the relative success or failure of the strategies and tactics used, which allows researchers to examine strategies and tactics in the context of organizational regrowth. Finally, although the semistructured interview format promoted depth and detail in responses, it may have contributed to missing data. Unless an interview question directly addressed a particular topic, it may or may not have been deemed relevant by the respondent and may thus have been omitted.

Major findings

The presentation of the findings begins with a review of (a) organizational and environmental factors affecting the cutback decisions of managers; (b) the principles used to guide organizational decision making in response to budget cuts; (c) the strategies used for making those decisions; and 4) the organizational changes that were implemented in an effort to balance the budget. The final section of findings describes what respondents reported as lessons learned by noting the strategies that they perceived to be more and less effective.

Organization structural and contextual factors

Inductive analysis of transcripts identified several common organizational, structural, and contextual factors that were either described by participants as assets to the organization throughout the recession or as liabilities that impaired functioning during cutbacks. This section lays out these factors and the following sections describe related managerial decision-making processes.

Support of county governance

Several respondents stated that the support of elected county boards of supervisors and/or their appointed county administrative officer (CAO) played an important role in their successful response to the recession by supporting the implementation of new, experimental solutions. Some informants described their boards as "hands-off" by trusting HSO leaders to make good decisions and supporting those decisions. *"I could count on one hand the number of times the board has given us input on how we allocate money among programs. And so that left us quite a bit of strategic room to work."*

Other organizations pointed to the priority that human services was given in board of supervisor or CAO budgetary decisions. *"And the other thing that's unique about us is, even in times of budget cuts where everyone needs to share the pain, that our services are still prioritized in the political structure of services. So when the Board of Supervisors are deliberating on our budget, ... they do reallocate money (and) we tended to benefit from that."*

In contrast, some organizations report strained relations with their CAO or board of supervisors, where trust is minimal. *"I've learned a lot, you know, to be careful about how much trust you have with your CAO."* Some respondents also indicated that the board did not prioritize human services in the county budget. *"I think that one of the disappointing things was that we really did not have too much support from the Board of Supervisors. They weren't negative, but they were not inclined to provide any county General Fund support. So we were really on our own in terms of handling the financial impacts."* Finally, a board of supervisors was less supportive if they did not fully understand the complexities of federal drawdowns and other peculiarities of social-service financing. *"I mean we've been telling the Board and the county administrator for 5 years and they did not believe us ..."*

Collaborative employee unions

Several study participants also described their union relationships as collaborative and productive. *"We have a pretty good relationship with our labor unions. Our human resource department at the county spends a lot of time on that. So we don't have quite the struggles that some of our surrounding counties probably have."* Collaborative labor unions explicitly supported managerial decisions by communicating with their members. *"I have to say, the union stood with me when we did the presentations to the staff on why we have to change."* They also participated willingly in the budget-reduction planning processes. *"When we came up with a plan, you know, I sat down with the union again—outside of the county process—and I said 'These are what I'm restoring. You tell me if you want me to do something different and I'll consider it.' And they were happy with the strategy that we came up with."* Some unions were even described as partners in the cutback process. *"But they are emphasizing partnership and they want to be at the table helping with the planning. They don't want to be perceived as a barrier. So they have in fact joined us at the table, if you will, on some of the planning meetings."*

Conversely, organizations with more-contentious unions describe tedious processes for implementing change. *"The unions are very impatient here ... They filed several (grievance) charges and that means things come to a grinding halt."* HSOs reported working through cutbacks with highly contentious unions by addressing questions about every organizational or process change suggested. *"So you can never assume you're going to change this little part of this process and it will fly. Everything is meet and confer, everything."* The implementation of more-efficient processes to better meet the increased need triggered by the Great Recession was hindered by unions supporting minimal productivity standards. *"There is still that mindset of, 'I can only do this amount of work, because that is what I've always done for the last 25 years.'"* Finally, in particularly conflicted HSOs, respondents indicated that labor unions created additional strife between employee groups. *"The other piece is that our strong union started [to complain about] the training supervisors [who were supposedly] out to get people, and that they were not supporting people and so it was almost like they were the scapegoats."*

Organizational or county size

Respondents from small-county agencies noted that their small size advantaged their cutback-management process because established relationships in the community could be easily activated to promote shared decision making. Smaller HSOs were more agile and could start, stop, or change a program more quickly due to smaller staff sizes and caseloads. On the other hand, small counties or organizations had more-limited infrastructure and could not as easily absorb overhead costs of nonessential services. Consolidated HSOs, with integrated health and human services, were able to use the budgets of larger departments to help cushion the fiscal blow to the departments being hit hard by cutbacks. However,

large-county HSOs were less agile and reported difficulty in managing internal communications regarding change. *"We were a very large agency. And to be honest, one of the things I struggle with— even now—is trying to break down the silos, because everyone has become very focused on their department. So I have a staff of 2200 employees … So, you know, trying to manage information was difficult."* These larger HSOs also noted that successful cross-departmental collaboration was difficult and rare.

Integrated versus nonintegrated HSOs

HSOs that administered both public-health services and social services were better able to manage the budget-reduction process. Their wider array of services created more options for reconfiguring services and staffing to maximize the drawdown of federal funding. For example, two integrated HSOs transformed their public-health clinics into Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), which tripled the reimbursement rates for some of the services routinely provided at these clinics. *"Long story short, this migration saved us a ton of money because the [County] Community Clinic, the FQHC that received the OB-GYN services, could bill for the federal rate—which is about three times the rate that the county was able to bill."* One of these agencies also integrated mental-health services into their health services as a means of compensating for a lack of funding for mental health in their county. Integrated HSOs also had more programs and departments to work with when searching for additional resources. *"This is obviously helpful to be a consolidated agency like ours. It meant that if one division had a windfall increase in an allocation, they would say 'Before we hire new staff, that allocation increase goes on the table and if we can prevent laying off staff in another program, then that's what we do.' And we were able to do that because we have discretionary county dollar in all of our divisions."* Nonintegrated HSOs lacked the financial and infrastructure insulation that administering both health and human services provided.

Guiding principles

"You know, I think that … the agency and most of its programs made it through okay. I think our relationships with our CBO community held okay … So we went through a series of years with big cuts and we kind of held it all together. So I guess that's the good news of what we did and we followed our guiding principle in that sense."

More than half of the county HSOs created a formally articulated set of guiding principles. The remaining organizations used a set of informally developed values and priorities to guide their decision making without articulating them in writing. Most of these principles were mission-related values regarding client-serving programs (e.g., preserving children and family services and prioritizing the welfare of children in the community) and certain administrative values (e.g., complying with federal and state mandates, preserving direct-service staff positions, maintaining in-house and contracted-service capacity and quality, and increasing efficiency to address record-setting demand for services) to support the implementation of agreed-upon organizational changes. See Table 1 for a summary of guiding principles.

Formal guidelines were more often used in large-county HSOs when reporting to their supportive board of supervisors, the CAO, and union leadership. These guidelines were also used to communicate decision-making processes to all levels of the organization. One respondent described the motivation for creating the document as preemptive: *"We wanted to have them in place before there was a lot of wrangling going on around the table."*

Decision-making strategies

The organizations participating in this study used an array of strategies to help redefine priorities. In most organizations, program- and staff-performance data, combined with information about which programs were funded by county general-fund dollars, were used to inform the development of new priorities. In particular, integrated HSOs with high levels of union activity and

Table 1 Guiding principles.

Theme	Number of organizations
Use of mission-related values:	
Preserve quality or capacity of programs	10
Preserve programs	8
Preserve child welfare	7
Mandates	6
Preserve staff	5
Preserve contracts	2
Use of organizational priorities:	
Efficiency	11
Planning ahead	9
Equal distribution of cuts	8
Use of administrative values:	
Staff morale	10
Communication	8
Empowering staff	4
Evaluation	3
Use of a formal document	6

unsupportive boards of supervisors or CAOs placed more emphasis on reducing county-funded–line items in the budget because they were required to address the county-fund portion of their budget more aggressively.

Most of the HSOs used financial models and time studies to create and test various budget-reduction scenarios before making final programmatic or organizational structural changes. Many organizations used their current strategic plan to inform the process of reprioritizing services. Engaging critical stakeholders (e.g., staff, unions, clients, funders, community partners, and community leaders) was a common strategy for decision making. This involved discussions with stakeholders about service reduction or elimination and incorporating their input into organizational actions. Multiple communication strategies were used with internal staff to engage them in decision making, and HSO leaders paid careful attention to consistent and clear messaging to staff about the budget-reduction process.

Board-supported HSOs more often reported an explicit focus on staff engagement and creating and executing a clear communication strategy. One midsize organization, with a very supportive board of supervisors, invested considerable time and resources into educating employees about social-service budgeting to make sure that they could contribute meaningfully to decision making. *"So we had to inform, educate and then we could begin to really discuss."* In this organization, when staff suggestions were not used, leadership attempted to *"get word back (as to) why this didn't work or why it wouldn't work exactly"* to the staff who contributed ideas. *"Just so people knew that we were listening."* Such attention to detail took a great deal of agency resources in staff time and energy, but leaders in this agency felt it was an important priority. *"[We were] was just trying to maintain a sense of sensitivity to the fact that—whether someone was laid off or bumped—people were afraid. And they deserved a lot of respect and some care during that difficult time because there are lots of things that you can say, and you must say, and you should say."*

In many other organizations, while some efforts were made to engage midlevel- and direct-service staff (as well as union leaders) in the decision-making process, management frequently did not display a capacity to communicate effectively with staff. Many respondents reported that their staff provided feedback that communication related to budget reductions was insufficient, and staff members were critical of top-down decisions made without their input or that of community stakeholders. See Table 2 for a summary of decision-making strategies.

Table 2 Decision-making strategies.

Theme	Number of organizations
Create and codify new priorities	10
Use financial models/time studies	9
Use agency data	9
Consider county dollars	8
Engage in strategic planning	8
Primary decisions made by top leadership	8
Gather input from stakeholders:	11
Community input	11
Staff input	10
Labor union input	8

Budget-balancing strategies

New priorities inspired a range of strategies and tactics used by the participating organizations to balance their annually shrinking budgets during the recession years. Every HSO used solutions related to organizational re-structuring, internal and community partnerships, staffing strategies, and fiscal management. Most HSOs also addressed the increased workload created by the budget-balancing strategies and the increase in service demand triggered by the economic downturn.

Restructuring the organization was the most common strategy for reducing agency budgets while attempting to maintain service capacity and quality. HSOs eliminated or reduced organizational infrastructure (e.g., client-transportation services, training or planning positions or entire departments, and administrative support for direct-service staff) and client-serving programs. Most organizations seized the opportunity to reformulate programs in a more efficient or consolidated manner. Some examples of program reforms include moving from scheduled to drop-in appointments, conducting group intakes for entitlement programs or using call centers to work with clients on the phone rather than in-person.

All HSOs looked for solutions to their fiscal challenges by creating new partnerships, capitalizing on existing ones, or adjusting contracts with partners. Every organization developed internal partnerships, within their own agency or with other county departments such as probation or behavioral health. Partnerships with other county divisions were utilized, for example, to transfer programs from the HSO budget to the budget of another department, ensuring service continuity. Partnerships within the HSO also helped to balance the budget, including interdivision transfer of funds to sustain a struggling division. Many organizations also reduced or eliminated contracts with community-based partners as a way to reduce their budgets. However, an equal number of agencies expanded or added contracts in order to maintain services at a lower cost. Smaller, integrated HSOs with low-to-moderate union activity and supportive boards were more likely to increase contracts for outsourcing services, whereas large agencies with high union activity and less supportive boards were more likely to reduce contracts. Finally, several organizations worked actively with community or county partners to identify duplication of services in the community and to coordinate service provision through the use of a single service provider.

The third-most-frequently-mentioned–budget-balancing strategy involved rigorous fiscal stewardship, such as reducing or eliminating unnecessary spending and increasing accountability for staff and community contractors. Nearly every respondent also focused attention on maximizing the drawdown of federal or state funds. More than half of these HSOs, especially those reporting minimal union activity and supportive boards or CAOs, also looked for additional ways to increase revenue; for example, two counties invested in staff to help clients on county-funded general assistance to apply for and obtain federal disability benefits, enabling the HSO to claim federal reimbursement for the general-assistance benefits paid to these clients and increasing the monthly income of clients. Every HSO eliminated vacant positions and/or shifted staff from poorly funded

programs to better-funded programs. Most organizations also resorted to staff layoffs; however, with limited exceptions, layoffs were minimal as administrators capitalized on vacancies and staff attrition. Almost half of the participating organizations implemented hiring freezes as a means of controlling staff costs, and several used voluntary or incentivized retirement to avoid layoffs. A few organizations recruited volunteers to supplement the workforce or to provide ancillary services, in some cases using newly retired staff as volunteers. The increased demand for efficiency and productivity led a few small and midsize organizations to increase performance expectations for staff. For example, poorly performing staff were more quickly identified and moved out of the organization through disciplinary processes. *"I think basically we've discovered—we just can't afford to have deadweight, or, you know, people not pulling their weight, and making important, significant mistakes. And so we don't tolerate that anymore."*

The remaining staff in every agency was left with a significantly increased workload. Organizational leaders were aware of this problem and, through direct supervision or agency-wide communications, attempted to help staff prioritize their workload and identify tasks that could be left incomplete. Most of these organizations later brought in temporary or contracted employees to help the organization catch up on the backlog of work left undone during these times. Two organizations used overtime contributions from current employees to help catch up on backlogged work. See Table 3 for a summary of budget-balancing strategies.

Lessons learned

As budgets began to be restored, respondents reflected on lessons learned to incorporate into their regrowth. As one agency director reflected, *"Change comes out of something we've blown up … Once it's blown up … you have to pick up the pieces again … and build in a different way [by] throw[ing] away pieces that, you know, maybe the only reason you had them was because you have had them for 30 years."*

Table 3 Budget balancing strategies.

Theme	Number of organizations
Structural solutions:	
Eliminate programs	11
Reduce infrastructure	10
Reformulate programs	10
Partnership solutions:	
Create new internal partnerships	11
Reduce contracts	8
Expand contracts/outsource	8
Reduce duplicate services	7
Financial solutions:	
Increase fiscal stewardship	10
Maximize drawdowns	8
Increase revenue	8
Utilize ARRA funds	5
Staffing solutions:	
Eliminate vacant positions	10
Shift staff between programs	8
Lay off staff	7
Freeze hiring	5
Use volunteers	3
Increase accountability	2
Workload solutions:	
Prioritize workload	7
Hire temporary staff	6
Expand use of overtime	2

What worked

The innovative solutions and increased partnerships that arose from the economic crisis were seen as successes. Most study participants agreed that the budget crisis spawned innovation and shifted focus from temporary fixes to sustained organizational changes. HSOs reporting supportive boards engaged in innovative approaches over four times more often than agencies reporting unsupportive boards or those not commenting on levels of board support. The majority of innovations involved creative financial strategies (e.g., revising accounting methods, using more-accurate methods to project salary savings, finding new ways to increase revenue, or transferring funds between programs based on funding availability). One organization developed "Budget Projects" through which each division in the organization was challenged to increase revenue or decrease expenses in order to close their budget gaps.

Another common innovative practice was the formation of new partnerships with community organizations, or the reconfiguration of existing partnerships, as a means of maintaining service quality with reduced funds—especially among HSOs with supportive boards; for example, one county partnered with local foundations to continue to provide services in the community that the HSO no longer had the resources to provide. In another county, a mutually beneficial partnership between the water agency and the youth employment training program, facilitated by a member of the board of supervisors, gained great support from the community and positive response from the participants. *"So I had never met these folks at the Water Agency before, and one of our former Board of Supervisors members, who had been retired, introduced me to the water agency folks—and said, you know, HSO has kids that need to go to work. Water Agency, you have work that needs to be done. This is a marriage made in heaven."*

The use of information technologies was also a critical aspect of surviving the impact of the recession. As one executive director observed, *"Technology has really saved us, because despite all the losses, [we went from] about 650 employees today ... down to about 400 employees and today we are probably up to about 450 [and] we are serving more clients today than we have in our history."* Several study participants noted that the data provided by their information technologies were critical to decision-making and monitoring processes. For example, in one organization, the leadership team invested in mobile workplace technologies that allowed direct service staff, working primarily in the field, to enter case data in their car, at home, or on site with clients. Staff saved travel time because they did not have to start or end the day at the office, and the agency saved money on mileage reimbursement, increased staff efficiency, and facilities costs (close to one million dollars annually). Several other agencies used customer-oriented, computer-based technologies to streamline the intake and application process in benefits-eligibility offices. Clients were able to access many functions within the organization's lobby through kiosks, private phones, computer stations, electronic reader boards, phone systems with IVR, and document-scanning stations.

Programs were creatively redesigned to enable consumers to receive similar levels of services with fewer agency resources. For example, several participating organizations restructured their eligibility-determination process from a case-based process (in which the intake worker follows a case from file opening to closure) to a task-based process (in which clients can be served by any case worker, at any phase of their case). Some organizations developed new communication strategies for reaching out to the community or to their staff, such as investing resources in a media team to manage internal and external communication through video production and YouTube. Finally, a few organizations innovated through the use of volunteers, including recruiting volunteers to provide services to the aging population in the community and asking recent HSO retirees to implement a leadership-development program for their middle managers. Another county erected a "triage tent" in the parking lot to address lobby overcrowding and enlisted the help of volunteers by recruiting individuals waiting in line for services.

What did not work

The majority of respondents referred to regrets about the ways in which communication, particularly with internal staff, was handled during this time. Another agency leader commented, *"If I had to do*

that all over again, I would have been more transparent." Some HSO staff reported feeling that they should have provided more opportunity for employees to participate in decision making or that they should have explained more clearly the rationale for certain decisions.

In many organizations, staff had limited understanding of complex social-service-funding mechanisms, and this affected the extent to which program-level staff could contribute to decision making. An interviewee responded, *"I'm guessing . . . the deeper you go, the less staff know about what was cut . . . Why does MediCal never get cut? Well you know because there are no [county] general funds in MediCal."* The lack of adequate staff engagement in meaningful or productive discussions around budget reductions also highlighted the need to better educate program-level staff about county social-service financing. Similarly, the lack of understanding of social-service finances contributed to the lack of support from their boards of supervisors.

Almost half of the respondents expressed regret about issues related to fiscal stewardship. This was especially true for agencies that also reported medium- to high-levels of union involvement. A few agencies returned state or federal funding because they did not allocate their resources appropriately to generate the matching funds. Others were not able to maximize their federal or state drawdowns, in part due to the board of supervisors requiring them to cut staff positions that generated state or federal revenue.

Almost all study participants discussed the importance of anticipatory planning and forecasting, even in the midst of the recession, as a means of better positioning the organization for recovery. As one deputy director reflected, *"It just didn't seem like we had enough time and I think in retrospect . . . it is important to really know exactly what the immediate impact is, what the midterm impact might be, and the long term—and for everybody to be aware of that."* Many respondents disclosed a variety of ways in which a lack of foresight about the consequences of short-term solutions devastated their organization—for example, a voluntary employee-separation-incentive package, which encouraged knowledgeable staff to leave the organization at a time when skilled and experienced staff was needed. Some organizations referred to this experience as "brain drain." Organizations could not replace the lost experience and expertise quickly enough, and some programs and processes temporarily declined in quality.

Increased turnover was cited by several organizations as an ongoing additional challenge during the recession years, and the drastically reduced workforce became a bigger problem when county HSOs needed supplemental staff to launch the enrollment phase of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that emerged at the end of the recession. Another budget-reduction stressor experienced in most organizations related to "bumping" (e.g., the right of a senior employee to displace a newer employee, when the senior employee's position is eliminated). Employees were often bumped into positions for which they had no experience or expertise, increasing the need for staff training at a time when HSOs had limited resources for such activities. Bumping processes also led to an increase in staff turnover, when senior staff members were unsuccessful in new roles or newer staff resigned to avoid being bumped.

A few organizations were early adopters, planned ahead, and implemented time-saving technologies before the recession. In other organizations, respondents expressed regret over delaying investment in such technologies before the crisis hit. Another respondent noted, *"When you're cutting a lot of staff and you're cutting a lot of budget, that's probably not the best time to look at new technology."* New technology required extensive staff training and new policies and procedures to support staff that experienced difficulty learning to use the new systems. A few respondents also reported disappointment that some of the technologies adopted did not deliver the projected efficiencies.

The implementation of new technologies during these recession years was especially difficult because many county HSOs had substantially reduced supports for technology such as IT specialists and trainers. Respondents in almost half of the organizations expressed regret over having eliminated critical planning, evaluation, and/or staff-development positions. One agency director recounted, *"It probably was easier to hire back direct staff later than indirect service staff, probably*

easier to justify getting them through your local Board of Supervisors than it is to get your infra-structure staff back." Respondents in other organizations that were careful to preserve infrastructure positions stated that they did so intentionally, recognizing that such positions would be more difficult to restore.

Discussion

Reflecting on previous cutback research

The findings from this exploratory study suggest that county HSOs charged with budget cuts face many of the challenges outlined in much of the original research into public-sector retrenchment in the 1980s. Goplerud, Walfish, and Broskowski (1985) note that leaders' actions may diverge from the values and strategies they espouse. Levine's insights highlight the challenges, asserted to be unique to public managers (Pandey, 2010), which may account for this disparity. Environmental constraints fundamentally shape public management practice, including complying with legislative and judicial program mandates and responding to political actors (Levine, 1978, 1979; Levine et al., 1982). The strategies identified by the participants as poor choices were influenced by a range of environmental factors, related to their public nature, which forced or encouraged the organization to implement a particular strategy. Most participating organizations disclosed that communication efforts were hampered by constant changes in budget decisions made by the state and by the board of supervisors and the county administrator's office. In addition, county political dynamics often inhibited open communication with the community and with organizational staff. In one instance, an HSO leader was explicitly told not to share critical information with staff or the public until after an important election. When deciding what and where to cut, careful consideration of future repercussions was hindered by the uncertainty of legislated funding mechanisms and changing political priorities, exacerbated by unsupportive boards of supervisors or CAO offices. HSOs with less structural flexibility and in more-contentious environments appeared to be hampered in efforts to shore up staff morale by political agendas, civil service union regulations, and workloads required by legislative mandates.

Many other themes in this study echo key findings from the 1980s retrenchment research highlighted in Figure 1. Public-sector–human-service organizations still focus heavily on the social-services mission and honoring commitments to public employees. However, modern HSO leaders are able to access additional technological resources unavailable to organizations during the 1970s and 80s. In the Great Recession, these technologies helped create efficiencies, aided in decision making and managing customer and staff communications, but also came with unanticipated complications and required more organizational resources than expected. An important study finding, rarely noted in previous research or theoretical frameworks, is the impact of complex social-service–funding mechanisms on staff participation in organizational decision making. Direct-service staff, midlevel staff, and members of boards of supervisors were often unfamiliar with the intricacies of social-service financing, creating challenges for human-service administrators who sought to include employees in decision making and to work collaboratively with elected officials.

Structural and environmental contexts

The apparent impact of public environmental context on HSO decision making lends further support for Pandey's (2010) theory, which argues that strategies for reducing budgets are distinctively affected by organizational structures and processes unique to public organizations. The level of support for human services from the county board of supervisors or CAO, the nature of employee union activity, and the size and structure of the HSO may have a significant impact on the extent to which leaders can access strategies that advantageously position the organization for regrowth or

expansion. Supportive boards and CAOs increased the ability of leaders to develop innovative revenue-generating solutions, to create new internal and external partnerships that expanded services with little or no increase in costs, and to engage in collaborative planning with their own staff and other organizations. The hands-off relationships that these boards developed over time with their HSO leadership, which implicitly communicated respect and trust, may provide a model of leadership that HSO managers channel to empower their own staff to find new ways to generate revenue or reduce program costs. Further, empowering boards and collaborative unions may have allowed these HSO leaders to innovate with their staff, plan ahead more carefully, and create new partnerships by minimizing approval processes and reducing barriers to change.

More county funding, often associated with more supportive boards of supervisors, also provided a resource cushion that enabled more-extensive planning processes, including taking the time to create formal guidelines for budget reductions and engage and educate staff on budget matters so they could participate in decision making. One respondent pointed out that the effort to fully engage staff in the cutback process was time consuming and laborious: *"There was a lot of work and a lot of effort that went behind the communication in regards [sic] to what was happening."* This particular agency, which appears to have put forth the most effort into engaging staff, is also an organization that entered the recession with a healthy reserve fund—which was used to supplement the agency budget in the first years of cutbacks.

It is also interesting that agencies with contentious labor unions more frequently reported feeling that they had not been as fiscally wise as they could have been. Examples include regret over leaving federal money on the table or a sense that leadership was *"borrowing from Peter to pay Paul."* Organizations with higher levels of union conflict struggled more with implementing new technologies, executing strategies aimed at fiscal stewardship, and outsourcing existing services. A few respondents stated that their highly involved unions tended to slow down change processes by asking to meet and confer over each small adjustment to their roles or processes. This dynamic may have influenced the decisions to avoid further outsourcing of additional services and delay implementation of new technologies, as there may simply not have been time for the intensive process of seeking approval for such organizational changes from union representatives. As a result, these organizations may have had to look elsewhere for second-best solutions.

Agency size and structure also affected the amount of flexibility an organization had with respect to redesigning programs and staffing structures, engaging staff and communicating change processes. Not only did smaller organizations seem to have an easier time managing staff communication and engagement in the budget-reduction process, but it was also easier for them to implement programmatic and staffing changes using "ramp-up" time that was shorter and less complicated. Smaller, integrated HSOs were also more agile and programmatically diverse and could, thus, buffer the effects of cutbacks more easily. Senior staff in all three integrated HSOs also felt well supported by their board of supervisors, indicating that such solutions were also more easily achieved by agencies allowed autonomy by their board of supervisors.

Further research

The cutback-management experiences of these 11 HSOs suggest new variables to incorporate into existing cutback-management–theoretical frameworks, which may expand the applicability of these models and deepen the knowledge derived from them. These contextual factors can also contribute to beginning theories regarding public-organizational-cutback strategies for optimal organizational regrowth. To further discern optimal and predictable organization processes during retrenchment it is important to examine the following research questions: (a) How does the tension between the values of leaders and their ability to actually execute related actions inform decision making and impact long-range strategic approaches to budget reductions? (b) To what extent does organizational size and structure influence the actions and relationships of leaders? (c) How does the quality of the relationship between organizational leaders and their labor unions and board of supervisors or

CAOs influence decision making during fiscal crises? and (d) What can managers do to mitigate the effects of these variables and enhance the weight of organizational values in their decision making and reduction process?

Respondents in all participating organizations reported concerns about technology adoption and communication strategies. Information technology was a key asset for most organizations but also a source of stress and frustration. Future research needs to identify the advantages and limitations of the use of information technologies in HSOs, the role of technology in preparing for and surviving retrenchment, and the specific ways that information technologies can enhance intraorganizational communications. Relevant organizational communication frameworks from other disciplines may shed light on the communication struggles experienced by these declining HSOs. However further research should focus particular attention on the specific external and intraorganizational communication needs characterizing the human services, where staff engage heavily in emotion-based work. Guidelines that address the appropriate content, timing, and media for communications with staff at each level of the organization would be a useful product of research in this area.

Practice implications

At the time of the interviews in the spring of 2013, many organizations were beginning to expand and rebuild. One agency leader remarked, *"It feels like we are coming out of a war, and we are looking at the limbs we lost, and we now need to redesign the organization to be in a more stable position."* For some respondents, down-sized organizations became the new reality that required collective adjustment. One participant described the new normal: *"We have seen our high, but I believe that that's government everywhere."* The shift in managerial perceptions highlights the need to transform how scholars and executives view this topic. In his 2010 essay regarding cutback-management scholarship, Barry Bozeman suggests reinvigorating the subject of cutback administration by "focusing not on strategies for mitigating decline but rather on the role of decline in organizational life cycles and its implications for devising resilient, long-term managerial strategies" (p. 561).

Further support for Bozeman's perspective emerged from leaders' reports that their organizations became stronger and more efficient due to the drastic changes made during the Great Recession. One director noted, *"I think that in many ways the creativity happened after we got leaner. It wasn't how we got leaner—but we got leaner and then we got better."* Another respondent stated, *"I feel like the Phoenix rising."* These statements suggests that, perhaps like a wildfire, the recession budget reductions served to burn off debris, providing ideal growing conditions to kick-start regeneration and allowing organizations to emerge in a new form. The stories of these HSOs underscore the accuracy of Bozeman's observations by offering a long view of organizational decline in which reductions are normative, periodic, and serve to streamline and strengthen organizations. For this reason, the experiences and strategies emerging from the Great Recession point to two types of practice implications: (1) tactics to employ when the organization is thriving in order to prepare for the next round of budget challenges and (2) tactics to employ when faced with the need to reduce budgets.

Tactics to prepare

In addition to maintaining positive and collaborative relationships with key stakeholders (e.g., elected officials, the board of supervisors, other county departments, labor unions, and partner organizations in the community), it is increasingly important to educate staff at all levels (and the board of supervisors) about the nature of social-service funding mechanisms. At the same time, HSOs would benefit from installing capacity-building technologies and developing a robust volunteer base in their community to help maintain service standards, especially when fiscal resources are less constrained. Finally, the ongoing challenge to create and find innovative approaches to budget and service efficiencies needs to become a normative management practice. As one respondent said,

"I once had someone tell me that there is such a thing as having too much money because . . . it makes you sort of lazy in the sense that you don't have to look for other ways of doing things."

Tactics for budget reduction

The impact of the Great Recession on these HSOs points to the benefits of continuing to advance an organization's strategic plan and taking the time to think through potential repercussions when faced with a financial crisis. As one director noted, *"We started that [strategic planning] when the downturn was at its height, because I always think that's a good time to plan. Because you're not going to stay in the mess forever, but you need to be ready for when things are better."* Maintaining a focus on collaborative strategic planning will help organizations to identify and direct limited resources to organizational priorities and to position the organization for expansion when economic challenges lessen. As the same respondent pointed out, *"A lot of what's in that strategic plan didn't cost money."* Strategic plans built in collaboration with partner organizations and other community stakeholders are a robust way of maintaining engagement with these stakeholders and enhancing opportunities to expand key partnerships in order to preserve the community safety net.

This study also highlights the need for specific tactics related to staffing changes during a fiscal crisis. Seeking to save money by incenting the early retirements of senior staff may, in the long run, cost more money when experience and expertise are replaced by those with fewer capabilities. When impossible to avoid, organizations should take action to mitigate negative repercussions of bumping by matching staff with appropriate open positions. Further, organizations should minimize reductions to organizational infrastructure, because these positions can be critical to support decision making and are difficult to restore once eliminated. HSOs that avoid these practices during difficult times, and capitalize on economic stability to continuously prepare for leaner times, will thrive, not just survive, in the face of environmental adversity.

References

Austin, M. (1984). Managing cutbacks in the 1980s. *Social Work*, *29*(5), 428–434. doi:10.1093/sw/29.5.428

Baker, B. (1982). The impact of cutbacks on workers. *Public Welfare*, *40*(3), 24–28.

Behn, R. D. (1980). Leadership for cut-back management: The use of corporate strategy. *Public Administration Review*, *40*(6), 613–620. doi:10.2307/3110316

Behn, R. D. (1988). The fundamentals of cutback management. In K. S. Cameron, R. I. Sutton, & D. A. Whetten (Eds.), *Readings in organizational decline: Frameworks, research, and prescriptions* (pp. 347–356). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Bigelow, B., & Stone, M. M. (1995). Why don't they do what we want? An exploration of organizational responses to institutional pressures in community health centers. *Public Administration Review*, *55*(2), 183–192. doi:10.2307/977184

Biller, R. P. (1980). Leadership tactics for retrenchment. *Public Administration Review*, *40*(6), 604–609. doi:10.2307/3110314

Bozeman, B. (2010). Hard lessons from hard times: Reconsidering and reorienting the "managing decline" literature. *Public Administration Review*, *70*(4), 557–563. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02176.x

California Budget Project. (2009). *In the midst of the great recession: The state of working California*. Retrieved from http://www.cbp.org/

California County Annual Report. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.sco.ca.gov/Files-ARD-Local/LocRep/counties_reports_1112counties.pdf

Center of Budget and Policy Priorities. (2014). *Chart book: The legacy of the great recession*. Retrieved from http://www.cbpp.org

Edwards, L. G., & Mitchell, C. C. (1987). Strategies for cutback management in community mental health centers. *Community Mental Health Journal*, *23*(2), 140–151. doi:10.1007/BF00757169

Flynn, R. (1991). Coping with cutbacks and managing retrenchment in health. *Journal of Social Policy*, *20*(02), 215. doi:10.1017/S0047279400018729

Glassberg, A. (1978). Organizational responses to municipal budget decreases. *Public Administration Review*, *38*(4), 325–332. doi:10.2307/975814

Goplerud, E. N., Walfish, S., & Apsey, M. O. (1983). Surviving cutbacks in community mental health: Seventy-seven action strategies. *Community Mental Health Journal*, *19*(1), 62–76. doi:10.1007/BF00778681

Goplerud, E. N., Walfish, S., & Broskowski, A. (1985). Weathering the cuts: A Delphi survey on surviving cutbacks in community mental health. *Community Mental Health Journal*, *21*(1), 14–27. doi:10.1007/BF00754703

Holzer, M., Lee, S.-H., & Newman, M. A. (2003). Best practices in managing reductions in force: Lessons learned from the Australian public service reform. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, *23*(1), 38–60. doi:10.1177/0734371X02250114

Hood, C., Roberts, P., & Chilvers, M. (1990). Cutbacks and public bureaucracy: Consequences in Australia. *Journal of Public Policy*, *10*(2), 133–163. doi:10.1017/S0143814X00004797

Jerrell, J. M., & Larsen, J. K. (1984). Policy shifts and organizational adaptation: A review of current developments. *Community Mental Health Journal*, *20*(4), 282–293. doi:10.1007/BF00757077

Jerrell, J. M., & Larsen, J. K. (1985). How community mental health centers deal with cutbacks and competition. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, *36*(11), 1169–1174.

Jick, T. D., & Murray, V. V. (1982). The management of hard times: Budget cutbacks in public sector organizations. *Organization Studies*, *3*(2), 141–169. doi:10.1177/017084068200300204

Johnson, N., Oliff, P., & Williams, E. (2011). *An update on state budget cuts: At least 46 states have imposed cuts that hurt vulnerable residents and cause job loss*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from http://www.cbpp.org

Johnson, R. S., & Berger, C. S. (1990). The challenge of change: Enhancing social work services at a time of cutback. *Health Social Work*, *15*(3), 181–190. doi:10.1093/hsw/15.3.181

Levine, C. H. (1978). Organizational decline and cutback management. *Public Administration Review*, *38*(4), 316–325. doi:10.2307/975813

Levine, C. H. (1979). More on cutback management: Hard questions for hard times. *Public Administration Review*, *39*(2), 179–183. doi:10.2307/3110475

Levine, C. H., Rubin, I. S., & Wolohojian, G. G. (1982). Managing organizational retrenchment: Preconditions, deficiencies, and adaptations in the public sector. *Administration and Society*, *14*(1), 101–136. doi:10.1177/009539978201400105

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Murray, V. V., & Jick, T. D. (1985). Taking stock of organizational decline management: Some issues and illustrations from an empirical study. *Journal of Management*, *11*(3), 111–123. doi:10.1177/014920638501100309

Nakamoto, D., & Altaffer, F. (1992). Cutback management using information and research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, *19*(4), 255–268. doi:10.1007/BF00708318

Oliff, P., Mai, C., & Palacios, V. (2012). *States continue to feel recession's impact. Center on budget and policy priorities*. Retrieved from http://www.cbpp.org

Packard, T., Patti, R., Daly, D., Tucker-Tatlow, J., & Farrell, C. (2007). Cutback management strategies: Experiences in nine county human service agencies. *Administration in Social Work*, *32*(1), 55–75. doi:10.1300/J147v32n01_05

Pandey, S. K. (2010). Cutback management and the paradox of publicness. *Public Administration Review*, *70*(4), 564–571. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02177.x

Partnership for Public Service & Booz Allen Hamilton. (2011). Making *smart cuts: Lessons from the 1990s budget front*. Retrieved from http://www.boozallen.com/media/file/SmartCuts_11.pdf

Pawlak, E. J., Jeter, S. C., & Fink, R. L. (1983). The politics of cutback management. *Administration in Social Work*, *7*(2), 1–10. doi:10.1300/J147v07n02_01

Reisch, M., & Taylor, C. L. (1983). Ethical guidelines for cutback management: A preliminary approach. *Administration in Social Work*, *7*(3–4), 59–72. doi:10.1300/J147v07n03_08

Ruffing, K. A., & Friedman, J. A. (2013). *Economic downturn and legacy of Bush policies continue to drive large deficits: Economic recovery measures, financial rescues have only temporary impact*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from http://www.cbpp.org/research/economic-downturn-and-legacy-of-bush-policies-continue-to-drive-large-deficits

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

U.S. Census Bureau State and County Quick Facts. (2014). Retrieved from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html#

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Managerial and Frontline Perspectives on the Process of Evidence-Informed Practice Within Human Service Organizations

Sarah Carnochan[a], Bowen McBeath[b], and Michael J. Austin[a]

[a]Mack Center on Nonprofit & Public Sector Management in the Human Services, School of Social Welfare, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA; [b]School of Social Work, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA

ABSTRACT

Emphasis on evidence-informed practice (EIP) in human service organizations aimed at improving service quality and client outcomes has increased in recent decades. Research has suggested that the organizational context shapes EIP, yet few studies have explored the agency-based activities that constitute this form of practice. This survey of 473 managers and frontline practitioners in 11 county human service organizations examines EIP activities in agency settings. Analysis of responses to open-ended questions identifies the specific cognitive, interactive, action, and compliance dimensions of EIP, including challenges. EIP emerges as complex and nonlinear, shaped by organizational environment, practitioner perspectives, and client needs.

In recent decades, the social work profession has experienced growing attention to the use of evidence to improve service quality and client outcomes. The task-centered practice, empirical clinical practice, and single-system design models of frontline practice represent efforts to link empiricism to social work practice (Marsh & Fisher, 2008; Okpych & Yu, 2014; Reid, 2002; Thyer & Myers, 2011). Since the 1990s, two related but distinct approaches to incorporating evidence into human service delivery have emerged: the empirically supported interventions (ESI) approach and the evidence-informed practice (EIP) or, alternatively, evidence-based practice (EBP) framework (Fisher, 2014; McBeath, Briggs & Aisenberg, 2010). These frameworks are increasingly dominant in social work policy and practice and occupy an important position in the social work literature (Hodge, Lacasse, & Benson, 2012).

The ESI approach seeks to improve service effectiveness by implementing rigorously evaluated interventions with fidelity to specific practice protocols (Barth et al., 2012; Thyer & Myers, 2011). In the United States, federal, state, and local government entities have engaged in an array of strategies to promote ESIs (Bellamy, Bledsoe, & Traube, 2006). For example, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offers a website listing evidence-based mental health interventions, while the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare website provides similar information for child welfare services (California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare [CEBC], 2015; Thyer & Myers, 2011). These federal- and state-level efforts to promote the diffusion of ESIs have influenced parallel efforts by local governments and community-based agencies. In Sonoma County, located in Northern California, the Upstream Investments Initiative provides information on a comprehensive set of empirically supported interventions and prioritizes these interventions in decisions to fund community-based service providers (Sonoma County, 2011). In other states, including Oregon, public agencies (and private agencies providing contracted services) are required to dedicate substantial proportions of their service expenditures to providing ESIs (McBeath, Briggs & Aisenberg, 2010).

Despite these efforts, the implementation of ESIs is still limited in human service settings, attributable to cost, challenges involved in ensuring treatment fidelity, and the complexity of adapting individual ESIs to suit specific agency and client demands (Barth, 2008; Barth et al., 2012; Horwitz et al., 2014). Scholarly critique of the ESI framework has highlighted three additional issues: (1) the mechanistic nature of "manualized" interventions that may undermine the exercise of professional judgment; (2) the top-down nature of performance measures and service models prescribed by policy makers and external researchers; and (3) the emphasis on compliance-oriented practice based on past evidence rather than innovative practice responsive to current evidence (for summaries of this literature see McBeath, Briggs & Aisenberg, 2010; Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, 2011; Webb, 2001).

In contrast to the ESI approach to strengthening frontline practice, evidence-informed practice (EIP) proposes a process framework in which practitioners integrate "individual practice expertise with the best available external evidence from systematic research as well as considering the values and expectations of clients" in order to inform practice decisions (Gambrill, 1999, p. 346). (We use the term evidence-informed practice (EIP) in our discussion of the literature for the sake of consistency.) While ESI strategies are comparable to managerial performance measurement approaches, with a strong emphasis on administrative accountability and control of frontline practitioners, EIP as framed by Gambrill (1999) and others is consistent with a street-level perspective in which evidence-informed decision-making by frontline practitioners is viewed as essential (Brodkin, 2008; Ganju, 2006).

Over the past decade, studies conducted in the United States and internationally have found generally positive attitudes toward EIP among human service managers and frontline or direct service practitioners working in public and private sector settings (Beddoe, 2011; Booth, Booth, & Falzon, 2003; Collins-Camargo, Sullivan, & Murphy, 2011; Gray, Joy, Plath, & Webb, 2014; Knight, 2013; Savaya, Altschuler & Melamed, 2013). EIP process guidelines have focused on the activities of the individual frontline practitioner, outlining a process of critical reflection that involves framing researchable questions; identifying and evaluating relevant research; integrating research findings, practitioner expertise, and client values; and assessing outcomes (Gambrill, 1999; McCracken & Marsh, 2008). This multistep process has generally been understood as sequential, although little research has evaluated the extent to which practitioners view it as such. Despite the growing emphasis on using research to inform practice decisions, challenges related to research availability and utilization persist (Marsh & Fisher, 2008).

More recently, research focus on the role of practitioners and managers has expanded to consider the effects of organizational context on individuals engaged in EIP (Austin, Dal Santo & Lee, 2012; Lee, Bright, & Berlin, 2013; McBeath et al., 2015; Yousefi-Nooraie, Dobbins, & Marin, 2014). Research situating the individual evidence-informed practitioner within the organization focuses attention on practitioner discretion in carrying out formal roles within the immediate task and technical environment. Studies have identified concerns related to the effects of monitoring and the diminished professional responsibility of frontline practitioners due to managerialism and funder-driven expectations of effectiveness and efficiency (Gray, Joy, Plath, & Webb, 2012; Mullen, Bledsoe, & Bellamy, 2008; Savaya & Altschuler, 2013). Organizational factors reported in the research relate to implementation barriers and facilitating factors including leadership, organizational culture, supervision, staff training, agency resources, and access to evidence (Barratt, 2003; Booth et al., 2003; Collins-Camargo et al., 2011; Gray et al., 2012; Mullen et al., 2008; Savaya & Altschuler, 2013).

These studies highlight the practical and ethical complications of engaging in EIP within a changing political economy of human service provision emphasizing efficiency, effectiveness, and outcome attainment. This research also suggests that the role of individual evidence-informed practitioners and managers is influenced by organizational context, such that engagement with various forms of evidence may reflect (a) the availability of different types of data; (b) the priorities of administrators; (c) the overall culture of the agency in relation to the use of evidence; and (d) the degree to which individual practitioners and managers are supported to engage in evidence-informed practice.

Research situating EIP in an organizational context increasingly reflects a "methodological pluralism" with respect to the definition of evidence. This perspective acknowledges the presence and potential value of multiple types of evidence, including qualitative, quantitative, and practice-based research and agency-generated administrative and performance data, needs assessments, and client surveys (Epstein, 2011; Gould, 2006; Qureshi, 2004; Shlonsky & Mildon, 2014). Practitioners and managers in human service organizations may have limited access to external scientific research due to publisher licensing restrictions or limited time to search for, evaluate, and apply the best available scientific research (Barratt, 2003; Buckley, Tonmyr, Lewig, & Jack, 2014). In contrast, they may have access to substantial internal organizational data and reporting; however, only some of these may be relevant for addressing practice-based questions (McBeath et al., 2015).

Absent from the literature on EIP are direct explorations of the daily and organizationally situated practices involved in EIP—namely, the ways in which managers and practitioners use diverse types of evidence to inform their decision making in specific organizational settings. With respect to organizational context, the literature on knowledge management, organizational learning, and virtual communities of practice in human service organizations identifies the important role that social and relational processes play in knowledge diffusion among managers and practitioners (Cook-Craig & Sabah, 2009; Gould, 2000; Herie & Martin, 2002). This work highlights limitations inherent in the EIP process model that focuses on individual frontline practitioners without also attending to the manner in which practitioner processes may be embedded within formal organizational goals and structures and within informal organizational norms and processes. For example, Nutley, Walter, and Davies (2009) note that interactive approaches and social influence appear to be most effective in improving research use among social work practitioners, and a Canadian study of public health workers found that interpersonal relationships and social and contextual factors influence information seeking in EIP (Yousefi-Nooraie et al., 2014). These studies suggest that practitioner and manager engagement in EIP is a group activity that may reflect prevailing social processes (e.g., the efforts of staff teams) and hierarchical and organizational forces (e.g., the influence and perspectives of key agency stakeholders).

More specifically, scholarship to date on EIP has not investigated the particular cognitive and interactive processes involved in gathering, interpreting, and making use of evidence. Generally, scholarship about critical thinking in social work practice suggests that EIP cognitive processes might involve (a) reframing and challenging assumptions; (b) synthesizing, comparing and evaluating ideas and observations; (c) problem solving; (d) creativity; and (e) critical talk, dialogue, and engagement (Gibbons & Gray, 2004). These critical thinking processes, when situated within a social and organizational context, suggest that evidence-informed managers and practitioners engage in dialogue using agency data and other forms of evidence with colleagues at diverse levels of the agency (i.e., frontline, supervisory, and administrative) and in the service of identifying agency solutions to current practice dilemmas.

To further our understanding of the EIP process as carried out in the daily, agency-situated work of social work managers and practitioners, this qualitative study addressed two central questions: (1) What processes do managers and practitioners in public human service agencies engage in as they work with multiple sources of evidence to inform their practice decisions? and (2) What individual and organizational challenges do managers and practitioners experience as they work with various forms of evidence? Our empirical study presents findings from open-ended questions from an online survey involving responses from 473 individuals, including executives, managers, supervisors, and line staff, in 11 county human service organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. The findings describe the cognitive, interactive, action, and compliance processes involved in EIP and the organizationally situated challenges related to integrating stakeholder perspectives, developing measurement schemes, and managing resources. EIP emerges as a form of collective action within organizations that is carried out by managerial and direct practitioners through nonlinear and complex processes.

Methods

Sample and data collection

The 11 county social service agencies that participated in this online survey conducted in June–July 2013 are responsible for Child Welfare, Benefits/Public Assistance, Employment Services, and Adults and Aging, with three of the agencies additionally overseeing county health services. They were selected purposively to represent a diverse set of organizations with respect to (a) size (e.g., 350–2,200 full-time-equivalent employees), (b) budget (e.g., $93 million–$738 million), and (c) resourcing and structure of research and evaluation functions (e.g., multistaff, stand-alone unit directed by PhD-level researcher compared to individual master's-level analysts assigned to program divisions).

The purposive, nonprobability sample of respondents included staff at the frontline, supervisory, managerial, and executive levels. Email invitations to participate were sent to 958 employees; a total of 497 responded to the online survey that included closed- and open-ended questions, representing an overall 52% response rate, above average for organizationally based employee surveys (Baruch & Holton, 2008). Among these 497 respondents, 473 individuals provided responses to one or more of the open-ended questions, representing a 49% response rate; 24 did not respond to any open-ended questions. With respect to program responsibilities, the largest percentage of respondents worked in Child Welfare (43%), followed by Benefits/Public Assistance/Employment Services (19%), and Adults and Aging (7%). The remainder of the respondents worked in administrative or analyst roles that were not program specific (e.g., fiscal, HR, IT, planning, evaluation) (31%). With respect to work role, a substantial majority of respondents were in managerial positions. The largest percentage of respondents were supervisors (37%), followed by middle managers (28%), executives (17%), frontline staff (9%), and administrative/support staff (6%). Approval for the study was granted by the authors' institutional review board, and consent information was included in the online survey.

The survey sought to understand how human service managers and practitioners use multiple types of evidence, including those generated by performance measurement systems and program evaluations, as well as external research, client perspectives, and professional experience, to inform their practice and enhance services and agency operations. This analysis used qualitative data from open-ended questions related to four domains: (1) ideas for improving client services or agency operations (e.g., What are some recent examples of your thinking about how to improve client services or agency operations, and what are some barriers? [384 respondents]); (2) interest in EIP activities and training (e.g., If you could find time to attend a short program on EIP, why would or wouldn't you be interested in participating? [355 respondents]/Why would or wouldn't you be interested in participating in an evidence request service? [335 respondents]); (3) uses of internal and external sources of evidence (e.g., For what purpose do you use your agency's/program's dashboard or regular reports? (254 respondents)/How else would you investigate reasons for caseload changes? [44 respondents]); and (4) defining and measuring service quality and outcomes (e.g., Describe a challenge you have experienced in your agency related to defining and measuring "service quality" and "client outcomes", and strategies to respond to this challenge [248 respondents]). The length of responses to questions in each of the four domains ranged from partial sentences or phrases to paragraphs of 5 to 6 sentences.

Analysis

Our approach to analysis was consistent with the definition of grounded theory methods proposed by Charmaz (2005): "a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development … that provide tools for analyzing processes" (pp. 507–508). The analysis was carried out in three phases, and integrated multiple coding strategies, consistent with the flexible

approaches to qualitative analysis suggested by Saldaña (2013) and Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Coding was carried out by the first author using Dedoose in conjunction with manual-coding methods. Dedoose is a web-based qualitative analysis software application that provides tools for data management and analysis common to computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (e.g., excerpting, coding, cross-referencing of codes, memo writing and linking, importing of quantitative data for mixed-methods analyses, and visual data displays) (Dedoose, 2016; Gilbert, Jackson, & di Gregorio, 2014; Moylan, Derr, & Lindhorst, 2015). Coding strategies and specific codes were noted and described in analytic memos and were reviewed with co-authors, with memo-sharing and discussion conducted regularly throughout the analytical process (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The first cycle coding scheme was developed based upon a complete reading of the data, which identified three high level codes: (1) values coding to capture responses related to the importance or value of EIP; (2) descriptive coding focused on concrete activities and processes, with subcodes that identified EIP activities and distinguished them from other practice activities; and (3) coding to capture tensions and challenges associated with EIP (Saldaña, 2013). These codes were then applied to the data in a case-based approach in which data were sorted by respondent.

The second phase of the analysis focused on mapping and conceptualizing the specific processes and activities involved in EIP. An export of all the EIP-activity-coded data was used to create a new document that was loaded into Dedoose. A new subcode, Process Verb, was then created in Dedoose and used to code all action verbs and verb phrases related specifically to EIP activities, excluding activities unrelated to EIP. This process resulted in a list of 807 verbs or verb phrases that were exported into Excel for review and cleaning. The list of verbs was condensed by merging repeat instances and synonyms, and the resulting list of 129 unique verbs was organized in a conceptually ordered matrix that displayed activities under six high-level categories in order to "subsume the particulars into the general" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 129). This matrix was then reviewed and critiqued by the study coauthors, followed by a process of member checking involving review and discussion by 38 supervisors and managers at the 11 participating agencies, the group representing 65% of the survey sample. The lead author presented the matrix to the group, who then spent 20–25 minutes in small discussion groups critiquing the content and organization of the matrix. The small group discussions were reported back to the lead author and the full group, followed by further discussion to develop a unified perspective on the validity of the concepts outlined in the matrix. These critical reflections, grounded in prior research and practice experience, were used to develop a concept map identifying four EIP process domains (described in the next section). Finally, an analysis was conducted to develop an understanding of the relationship between the four EIP process domains as well as the agency-based factors that inform manager and practitioner engagement in EIP. In this stage, using a manual-coding process, the full data set was reviewed and coded with two high-level binary codes, linear/nonlinear and organizational driver/client driver.

Limitations

The purposive organizational and individual samples dictate caution when generalizing findings to other public human service agencies. Further, the data are based upon self-report, and responses may reflect a social-desirability bias toward EIP in the current policy and practice environment. Lastly, while the open-ended survey questions generated a large number of responses, the detail provided by each respondent was limited as noted above.

Findings

Respondents described a broad array of EIP activities in which they use multiple forms of evidence to achieve multiple purposes. They reported engaging in EIP, in order to respond to drivers that reflect organizational as well as client needs, and carrying out EIP activities in multiple, varying sequences. EIP activities clustered in four domains: (1) cognitive processes; (2) interactive processes; (3) action processes; and (4) compliance processes, as depicted in
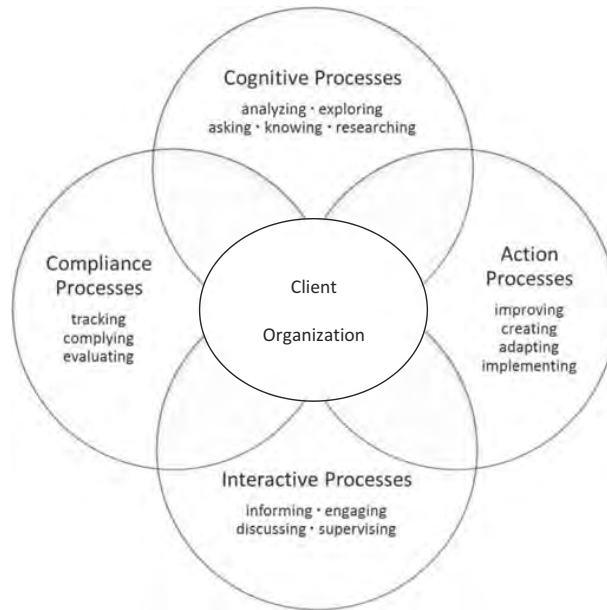
Figure 1. EIP processes.

Figure 1. In the cognitive, interactive, and compliance domains, respondents identified associated challenges; however, they did not describe significant or common challenges associated with the action process domain.

EIP drivers and sequencing

Respondents described a balance between *the primary drivers of EIP—responding to client needs and addressing organizational priorities and challenges*. EIP related to *client needs* included responding to individual clients as well as broader efforts to improve service quality, service targeting, and aggregate outcomes. As a mid-level child welfare manager in a medium-size county agency noted when explaining her interest in attending an EIP program, "[p]roviding EBP's is paramount in our agency thinking. All our programs are built with this in mind, to protect resources and to target only the highest populations in child welfare." With respect to *organizational drivers* of EIP, respondents reported multiple aims, including (a) increasing productivity and efficiency; (b) responding to externally imposed mandates and incentives; (c) improving staff morale; and (d) providing opportunities for staff development. Client and organizational drivers of EIP were often described simultaneously, as illustrated by an administrative support staff person in the child welfare division of a small rural county agency who described her interest in an EIP program: "To see what we could do better to improve our service to clients. What can we change to make it a better experience for the families we serve, in addition to providing opportunities for growth for our staff?"

The *four EIP process domains were described as occurring in multiple, varying stages*, rather than as a fixed, linear or cyclical process. For example, monitoring (compliance activity) may follow a sequence in which a service strategy is designed (cognitive process) and implemented (action process) and staff are trained and supervised (cognitive-interactive processes). In another context, monitoring (compliance process) may generate questions and subsequent analyses (cognitive processes), as when one mid-level manager in a large urban county agency's fiscal division noted that she used the agency dashboard to "see what overall trends look like and identify any questions I

might need to ask depending on what the data is." EIP activities also occur simultaneously, such as when work teams review data dashboards together (cognitive process) and discuss (interactive process) client trends and staff performance. For example, a mid-level child welfare manager in a large urban county agency noted using a dashboard "to review information with my peers, staff and supervisor about how my program is performing."

Cognitive processes

Respondents described a series of cognitive processes as central to EIP: (a) *asking*, (b) *exploring*, (c) *researching*, (d) *analyzing*, and (e) *knowing*. The asking process was prominent among respondents' descriptions of EIP, indicating they formulate a diverse array of questions such as "how to support the move towards unsupervised/community visits" (mid-level child welfare manager) and "how to shorten wait time to complete work requests" (supervisor of administrative support staff). *Exploratory activities* (e.g., looking, searching, and investigating) were common, reflected by an adult and aging supervisor in a large suburban county agency who sought to "hear new ideas and explore how other programs are meeting the needs of the community, effectively." More systematic *research activities* were also common, particularly reading internal and external materials (e.g., "Read articles about utilizing technology and identify ways to translate into service delivery (child welfare supervisor). Analytical processes were central (e.g., thinking, comparing, analyzing), as illustrated by an executive overseeing public assistance in a large urban county agency who reported s/he would "analyze data re: families waiting for child care subsidies against employment data on unemployment, CalWORKs data, and child welfare data" in order to better understand the reasons for a major change in caseload size. Finally, a less common but important cognitive process involves using evidence to *predict or forecast* (e.g., "track trends, levels of service, determine whether we're meeting service targets, attempt to forecast future" [member of executive team]). Engaging in these cognitive activities, respondents seek to determine the source of and solutions to current and future needs and problems.

Respondents noted that cognitive processes underlie the development of measures that utilize agency data to inform decision making, raising challenges related to developing accurate logic models, selecting outcomes, and determining appropriate metrics. A number of respondents expressed *concerns about the logic models* underlying the programs and services being delivered, pointing to a disjuncture between service quality and client outcomes. As an employment services supervisor in a large suburban county agency explained, "Services provided may be of high quality, yet outcomes do not reflect that; the same is also possible in reverse." A child welfare supervisor in a medium size suburban/rural county agency highlighted the challenges associated with developing *accurate models of human behavior*: "Predicting human behavior is very difficult if not impossible. A good quality service is never a guarantee that a client will be successful." Given the complexity of human services, these practitioners in county human service agencies found it difficult to *define service outcomes and quality*, as noted by an executive in the fiscal division of a small rural county agency: "We constantly struggle with the definition of success and whether the outcome of a case was successful or not." Respondents also described difficulties with operationalizing the "independent and dependent variables that impact a person's life and life situation which impact the success and/or the non-success of service delivery" (public assistance executive). As with developing logic models, a central difficulty relates to accounting for client variation in the design of measures to evaluate services. As a child welfare worker in a large urban county agency noted:

> Each client came from a different background and they each are from a different playing field, so we cannot expect each client fits our standard measure based on their situation; it would be unfair and unrealistic to expect certain clients and families to fulfill our standard and requirements at certain level and at certain timeline.

Interactive processes

Respondents described relying heavily on interactive processes that involve working with others as they engage in EIP, including *engaging, talking, informing*, and *supervising*. A substantial majority of respondents proposed interactive strategies when describing actions they would take to address an increase in caseload size. This array of strategies included: (a) internal and external information gathering from colleagues; (b) consultation with peers and experts; and (c) collaborative decision making. *Reaching out to stakeholders and colleagues* was seen as important to determine need and identify and implement promising strategies (e.g., "engage CBOs and possibly our own staff to get trained in trauma informed models that work, such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy for high risk teens and Parent Child Interaction Therapy for parenting coaching" (child welfare executive)). *Providing information* to multiple audiences within and outside the agency was reported to be a very common element of EIP, through formal reporting and training, as well as through informal communication activities. Evidence use is also an important component of *supervision*, used to direct and motivate staff.

Interactions with both internal and external stakeholder groups were described as common in the EIP process, including: (a) agency employees (e.g., line staff, staff in other programs or divisions); (b) community members (e.g., clients, families, community members); (c) professionals (e.g., community service providers, other county agencies, other county human service agencies; and (d) researchers/academics. An executive in the public assistance division of a large urban agency noted that after examining multiple evidence sources, including agency caseload data and regional economic and employment statistics, she would "interview line staff and supervisors in focus group type settings to glean info from the ground on trends. Routinely when there are caseload or demand shifts, this is discussed in statewide meetings to fact check and determine if it is the result of changing practices or policies or if it is unique to our county."

Respondents described the *significant, complex roles played by stakeholders* in EIP, including generating new ideas to improve practice (e.g., "meeting with staff to solicit ideas how best we can serve our clients with the many changes that impact their lives" [adult and aging executive]). Respondents also emphasized the importance of stakeholder perspectives in defining or conceptualizing outcomes/quality/success. A mid-level manager with cross-division responsibilities in a large urban agency highlighted the importance of incorporating service user input by "allowing our customers to define what high quality service and successful outcomes are," while a child welfare supervisor in a large suburban agency sought to gain input from multiple stakeholder groups, by using "focus groups of families, staff, and service providers in order to develop measures and ultimately to shape future strategies and practice." Strategies to gain client perspectives were seen as particularly important when evaluating service quality, including "focus groups or post service contact with clients to ask how well we did and what we could have done better" (administrative support executive). Some respondents spoke of the value of stakeholder perspectives that can aid in interpreting and validating data, including a mid-level child welfare manager in a large suburban agency who described "talking with community providers to see if perceived trends are congruent with reality." Colleagues and other professionals were the most common source of information about innovative or best practices.

Finally, while incorporating the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in EIP processes was generally viewed as important and useful, by contributing to knowledge or clarifying issues, it also appears to *complicate decision making*, particularly related to measuring and assessing service quality and outcomes. As a mid-level manager in the planning and evaluation division of a medium-size suburban/rural agency noted, "everyone has a different perception of service quality and client outcomes."

Action processes

Respondents reported that evidence provides the foundation for multiple types of managerial and organizational actions including *implementing, improving, adapting, creating* and *directing*

(e.g., "act upon the data"; "implement better solutions"; "drive decision making"; "create the most efficient and effective customer service"). An important aim of EIP, as described by participants, relates to *improving agency services and operations through creating and/or adapting new services, business processes, and measures*. As an administrative support supervisor in a medium-size suburban agency observed: "We would use the data to constantly refine and improve our work processes to adapt to client needs, while increasing efficiency and worker satisfaction." Describing her interest in playing a role in information-sharing activities within the agency, a child welfare supervisor in a medium-size suburban/rural agency explained that she would "see the benefit in engaging in dialogue and training within the department to improve service delivery. Clients would benefit, staff would feel that they are having an effective impact and the agency would likely improve its compliance measures."

When asked to provide examples of their thinking about how to improve client services or agency operations, many respondents reported engaging in EIP-related activities. For example, a child welfare executive in a large urban agency noted she had "reviewed evidence based practice for working with high needs teens, asked a friend in emergency management for ideas in disaster prep, [and] attended training on my own time to learn EBP for high risk teens." A child welfare supervisor in the same agency similarly described turning to externally generated research evidence and consulting with experts: "reading national publications about child welfare services; network[ing] outside of work with professionals in related fields." These examples illustrate the strong link between EIP and active efforts to improve multiple aspects of agency practice, including work processes, client experiences and outcomes, measurement decisions, and worker satisfaction. In contrast to the challenges described by respondents related to cognitive, interactive, and compliance processes, the analysis did not identify responses that described challenges specifically associated with action processes.

Compliance processes

Activities related to complying with federal and state mandates were also common EIP processes described by participants, including *tracking, monitoring, and reviewing data* in order to meet performance standards. Respondents utilized data monitoring for multiple purposes that included: (a) supervision (e.g., "helping [staff] track what has been done and what needs to be done on their caseloads on a weekly basis" [child welfare supervisor]), (b) identification of caseload trends (e.g., "tracking trends such as caseloads size, case types, reunification rates" [mid-level child welfare manager]), and (c) performance reporting (e.g., "track my staff efforts, report out to agency on measures my staff are responsible for and use in decision making processes" [mid-level administrative support manager]). Tracking and monitoring were used to make "daily and strategic decisions" and were typical across agency divisions, including child welfare (e.g., "caseloads, numbers of youth in care, placement types"), welfare benefits (e.g., "use to establish the error rate and trends"), and external reporting by executive teams (e.g., "report to the board [of supervisors]").

Responses to a question about challenges in measuring service quality and client outcomes highlighted *issues associated with using quantitative data*, including for compliance monitoring. Some participants noted concerns related to what a child welfare executive in a large urban/suburban agency described as the focus on "numbers (nuts & bolts), not the quality of work/engagement social worker is making with family." While some respondents viewed quantitative data as "easy to capture" (child welfare analyst), others noted that it can be difficult to "get the numbers to be meaningful to line staff" (mid-level planning and evaluation manager). A planning and evaluation executive reported similar difficulties involved in efforts to "engage staff with consistent data collection" in order to provide the data necessary for compliance monitoring. Finally, several respondents described *resource constraints* that can impede using data to inform compliance processes; as a mid-level public assistance manager in a large urban agency explained: "Data need interpretation. Time is a factor in dealing with the abundance of data."

Discussion

These findings provide insight into the organizationally situated activities of managers and practitioners involved in EIP. Overall, these EIP processes are described as (a) multi-level (e.g., involving frontline staff, supervisors, managers, executives, and analysts); (b) multi-question (i.e., client questions, program questions, planning questions, administrative questions); and (c) driven by multiple organizational goals (e.g., accountability and learning, stakeholder engagement, compliance, and innovation). Specifically, managerial and practitioner engagement in EIP can be organized along cognitive, interactive, action, and compliance dimensions. The *cognitive* processes that inform decision making include asking, exploring, researching, analyzing, and knowing. Each of these elements is rooted in the perspective of "research-mindedness" that includes curiosity about ways to improve practice at different levels of the organization, critical reflection upon one's practice and how it might inform decision making, and critical-thinking capacities needed to understand, analyze, and interpret evidence (Austin, Dal Santo & Lee, 2012).

The *interactive* processes reflect the interpersonal skills needed to engage, talk, inform, and supervise in organizational settings. Study findings suggest that managers and practitioners do not engage in EIP activities in isolation. Rather, they gather information from, consult with, and engage in collaborative decision making with agency colleagues, community members, and external professionals and researchers. These cognitive and interactive processes operationalize three key elements of EIP identified by Sackett, Straus, Richardson, Rosenberg, and Haynes (1997) nearly 20 years ago—namely, identifying relevant research, drawing upon practice wisdom, and continuously seeking and utilizing the perspectives of service users. They point further to the need to expand the traditional EIP focus on constructing researchable questions derived from one's own practice to include questions derived from organizational challenges and from the perspectives of others within the agency setting. The findings related to the interactive nature of EIP highlight the social networks through which managers and practitioners engage in EIP within their agencies. We find evidence that individuals working in human service organizations are engaging in complex reasoning and critical thinking in the company of co-workers, clients, and community members. These interactions are organizationally structured in the sense that practitioners and managers are talking with colleagues in their immediate work environments and with other individuals they may encounter through boundary-spanning roles.

The *action* processes described by study participants are aimed at improving multiple aspects of agency practice (e.g., business processes, client service outcomes, service quality and outcome measurement, and staff development and satisfaction). Action processes involve seeking out and using diverse forms of evidence to design, implement and adapt new structures and processes in order to improve program services and operations. In this sense, EIP focused on action can support innovation in response to critical organizational prompts. Innovation often involves learning from others inside and outside the organization, and this learning can be traced to the capacity to engage with the evidence emerging from daily practice (Hargadon, 2002).

In contrast, *compliance* processes are responsive to administrative and funding requirements, involving tracking, monitoring, and reviewing data, in order to demonstrate achievement of performance standards and program fidelity. The focus on fidelity to existing service strategies and compliance with standards based in historical measures of performance may serve to inhibit efforts to innovate. EIP thus emerges in these findings as a tactic to pursue multiple organizational goals, not all of which may be consonant. While one of the purposes of public human service organizations is to demonstrate accountability for public funds received and the quality of the services provided, there is also a growing interest in finding ways to respond to changing client needs. One way for human service organizations to weather turbulent fiscal and policy environments is through innovation in service programs.

These findings point to several implications for practice and research. The importance of interactive processes in EIP indicates that staff development programs need to emphasize skills related to relationship building and maintenance, negotiation, and consensus building in order to support staff efforts to engage diverse stakeholders in EIP. The findings suggesting that EIP in public

human service organizations occurs across multiple levels of organizational hierarchy indicate that senior agency staff may need to develop new forms of communication to support the sharing of data and evidence throughout the organization. Skill development also needs to focus on the cognitive capacity to engage in EIP, including the ability to create logic models and measures of service quality and outcomes. In addition to staff capacity building, collaborative initiatives involving researchers and agency staff can assist in developing meaningful measures of service quality and outcomes that draw upon professional, client, and stakeholder values and expertise. Finally, agency funders and leaders need to do more to ensure that staff members have sufficient time to engage in EIP.

Future research is needed to explore the nature of EIP as a form of collective action inside organizations. To what extent will organizational culture support informal norms, like trust, that may be necessary for promoting participatory forms of EIP? What organizational supports are needed to create open, engaging, and safe spaces to gather and assess complex data? Given the common perception that individuals who work in human services are people oriented and data averse, the dynamic interplay between cognition and interaction also emerges as an important area for exploration. Research is needed to inform strategies that help managers and practitioners engage with evidence in ways that are analytically rigorous and socially interactive. Specific questions include (a) What kinds of materials and communication strategies can support critical reflection on research? (b) How can management or team meetings be designed to help participants examine and interpret agency data as well as use it to guide program and practice decisions? (c) What kinds of processes can effectively engage clients and community members in assessing and interpreting research and agency data? and (d) What kinds of organizational incentives and other tools can serve to make these processes both inclusive and productive?

The findings emphasize dual processes of action and compliance when translating evidence into individual and organizational behaviors, raising the potential for tension between innovation and accountability. Whereas the action processes described by study participants reflect a future-oriented desire to improve service quality and client outcomes, the compliance processes focus on tracking current outcomes and behaviors and ensuring fidelity to existing forms of practice. Given the current accountability environment of public human service organizations, research is needed to examine the effect of compliance-oriented forms of EIP practice on innovation-minded human service managers and practitioners. Important questions relate to understanding individual motivations to innovate, as well as identifying agency factors that promote innovation in the regulation-dominated and resource-limited environment of public human service organizations. Finally, although the findings of this study did not identify significant challenges related to action processes, the study design did not allow for follow-up inquiry, hence, further research exploring this theme might uncover additional challenges.

Conclusion

These findings offer a more comprehensive picture of EIP in daily practice than previous research has provided, illuminating respondents' understanding of EIP and their experiences engaging with diverse forms of evidence within their agencies. The understanding of EIP as a continuous, multidimensional process embedded within agency-based social and organizational practices and priorities and conducted at all organizational levels differs substantially from the ESI model that focuses on the implementation of manualized interventions originating outside the agency. It differs similarly from the linear, stepwise model, in which EIP is (a) carried out by individual, isolated frontline practitioners, (b) focused on external research while excluding agency generated data, and (c) limited to addressing individual client problems. This study finds that engagement in EIP may be influenced strongly by organizational demands and goals, rather than staff or service-user interests alone. The findings suggest further that EIP frameworks used in agency settings involve both cognitive and interactive processes, where managers and practitioners engage simultaneously in "critical talk, dialogue and engagement" (Gibbons & Gray, 2004, p. 21; Peake & Epstein, 2005). Finally, findings highlight the potential for tension between compliance- and innovation-oriented aims for individuals and agencies engaged in EIP.

References

Austin, M. J., Dal Santo, T. S., & Lee, C. (2012). Building organizational supports for research-minded practitioners. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, *9*(1/2), 1–39.

Barratt, M. (2003). Organizational support for evidence-based practice within child and family social work: A collaborative study. *Child and Family Social Work*, *8*(2), 143–150. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2206.2003.00276.x

Barth, R. P. (2008). The move to evidence-based practice: How well does it fit child welfare services? *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, *2*(2), 145–171. doi:10.1080/15548730802312537

Barth, R. P., Lee, B. R., Lindsey, M. A., Collins, K. S., Strieder, F., Chorpita, B. F., . . . Sparks, J. A. (2012). Evidence-based practice at a crossroads: The emergence of common elements and factors. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *22*(1), 108–119. doi:10.1177/1049731511408440

Baruch, Y., & Holton, B. C. (2008). Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research. *Human Relations*, *61*, 1139–1160. doi:10.1177/0018726708094863

Beddoe, L. (2011). Investing in the future: Social workers talk about research. *British Journal of Social Work*, *41*(3), 557–575. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcq138

Bellamy, J. L., Bledsoe, S. E., & Traube, D. E. (2006). The current state of evidence-based practice in social work. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, *3*(1), 23–48. doi:10.1300/J394v03n01_02

Booth, S. A., Booth, A., & Falzon, L. J. (2003). The need for information and research skills training to support evidence-based social care: A literature review and survey. *Learning in Health and Social Care*, *2*(4), 191–201. doi:10.1046/j.1473-6861.2003.00054.x

Brodkin, E. Z. (2008). Accountability in street-level organizations. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *31*, 317–336. doi:10.1080/01900690701590587

Buckley, H., Tonmyr, L., Lewig, K., & Jack, S. (2014). Factors influencing the uptake of research evidence in child welfare: A synthesis of findings from Australia, Canada, and Ireland. *Child Abuse Review*, *23*, 5–16. doi:10.1002/car.v23.1

California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC). *Information and Resources for Child Welfare Professionals* (2015). Retrieved from http://www.cebc4cw.org/

Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 507–535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Collins-Camargo, C. M., Sullivan, D., & Murphy, A. (2011). Use of data to assess performance and promote outcome achievement by public and private child welfare agency staff. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*, 330–339. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.09.016

Cook-Craig, P. G., & Sabah, Y. (2009). The role of virtual communities of practice in supporting collaborative learning among social workers. *British Journal of Social Work*, *39*(4), 725–739. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcp048

Dedoose. (2016). *Great Research Made Easy*. Retrieved from http://www.dedoose.com/

Epstein, I. (2011). Reconciling evidence-based practice, evidence-informed practice, and practice-based research: The role of clinical data-mining. *Social Work*, *56*(3), 284–288. doi:10.1093/sw/56.3.284

Fisher, M. (2014). The Social Care Institute for Excellence and evidence-based policy and practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, *46*(2), 498–513. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcu143

Gambrill, E. (1999). Evidence-based practice: An alternative to authority-based practice. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, *80*(4), 341–350. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.1214

Ganju, V. (2006). Mental health quality and accountability: The role of evidence-based practices and performance measurement. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *33*, 659–665. doi:10.1007/s10488-006-0071-1

Gibbons, J., & Gray, M. (2004). Critical thinking as integral to social work practice. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, *24*(1/2), 19–38. doi:10.1300/J067v24n01_02

Gilbert, L. S., Jackson, K., & Di Gregorio, S. (2014). Tools for analyzing qualitative data: The history and relevance of qualitative data analysis software. In J. M. Spector, M. D. Merrill, J. Elen, & M. J. Bishop (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (pp. 221–236). New York, NY: Springer.

Gould, N. (2000). Becoming a learning organization: A social work example. *Social Work Education*, *19*(6), 585–596. doi:10.1080/02615470020002317

Gould, N. (2006). An inclusive approach to knowledge for mental health social work practice and policy. *British Journal of Social Work*, *36*(1), 109–125. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bch243

Gray, M., Joy, E., Plath, D., & Webb, S. A. (2012). Implementing evidence-based practice: A review of the empirical literature. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *23*(2), 157–166. doi:10.1177/1049731512467072

Gray, M., Joy, E., Plath, D., & Webb, S. A. (2014). Opinions about evidence: A study of social workers' attitudes towards evidence-based practice. *Journal of Social Work*, *14*(1), 23–40. doi:10.1177/1468017313475555

Hargadon, A. (2002). Brokering knowledge: Linking learning and innovation. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *24*, 41–85. doi:10.1016/S0191-3085(02)24003-4

Herie, M., & Martin, G. W. (2002). Knowledge diffusion in social work: A new approach to bridging the gap. *Social Work*, *47*(1), 85–95. doi:10.1093/sw/47.1.85

Hodge, D. R., Lacasse, J. R., & Benson, O. (2012). Influential publications in social work discourse: The 100 most highly cited articles in disciplinary journals: 2000–09. *British Journal of Social Work*, *42*(4), 765–782. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcr093

Horwitz, S. M., Hurlburt, M. S., Goldhaber-Fiebert, J. D., Palinkas, L. A., Rolls-Reutz, J., Zhang, J., … Landsverk, J. (2014). Exploration and adoption of evidence-based practice by US child welfare agencies. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *39*, 147–152. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.10.004

Knight, C. (2013). Social workers' attitudes toward peer-reviewed literature: The evidence base. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, *33*, 177–195. doi:10.1080/08841233.2013.773955

Lee, J. L., Bright, C. L., & Berlin, L. J. (2013). Organizational influences on data use among child welfare workers. *Child Welfare*, *92*(3), 97–118.

Marsh, P., & Fisher, M. (2008). The development of problem-solving knowledge for social care practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, *38*(5), 971–987. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcm116

McBeath, B., Briggs, H. E., & Aisenberg, E. (2010). Examining the premises supporting the empirically supported intervention approach to social work practice. *Social Work*, *55*(4), 347–357. doi:10.1093/sw/55.4.347505

McBeath, B., Perez Jolles, M., Carnochan, S., & Austin, M. J. (2015). Organizational and individual determinants of evidence use by managers in public human service organizations. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, *33*(3), 242–261.

McCracken, S. G., & Marsh, J. C. (2008). Practitioner expertise in evidence-based practice decision making. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *18*(4), 301–310. doi:10.1177/1049731507308143

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Moylan, C. A., Derr, A. S., & Lindhorst, T. (2015). Increasingly mobile: How new technologies can enhance qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, *14*(1), 36–47. doi:10.1177/1473325013516988

Mullen, E. J., Bledsoe, S. E., & Bellamy, J. L. (2008). Implementing evidence-based social work practice. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *18*(4), 325–328. doi:10.1177/1049731506297827

Nevo, I., & Slonim-Nevo, V. (2011). The myth of evidence-based practice: Towards evidence-informed practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, *41*, 1176–1197. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcq149

Nutley, S., Walter, I., & Davies, H. T. O. (2009). Promoting evidence-based practice models and mechanisms from cross-sector review. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *19*(5), 552–559. doi:10.1177/1049731509335496

Okpych, N. T., & Yu, J. L. H. (2014). A historical analysis of evidence-based practice in social work: The unfinished journey. *Social Service Review*, *88*(1), 3–58. doi:10.1086/674969

Peake, K., & Epstein, I. (2005). Theoretical and practical imperatives for reflective social work organizations in health and mental health. *Social Work in Mental Health*, *3*(1–2), 23–37. doi:10.1300/J200v03n01_02

Qureshi, H. (2004). Evidence in policy and practice: What kinds of research designs? *Journal of Social Work*, *4*(1), 7–23. doi:10.1177/1468017304042418

Reid, W. J. (2002). Knowledge for direct social work practice: An analysis of trends. *Social Service Review*, *76*(1), 6–33. doi:10.1086/324606

Sackett, D. L., Straus, S. E., Richardson, W. S., Rosenberg, W., & Haynes, R. B. (1997). *Evidence-based medicine: How to practice and teach EBM* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh, Scotland: Churchill-Livingstone.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (No. 14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Savaya, R., Altschuler, D., & Melamed, S. (2013). Apprehensions and expectations of the adoption of systematically planned, outcome-oriented practice. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *23*(4), 437–446.

Shlonsky, A., & Mildon, R. (2014). Methodological pluralism in the age of evidence-informed practice and policy. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, *42*(Suppl. 13), 18–27.

Sonoma County (2011). *Upstream Investments: Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs*. Sonoma County: CA, USA.

Sonoma County. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.upstreaminvestments.org/

Thyer, B. A., & Myers, L. L. (2011). The quest for evidence-based practice: A view from the United States. *Journal of Social Work*, *11*(1), 8–25. doi:10.1177/1468017310381812

Webb, S. A. (2001). Some considerations on the validity of evidence-based practice in social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, *31*(1), 57–79. doi:10.1093/bjsw/31.1.57

Yousefi-Nooraie, R., Dobbins, M., & Marin, A. (2014). Social and organizational factors affecting implementation of evidence-informed practice in a public health department in Ontario: A network modeling approach. *Implementation Science*, *9*(1), 1–23. doi:10.1186/1748-5908-9-29

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Supporting Evidence-Informed Practice in Human Service Organizations: An Exploratory Study of Link Officers

Genevieve Graaf[a], Bowen McBeath[b], Kristen Lwin[c], Dez Holmes[d], and Michael J. Austin[a]

[a]School of Social Welfare, University of California–Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA; [b]School of Social Welfare, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA; [c]Practice & Research Together (PART), Toronto, Ontario, Canada; [d]Research in Practice (RiP), Totnes, Devon, UK

ABSTRACT

Human service organizations seeking to infuse research and other forms of evidence into their programs often need to expand their knowledge sharing systems in order to build their absorptive capacities for new information. To promote their engagement in evidence-informed practice, human service organizations can benefit from connections with intermediary organizations that assist with the dissemination and utilization of research and the use of internal knowledge brokers, called *link officers*. These boundary-spanning individuals work to embed external research and internal evidence in order to address current organizational priorities and service demands. This exploratory study describes the characteristics, major activities, and perceptions of link officers connected with three pioneering intermediary organizations. Quantitative and qualitative data from a survey of 137 Canadian and UK link officers provide a profile of these professionals, including how they engage practitioners to promote evidence-informed practice and the degree to which they are supported within their organizations and by intermediary organizations. The article concludes with practice and research implications for the development of the link officer role in human service organizations.

Human service organizations (HSOs) are increasingly seeking to develop knowledge-sharing systems to support evidence-informed practice (EIP). Recent literature has highlighted the "communication link" or purveyor role as key to the process of connecting research to practice (Bornbaum, Kornas, Peirson, & Rosella, 2015; Damschroder et al., 2009; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Pioneering research, as reflected in the work of Havelock (1967), suggests that "any detailed consideration of the dissemination and utilization of knowledge must sooner or later focus on the question of linking roles" (p. 1).

Anthony and Austin (2008) note that a type of management support organization, also known as intermediary organizations (IOs), can serve as one such link to build individual, relational, and organizational research capacities in HSOs by connecting research with practice. Another approach to the development of knowledge-sharing systems involves *link officers* who connect their organization's high priority interests with external research in order to promote evidence-informed practice. This exploratory study of link officers draws upon the experiences of three pioneering IOs that seek to develop and sustain intra- and interorganizational knowledge-sharing systems among HSOs in Ontario, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Based on a review of relevant literature on boundary-spanning positions within organizations and the characteristics of those who occupy such positions, this study focuses on knowledge brokering roles in HSOs called link officers and link PARTners and their location between their employing

---

CONTACT Genevieve Graaf ✉ ggraaf@berkeley.edu 🖂 University of California at Berkeley, 120 Haviland Hall #7400, Berkeley, CA 94720-7400, USA.

agency and one of the three IOs. The study draws upon an online survey of 137 Canadian and UK link officers designed to develop a profile of these professionals, how they promote evidence-informed practice, and the nature of organizational support inside and outside their HSOs. The implications for human service management and continuing investigation are noted in the discussion section.

Link officers as boundary-spanning–knowledge brokers

The origins of the link officer concept can be traced in the United Kingdom to government policies designed to encourage responses to citizen concerns (e.g., law enforcement liaisons with the community or school liaisons responding to the needs of families). The historical function of link officers is to represent the interests of their organizations in their contacts with external stakeholders and to relay relevant information back to organizational leaders for enhanced decision making.

Given their unique ability to connect colleagues to new information and facilitate communication, link officers are in a position to connect stakeholder groups inside and outside of HSOs; for example, a link officer can help to address the barriers experienced by practitioners seeking to engage in evidence-informed practice. These barriers include bureaucratic or rigid organizational structures, organizational cultures and climates that are resistant to research and experimentation, and/or the lack of time and fiscal resources needed for staff training for implementing evidence-informed practice (McBeath & Austin, 2015). In this era of increasing accountability for social services, there has been an ongoing search for ways to model evidence-informed practice, create learning environments, construct knowledge-sharing communities, and promote a culture of ongoing practice improvement to support the capacities of practitioners to integrate research and practice (Austin, Dal Santo, & Lee, 2012; Gray, 2009; Plath, 2014; Raffel, Lee, Dougherty, & Greene, 2013). Some of the knowledge brokering tasks needed to strengthen the development of learning organizations include the capacity to (1) identify, evaluate, and translate research for use in different practice settings (Jackson-Bowers, Kalucy, & McIntyre, 2006; Lomas, 2007; Meyer, 2010; Waring, Currie, Crompton, & Bishop, 2013); (2) apply relevant research to specific practice settings (Jackson-Bowers et al., 2006; Kramer, Cole, & Leithwood, 2004; Lomas, 2007; Meyer, 2010; Waring et al., 2013); (3) build research-focused relationships between practitioners and researchers (Jackson-Bowers et al., 2006; Lomas, 2007; (4) build the research capacity of staff (Meyer, 2010; Rivard et al., 2010; Traynor, DeCorby, & Dobbins, 2014); and (5) manage research resources and data (Jackson-Bowers et al., 2006).

From a classical organizational behavior perspective, knowledge-brokering link officers can be understood as boundary spanners whose role is situated specifically at the intersection of organizational subunits, or between the organization and its external environment, for the purpose of sharing knowledge and supporting organizational innovation (Tushman, 1977). Within each organization, specific norms and values evolve to reflect the distinct needs and culture of the organization that can impede the flow of information across different organizational settings (Katz & Kahn, 1978; March & Simon, 1993). As argued by Tushman and Scanlan (1981a), "Boundaries can be spanned effectively only by individuals who . . . are attuned to the contextual information on both sides of the boundary, enabling them to search out relevant information on one side and disseminate it on the other" (p. 291). Tushman and Scanlan (1981b) distinguish between individuals with the responsibility of communicating across primarily internal boundaries (i.e., *within-organization boundary spanners*), individuals with external communication responsibilities for only spanning external boundaries (i.e., *interorganizational boundary spanners*), and individuals who access external information and disseminate that information within the organization *and* share intra-organizational information with external entities (*bidirectional boundary spanners*).

Early studies of internal boundary-spanning roles focused on the relationship between the primary functions of the organization and the resources needed for boundary spanning to be carried out effectively and efficiently. In organizations concerned with discrete tasks and predictable

outcomes (e.g., manufacturing), boundary-spanning roles may require little time commitment or training and are often situated in formal positions of authority (Frost & Whitley, 1971; Pettigrew, 1972; Whitley & Frost, 1973). In contrast, more-complex organizations with less predictable or repetitious functions (e.g., medicine) may call for a boundary-spanning role that is (1) able to span organizational hierarchies and represent the perspectives of multiple organizational stakeholders as opposed to only administrative elites, (2) more likely to require significant organizational supports (e.g., time dedicated to information processing and disseminating, additional staff resources, access to internal and external networks for information sharing) and (3) more likely to need advanced education/training and continuing professional development (Farris, 1972; Tushman, 1977).

Health care studies of boundary spanners in knowledge brokering roles have emphasized the interpersonal dimensions with an focus on the value of trust, interpersonal relationships, and informal leadership as facilitators of linkage efforts (Bornbaum et al., 2015; Williams, 2002). Other research features the importance of boundary spanners being perceived by peers as credible and skilled but note the possibility that being in senior organizational roles may hinder their effectiveness (Waring et al., 2013). Studies have also suggested that a combination of personal qualities, group characteristics, and formal and informal organizational supports are needed to sustain the linkage role (Chew, Armstrong, & Martin, 2013; Currie & White, 2013; Long, Cunningham, & Braithwaite, 2013).

Based on the current literature, the concepts of task complexity and resource allocation are critical to understanding the bidirectional nature of boundary spanning that underlies the link officer role in HSOs. First, task complexity in the human services calls for boundary spanners to be highly educated and experienced practitioners who do not necessarily need to be in formal positions of authority but need to be well connected within and outside the organization to be viewed as credible by colleagues and a valuable source of external information and new ideas (Conklin, Lusk, Harris, & Stolee, 2013; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981b; Waring et al., 2013). The second concept relates to resource allocation where HSO leaders are called upon to support the boundary-spanning efforts of link officers by providing sufficient time and resources for them to build or access the professional networks needed to facilitate effective information exchange inside and outside the organization (Chew et al., 2013; Tushman, 1977; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981b).

Another factor that impacts the knowledge-brokering process is the role of intermediary organizations (IOs) designed to expand the capacity of individual HSOs by providing consultative assistance to managers and supporting organizational infrastructure development, particularly for small, start-up organizations. The literature on IOs in the human services has focused on their connections to academic institutions (Austin et al., 1999). In a similar way, the literature on intermediary management service organizations features their importance for supporting the development and sustainability of community collaborations (Connor, Kadel-Taras, & Vinokur-Kaplan, 1999), and their role in supporting fledgling nonprofits in multiorganization nonprofit centers (Vinokur-Kaplan & McBeath, 2014). In contrast, little research has focused on how IOs help transfer knowledge to HSOs despite the existence of a literature on the role of IOs in other sectors such as education (Cooper, 2014). In particular, there has been little attention to IOs that seek to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from researchers to practitioners in social service settings; nor has there been much investigation of the strategies that human service IOs use to support evidence-informed practice among their partner organizations.

The current study

This study focuses on three IOs that support themselves with membership dues and project grants: (1) Practice and Research Together (PART) in Ontario, Canada, and (2) Research in Practice (RiP) and (3) Research in Practice for Adults (RiPfA) in the United Kingdom. Prior to this study, the research team had no affiliation or relationship with PART, RiP, or RiPfA. RiP was established in 1996 with the purpose of helping to embed evidence into the daily practice of child-welfare

organizations (Dill & Shera, 2015). The success of this organization prompted the creation in 2005 of a sister organization, RiPfA, which focuses on promoting the use of evidence in adult social and protective services. RiP and RiPfA operate as knowledge repositories, knowledge translators, and knowledge transfer experts that operate to identify, distill, and disseminate relevant research in audience-specific formats. They also seek to enhance the research absorptive capacities of member organizations by providing organizational support through the development of collaborative inter-organizational networks. Their respective missions are to bring together research, practitioner expertise, and client voice, and to support practitioners, managers, and leaders in order to embed research and evidence into the design, development, and delivery of adult and children's services.

Inspired by the success of RiP and RiPfA in the United Kingdom, PART was established with the support of RiP in Ontario, Canada, in 2006 (Shera & Dill, 2012). Though smaller in size than RiP and RiPfA, PART has a similar mission of identifying, synthesizing, and translating relevant research into accessible, usable informational resources, primarily for use by members, which includes nonprofit child-welfare organizations.

PART and RiP/RiPfA promote evidence-informed practice within membership networks by providing an extensive array of professional development resources using publications, workshops, webinars, organizational support and consultation, and online tools and guides to help members locate, access, and evaluate research. Each organization relies on its member HSOs to designate a specific staff member—called a Link PARTner (LP) by PART and a Link Officer (LO) in RiP and RiPfA—to help the member organization maximize the value of their membership by serving as a liaison for disseminating evidence and learning opportunities throughout their respective human service organizations. LPs and LOs thus function as critical boundary spanners between their employing HSO and the IO.

These three IOs view the role of LPs and LOs as critical to their mission: they are the conduit for sharing resources with staff and practitioners in member HSOs, and they connect these staff to the range of resources offered by each IO. Each IO trains LPs and LOs on the nature of evidence-informed practice, on the target audiences for each of the IO's resources, on how to access those resources that include events and workshops, and on how to monitor membership usage. In order to maintain the relevance of their resources, the organizations regularly solicit input from their LOs and LPs. For example, PART annually gathers the perceptions of its LPs regarding current challenges in practice in order to develop programs as well as locate relevant research, often published as PARTicles. Similarly, RiP and RiPfA identify local and national topics for their learning program in consultation with LOs to ensure that they address current policy priorities and local organizational needs.

While the IO membership agreements do not refer specifically to the link officer role, written descriptions of the role that include recommendations about the type of staff best suited to the role are provided to new members. In the case of RiP and RiPfA, this informational bulletin states, *"It is usual for Link Officers to be situated in roles where they have a good overview of the needs of an organisation and are able to exercise their enthusiasm for research. Link Officers need to have very good links with workforce development, though they need not be sited there. An understanding of practice issues is very important."* The bulletin also includes tips and techniques for Link Officers to use in carrying out the role and provides strategies for providing organizational support for the role.

Once an LP or LO has been appointed, he or she receives coaching and advice about the new role from IO account managers, orientations by prior LPs or LOs in their organization, and formal training and networking events offered by the IOs, including one or more annual meetings for LPs/LOs and regional meetings. In the context of ongoing IO support, the training events include descriptions of the primary functions of their role as (1) a conduit between their organization and IOs, (2) a source of information regarding current practice concerns in their organizations, and (3) champions of evidence-informed practice in their organizations and in their professional sectors. Training content includes educating LPs and LOs about evidence-informed practice—what it is and

why it is important—and logistics about how to connect staff in their organizations with IO resources including web-based resources and learning events. Further, RiP/RiPfA requires that membership account managers meet regularly with the LOs in their region—every 4 to 6 weeks— usually via telephone. PART offers quarterly online meetings between PART staff and LPs.

While the history and organizational strategies employed by these three IOs have been captured by previous studies (Dill & Shera, 2015; Shera & Dill, 2012), little is known about the mission-critical role of Link Officers and Link PARTners. The current study sought to increase understanding of the role of LPs and LOs and of the current perceptions of LOs/LPs in supporting evidence-informed practice within their HSOs. The primary research questions included the following: (1) What are the professional characteristics of individuals serving in a LP/LO role? (2) What do LPs/LOs understand their role to entail and what major activities are involved in fulfilling those responsibilities? and (3) How well are the professional efforts of LPs/LOs supported by their own organizations and their IOs?

Study methodology

In late 2014, current and former LPs were invited to participate in a brief online survey focused on understanding the LP role. The survey invited both current and former LPs in order to broaden the sample size and capture reasons for former LPs leaving the role. The survey was developed with input from IOs to ensure that survey questions were relevant to LPs and LOs. The survey involved a mixture of closed-ended questions (either categorical questions or Likert-type questions) and short, open-ended questions organized into the following domains of inquiry: respondent characteristics; approaches to evidence-informed practice; understanding of the LP role and major activities; and perceptions of the organizational environment for evidence-informed practice and in support of the LP role. Respondents were asked to specify the extent to which they were involved in five types of evidence integration and promotion activities as part of their LP role, through a series of five-point Likert scales, and were given the opportunity to describe useful strategies and approaches to their LP role through open-ended, short-answer questions. The survey link was distributed electronically by PART to 93 LPs in Canadian child-welfare and family service agencies, representing 64 current LPs and 29 former LPs.

To expand this investigation, the survey was distributed by RiP/RiPfA to 198 current LOs in United Kingdom child and adult welfare agencies in early 2015, after adjusting the wording of several survey questions to suit the local HSO context. A link to the survey was also included in an e-bulletin that may have been forwarded by recipients to other potential respondents, including former LOs. The overall study was administered under the human subjects protections of the institutional review board of the University of California, Berkeley.

Of the 98 potential LPs connected to PART, 70 respondents completed the survey, for a response rate of 71.4% (57 current LPs, 20 former LPs, and 3 unidentified). Of the 198 potential LOs connected to RiP/RiPfA, 67 respondents completed the survey, for a response rate of 33.8% (65 current and 2 former LOs). However, because the UK survey was sent to a potentially greater number of respondents through e-bulletin forwards, a definitive response rate is unknown. The combined response rate was 46.2%.

Analysis

Descriptive statistical analyses of the survey data were conducted using the responses to the closed-ended questions. Analysis of continuous measures (e.g., years in current organizational position, FTE dedicated to the LP/LO role) and Likert-type measures involved the calculation of means and standard deviations; percentages were calculated for categorical measures. The analyses utilized Stata 13.0.

The qualitative data from the open-ended survey questions were uploaded into Dedoose, a cloud-based qualitative analysis software program. Analysis involved multiple coding cycles in which inductive coding schemes were developed that included descriptive and focused coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). Initial qualitative analysis began with the LP data. The first coding cycle was completed by coding all responses from one question at a time by capturing response content or themes within responses. A similar process was used for coding the LO data from the United Kingdom.

For the second round of coding, the qualitative data from the LP and LO surveys were combined, and analysis focused primarily on understanding LP/LO activities and perceptions of organizational support. The code list was refined by collapsing similar codes, removing nonessential codes, and reordering and reorganizing remaining codes. A third and final round of coding was conducted in which a few codes were identified for more detailed analysis, including the use of subcodes. In reporting findings, code counts and co-occurrences were used to identify the density of specific LO and LP activities and levels of perceived organizational support.

Findings

Demographic characteristics of LPs/LOs

The majority of Canadian LPs were located in public child-welfare organizations (n = 48; 72%), with approximately a fifth of LPs located in organizations providing child welfare and child-mental-health services (n = 13, 19%). Six respondents (9%) were located in other HSO settings (e.g., an advocacy organization, a child-welfare-education organization, an agency providing child-welfare services in combination with a variety of other human services). Most British LOs were located in public-sector, local authority organizations (n = 58; 95%) dedicated to protecting and promoting the welfare of the children, adults, and families within a specific public jurisdiction. Three LOs (5%) worked in nonprofits.

As Table 1 illustrates, the majority of LPs and LOs were experienced, well-educated professionals who held middle-management positions that included a moderate level of organizational authority. These positions included quality assurance, staff development or program supervision (e.g., 3 to 4 staff) and reported directly to senior managers or directors. When asked to describe their job responsibilities outside of their role as a Link PARTner, most Canadian survey participants described overseeing a team of direct service practitioners or a staff development team where they functioned as middle managers or upper-level administrators. These administrative positions included such tasks as staffing and managing a team of direct service staff, engaging in strategic planning, managing budgets, developing and implementing agency policies, serving on community or organizational committees, and managing internal and external communications. Several UK respondents reported overseeing staff development and/or quality assurance (e.g., internal program or service evaluation and managing and interpreting agency data for quality-control purposes). Staff development managers (sometimes called practice development managers) described creating and delivering internal training, assessing training needs, planning training events, coordinating external training, and fostering committee or workgroup participation. A few notable UK participants described themselves as "lead practitioners" who consulted on complex cases, supervised other direct-service practitioners, and shared best practice resources.

Understanding of LP/LO role and activities

Many respondents described their role as a "conduit" or "catalyst" to promote and facilitate the use of research in practice by increasing an awareness of and access to research resources provided by their IOs. As illustrated in Table 2, LOs and LPs dedicated an average of 1.4 hours per week to the LP/LO role. In the previous month, they had reviewed an average of 5.3 research articles, chapters,

Table 1. Characteristics of Link Officers (LOs) and Link PARTners (LPs).

Tenure in Link role	LO Mean (SD)	LP Mean (SD)	Total Mean (SD)
Current LO/LP - Years in role	2.93 (2.8)	2.6 (2.1)	2.8 (2.5)
Past LO/LP - How long ago LP/LO?	0.5 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	1.8 (1.0)
Past LO/LP - Years in role	2.5 (2.1)	3.4 (1.8)	3.3 (1.8)
Experience in formal role			
Number of supervisees	2.8 (5.8)	4.3 (3.7)	3.6 (4.9)
Years in organizations	11.2 (7.6)	12.7 (8.0)	12 (7.8)
Years in position	4.7 (4.5)	5.4 (4.6)	5.1 (4.5)
Years in social services	14.2 (9.4)	19.4 (8.3)	16.9 (9.2)
Path to the Link role	**Percentage**	**Percentage**	**Percentage**
Volunteered for the position	31%	31%	25%
Recommended for the position	22%	22%	15%
Assigned to the position	52%	52%	58%
Other	3%	3%	2%
Education level			
High school diploma/A Levels	0%	0%	0%
College diploma	8%	7%	11%
BSW degree	24%	13%	25%
Other Bachelor degree	29%	9%	25%
MSW	15%	46%	43%
Other Master's degree	24%	19%	29%
Ph.D. or other doctoral degree	0%	4%	3%
Formal organizational role			
Frontline service	2%	3%	2%
Supervisor	3%	34%	19%
Director of service	3%	15%	9%
Quality assurance	13%	21%	17%
HR/staff development	58%	15%	35%
Other	23%	12%	17%
To whom LP/LOs report			
Director/head of service	26%	31%	27%
Senior manager	56%	54%	53%
Team of administrators	32%	5%	18%
Other	10%	15%	12%

Table 2. Link Partner/Officer activities and supports.

General activities	Mean (SD) or %
Hours per week dedicated to the Link Partner/Officer role	1.40 (1.20)
Research articles, chapters, and reports reviewed in the past month	5.31 (6.98)
Research articles, chapters, and reports shared with agency colleagues in the past month	4.06 (5.54)
Requests in the past month from agency peers or supervisors for assistance with evidence-informed practice	2.25 (3.43)
Engagement in evidence-informed practice activities (*scale*)	2.37 (0.70)
Interaction with PART/RiP (*scale*)	3.28 (0.85)
Specific knowledge brokering and organizational support efforts	
Promoting evidence-informed practice in the agency (*scale*)	2.67 (0.95)
Staff training around evidence-informed practice (*scale*)	2.17 (1.04)
Supporting evidence-gathering projects (*scale*)	2.60 (1.05)
Supporting evidence-informed practice conversations (*scale*)	1.80 (0.87)
Locating and sharing relevant evidence (*scale*)	2.78 (0.95)
Supports for the Link Partner/Officer role	
Frequency of communication with other Link Partners/Officers (*scale*)	1.86 (0.83)
Individual supports for the Link Partner/Officer role (*scale*)	2.96 (0.94)
Organizational supports for evidence-informed practice (*scale*)	3.20 (0.76)
Received training in preparation for the Link Partner/Officer role	23%
Sees self as a part of a community of professionals including other Link Partners/Officers	64%

Note: Full sample of LPs and LOs was used. All scales were measured via 5-point Likerts. The composition of scales is described in the Appendix.

and reports, shared an average of 4.1 such research materials, and received 2.3 requests from agency colleagues for assistance with evidence-informed practice.

Using a 12-item scale of engagement in evidence-informed practice activities, respondents noted that they were engaged in evidence-informed practice efforts between "A little" and "Sometimes" at work ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 0.7$). Table 2 and Figure 1 summarize quantitative and qualitative survey responses depicting activities required in fulfilling the LP/LO role. As noted in Figure 1, the major activities related to carrying out the LP/LO role are divided between (1) *externally-focused linking activities*, connecting agency staff to IOs and other outside evidence resources and (2) *internally-focused linking activities* to promote the use of evidence in practice and embedding research into organizational practice.

Externally focused linkages

In locating and sharing evidence resources, LPs/LOs primarily sought to build the research absorptive capacity of their organizations through promoting and accessing IO research materials and resources. For example, one LO noted, *"We also use RiP promotional material and have tag lines on our e-mail signature strip linking to the RiP website. We incorporate RiP learning events into our own Learning Programme e.g. if you like that, you will like this."* Further, LP/LOs also described engaging in considerable efforts to promote and coordinate staff participation in IO training and learning events (e.g., *"Disseminating information from RIP, confirming training event participation, responding to questions and promoting RIP membership"*). Less attention was given to specific steps for increasing access to non-IO resources for evidence-informed practice or the process of finding and evaluating relevant research. Based on a seven-item scale of engagement in locating and sharing relevant evidence throughout the agency, respondents noted that they were involved between "A little" and "Sometimes" ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 1.0$).

Internally focused promotion of evidence-informed practice

Using a six-item scale of engagement in promoting evidence-informed practice in the agency, respondents noted that they were involved between "A little" and "Sometimes" ($M = 2.7$, $SD = 1.0$). To facilitate the engagement of staff in evidence-informed practice, LP/LO described networking with agency staff to support their evidence-informed practice efforts (e.g., *"maintaining personal relationships with key staff who will then continue the promotion/embedding in relation to the messages"*). Many respondents noted that sharing and disseminating research resources with others in their organization was an essential aspect of their LP/LO role (e.g., *"email to key people highlighting specifics to save them time"*). In response to a five-item scale of efforts to promote staff training around evidence-informed practice, respondents suggested that they were similarly involved between "A little" and "Sometimes" ($M = 2.2$, $SD = 1.0$). Some participants reported conducting internal training via staff meetings, lunch hour trainings, workshops, or forums that included the distribution of IO materials and developing informal learning communities through group-based activities. However, respondents were comparatively less involved in supporting evidence-informed practice conversations (five-item scale; $M = 1.8$; $SD = 0.9$). And yet several respondents noted that they gave priority to working with individual staff via case consultation, mentoring, or coaching to support their evidence-informed practice efforts and to modeling evidence-informed practice or providing concrete examples of successful evidence-informed practice in action.

Several respondents also noted that their goal was to embed evidence into the daily work of all aspects of their organization. As one respondent suggested, *"We are at the beginning stages of engaging management and staff in using the tools provided as a first step in embedding evidence-informed practice in everything we do."* For some LP/LOs, this process was described as including integrating evidence into auditing processes, individual clinical supervision practices, strategic planning for the organization, the use of specific evidence-based programs, and integrating the use of evidence in practice in staff-performance review processes. This also entailed encouraging staff to participate in research and evaluating agency services that included managing and analyzing agency data. A six-item scale determined that LPs/LOs were involved between "A little" and "Sometimes" in supporting evidence-gathering projects ($M = 2.6$, $SD = 1.05$).

I. Externally Focused Linking Activities
- Promoting and facilitating access to PART/RiP and external research materials for agency staff (n=206).
- Increasing access to resources for evidence-informed practice (n=40).
- Finding and evaluating relevant research (n=21).
- Serving as a liaison or advocate for PART/RiP by promoting and coordinating staff participation in PART/RiP trainings and events (n=93).
- Increasing awareness of resources for evidence-informed practice (n=36).

II. Internally Focused Promotion of Evidence Informed Practice
   a. Facilitating the engagement of specific staff in evidence-informed practice
   - Networking with staff to support their evidence-informed practice efforts (n=124).
   - Sharing/disseminating research resources with others in their organization (n=162).
   - Working with individual staff members through case consultation, individual support, mentoring, or coaching to support their evidence-informed practice efforts (n=90).
   - Conducting internal training via staff meetings, brown bags, workshops, or forums, often involving the distribution of PART/RiP materials (n=61).
   - Developing informal learning communities through group-based activities (n=30).
   - Promoting the use of evidence in practice by modeling evidence-informed practice or providing concrete examples of successful evidence-informed practice in action (n=54).

   b. General efforts to embed research into organizational practice
   - Encouraging staff to participate in research and evaluation about ongoing agency services (n=52).
   - Managing and analyzing agency data (n=30).
   - Integrating evidence into auditing processes (n=11), individual clinical supervision practices (n=7), strategic planning for the organization (n=7), the use of specific evidence-based programs (n=5), and integrating the use of evidence in practice in staff performance review processes (n=2)

Figure 1. Perceptions of major responsibilities of the link partner/officer role*.
*Some of these themes were mentioned in relation to non-link partner/officer duties, as all respondents balanced their link partner/officer responsibilities with other formal duties.

Perceptions of organizational supports for the LP/LO role

As can be seen in Table 2 on the perceptions of organizational supports for the LP/LO role, LP/LOs noted they could commit only a limited amount of time to the role; and less than a quarter of respondents (23%) had received any training in preparation for the role. Many respondents reported that the time demands of their formal role limited the amount of time they could dedicate to the LP or LO role, including attendance at training and networking events for LPs and LOs. Two scales were used to determine the degree of supports available for LPs/LOs. An eight-item scale was used to determine the sufficiency of individual supports for LPs/LOs; on average, respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with statements that they had sufficient time, training, and preparation to carry out their LP/LO role ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 0.9$). Over 30 respondents explicitly stated that they did not have enough time to sufficiently fulfill the requirements of the role.

In addition, a 12-item scale was used to identify whether organizational supports (including funding, mentoring, and administrative champions) were available for LPs/LOs. On average, respondents generally did not perceive these supports to be sufficient ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.8$). While many participants characterized their organization as having a learning culture and promoting a positive view of EIP, several respondents noted that their organization supported evidence-informed practice "in word only." Others noted that evidence-informed practice needed to be included in their organization's long-term planning strategies in order to increase organizational support for the

specific LP/LO role. Some respondents felt that staff did not have enough time to access, absorb, and consider application of IO resources and that having more face-to-face time with staff would increase staff use of evidence.

Using a six-item scale to report the level of their interaction with IOs, respondents indicated that they participated in activities between "Sometimes" and "Frequently" ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.9$). A subset of respondents reported receiving agency-specific support and training from the IO in the form of in-person contact, telephone consultation, and/or written materials. In addition, in response to an eight-item scale designed to assess the general level of communication with other LPs/LOs, respondents noted that they communicated between "None" and "A little" with other LP/LO colleagues ($M = 1.9$, $SD = 0.8$). In open-ended questions, few respondents reported connecting with other LPs/LOs, and several made comments about feeling isolated in their role and desiring more contact and on-going support from peers. In contrast, approximately two-thirds of respondents (64%) viewed themselves as part of a community of professionals comprising other LPs/LOs.

Discussion

Building on the literature related to knowledge-sharing systems within and among HSOs, as well as the classic and contemporary studies of knowledge brokers (particularly in health care settings), this study sought to: (1) develop a demographic portrait of Canadian LPs and UK LOs, (2) identify the major activities performed by LPs/LOs in their formal organizational role, and (3) capture their perceptions of the degree of support provided by their HSOs. Our survey data suggest that LPs and LOs were seasoned professionals, with over a decade of experience in the human service sector and approximately 5 years in their current role. Most respondents supervised between 2 and 4 employees and occupied staff development, direct-service supervisory, and quality-assurance roles. The levels of LP/LO activity were modest, reflecting the small number of hours per week (1.4 on average) that they were able to dedicate to the role. The LPs'/LOs' understanding of their role as a promoter and facilitator of IO resources can be seen in the following frequently reported activities: (1) sharing and facilitating access to IO research resources; (2) facilitating the engagement of staff in evidence-informed practice through outreach, training, and consultation; and (3) using various methods to embed research into daily organizational processes. In general, respondents reported moderate levels of support for their efforts within their own HSOs and from the external IO.

These findings need to be understood in relationship to a number of limitations associated with the study methodology. First, due to the manner in which they were invited to participate, a definitive response rate for LOs in the United Kingdom could not be determined. Second, because the survey was sent only to LOs and LPs for whom the IOs had accurate email addresses, the study may have undercounted the number of potential respondents. Third, due to the nature of the survey questions, less active LPs and LOs may have felt uncomfortable answering questions concerning their LP/LO activities, thus potentially biasing responses to these questions. Fourth, a similar possibility may have existed due to social desirability bias, as respondents may have overestimated the significance of their efforts in carrying out the role. Fifth, while each of the multi-item scales developed in the current study had strong internal consistency, it is possible that measurement error was incorporated into each scale through the omission of other indicators of the underlying construct being measured.

Despite these limitations, the study findings provide insight into (1) the nature of the individuals engaged in the LP/LO role; (2) the active dimensions of the LP/LO role; and (3) the degree of organizational supports available to LPs/LOs. With respect to the first topic, LPs/LOs varied somewhat in their level of education and prior human service experience, their formal role in the organization (which ranged from administrative assistants to executive-level personnel), and their pathway into the specific role (i.e., whether they were assigned to the position or volunteered for it). Despite these differences, the main findings point to the population of LOs/LPs as comprising experienced professionals in positions of middle or senior management with some authority within

their HSOs. This is consistent with classic and recent findings that, in organizations with complex task environments, effective boundary-spanning–knowledge brokers hold some degree of formal authority, are well respected by peers for their technical skills and experience, and are more likely to have advanced education or training (Tushman, 1977; Bornbaum et al., 2015).

These descriptive findings help situate the LP/LO role (and those embodying it) within HSOs. From a theoretical perspective, a central premise in classic organizational-behavior literature is that organizational status denotes role importance—that is, the level of authority of individuals attached to a formal role can serve as a marker of its importance to the organization and can also be used to draw inferences concerning the value of the underlying organizational functions for which the role was developed (Katz & Kahn, 1978). In the current study, practitioners in important organizational roles (e.g., program supervisor, staff-development specialist, quality-assurance analyst) were often carrying out the LP/LO role. Despite their years of experience in the human service sector and their HSOs, most LOs/LPs were not in senior executive-level positions. These results suggest that LOs/LPs were chosen by their organizations (more than half of the respondents reported being assigned to the role) because of the specific position they held in the organization (e.g., moderate levels of formal authority with possibly a high degree of informal credibility and influence with peers). Such a choice might indicate a strategic under-standing held by senior management of the qualities that would enhance the link role; alternatively, the selection of individual LOs/LPs may reflect informal advice provided by IOs in helping new member organizations identify promising candidates for the role.

With respect to the active dimensions of the LP/LO role, the findings suggest a distinction between internal activities to promote evidence-informed practice within HSOs and external activities designed to connect HSOs and their staff members with the research resources of the IO. We considered our findings using the classic question of time versus task (Katz & Kahn, 1978); namely, given the limited amount of time devoted to the LP/LO role, which tasks should be prioritized or de-emphasized and with what implications for the development of the role? The average ratings on all scales pertaining to various dimensions of internally focused engagement in the LP/LO role ranged from "A little" to "Sometimes." We interpret these findings as reflecting the modest priority given to the internal tasks associated with the LP/LO role. Since the standard deviations on these scales averaged around one point, the magnitude of difference in the intensity noted by LPs/LOs across the major internal task domains was small. And externally, respondents noted that the frequency of the interaction with their IO was between "Sometimes" and "Frequently," suggesting that greater attention was given to external rather than internal activities associated with the role.

A similar portrait of LP/LO role and tasks can be derived from the qualitative data in which the most-frequently-cited activities were externally focused. LPs/LOs sought to promote and facilitate access to materials and learning events provided by the IO and clearly identified themselves as liaisons between it and their HSO. Internally, respondents viewed their role, to a lesser degree, to include the following components: sharing/disseminating research resources; promoting attention to evidence-informed practice across the organization; and supporting individual staff members engaged in evidence-informed practice through case consultation, individual support, mentoring, or coaching. It is clear in the findings that the research resources and training programs being supplied by the IOs were the primary resources LPs/LOs shared in order to promote and embed evidence-informed practice.

These results suggest that the activities of LPs/LOs reflect a substantial dependence upon the research resources and learning events provided by the IO, which is consistent with how the role is conceptualized by the IOs. It is also consistent with most LOs' and LPs' understanding of their role as the primary brokers of the relationship between their HSO and the IOs. The stronger emphasis on externally focused activities may be a reflection of the way in which LPs and LOs managed their time-versus-task dilemma; that is, given the limited time LOs and LPs were able to dedicate to the role, these individuals may have focused first on discrete, routine activities that reflected their primary duties—that of linking staff to external resources.

The time-versus-task dilemma was apparent in the central finding that LPs/LOs perceived that they did not have enough organizational support to fully inhabit their role. When asked about their preferences for carrying out the role, LPs/LOs called for more-concrete resources to support their role, especially time and training. Only 23% of respondents reported being trained for the role. Many reported that their non-LP/LO duties prevented them from carrying out their internal LP/LO responsibilities or developing stronger connections with the IO or with other LPs/LOs by participating in quarterly or annual training and networking events. Given the limited amount of time dedicated to the position, these findings may suggest that the LO/LP role was viewed within the HSOs included in this study as important but not critical. However, this possibility is balanced by the fact that the respondents did perceive moderate formal and informal support from senior management regarding the importance of implementing evidence-informed practice and for carrying out the LP/LO role. This paradox may reflect the significant cutbacks many participating organizations were experiencing at the time of the study.

Implications for practice

Taken together, these findings suggest a number of implications for developing and sustaining the LP/LO role within HSOs.

(1) *Role clarity related to LP/LO tasks and responsibilities as well as the process of linking the HSO to the IO are essential.* These findings highlight the importance of connecting leaders from the IO with those of HSOs to engage in ongoing dialogue to clarify expectations in the form of job descriptions and specifying the time and resources needed to support the linking role. This dialogue could lead to decisions that help to alleviate the role strain experienced by LPs and LOs as they seek to fulfill their commitments to both the member HSO and to the IO. In addition, formal job descriptions for the LO or LP role can help HSOs identify potential LPs and LOs whose current duties can be modified to accommodate the linking role. Finally, it is important for IOs to recognize and collaboratively address the inherent tension that exists for service-delivery organizations between allocating resources to support evidence-informed practice and those resources needed to support the service mission of the agency.

(2) *Sufficient resources need to be identified to support the role both within the HSO and from the IO in relationship to the necessary time, training, and mentoring for effective role performance.* HSOs also need to provide LPs and LOs access to formal channels of organizational communication to effectively disseminate evidence and other informational resources. HSO leaders can further support boundary spanning by enhancing the overall culture of the organization related to promoting evidence-informed practice. This type of leadership is needed to avoid isolating the LPs/LOs with the sole responsibility of serving as the primary conduit for research resources within the organization without sufficient organizational supports. As reported by some LPs and LOs, one strategy is to develop a team approach to implementing evidence-informed practice where LPs/LOs partner with other senior administrative staff and junior staff from different service units to become the organization's champions of evidence-informed practice and part of a "knowledge mobilization team" (Dill & Shera, 2015, p. 330). Such models also illustrate greater investment of organizational resources in EIP, signaling to staff that senior leadership is committed to engaging in evidence-informed practice.

(3) *Attention needs to be given to the extent to which the LP/LO role complements the other professional roles and duties of the employee (e.g., program manager, staff-development specialist, quality-assurance analyst).* For example, LP/LOs holding staff-development roles appear to be more likely to invest in coordinating external training events and creating and executing relevant internal training events related to EIP. Similarly, LP/LOs working in quality assurance may focus more on engaging staff in internal evaluation and assessment of

programs in order to increase staff commitment to evidence-informed practice. The biggest challenge may be faced by those serving as program managers overseeing service delivery where EIP competes with the demands of daily practice.

(4) *More attention could be paid to the selection of LPs/LOs by identifying candidates who have (a) sufficient informal influence among their peers, (b) sufficient technical capabilities relevant to evidence-informed practice, and (c) sufficient investment in assuming the knowledge-broker role.* Such candidates need to be provided with access to formal channels of dissemination within the organization along with the formal authority often associated with middle- or senior-management positions. In essence, the effectiveness of the LP/LO role relies upon the capacities of agency leaders to convey a clear understanding of the linking role, the allocation of supports for effective boundary spanning, and the identification of staff members with the professional capacities to balance the multiple roles held by LPs/LOs. Ultimately, the success of those assuming the linking role is dependent upon the selection of individuals with the necessary professional and technical attributes to (a) model evidence-informed practice, (b) access training and research resources, (c) coach colleagues on engaging in evidence-informed practice, and (d) develop support structures to sustain it.

Implications for research

Since this study is one of the first to capture the LP/LO role within HSOs, additional research is needed to address the following questions: (1) What individual and environmental factors contribute to the level of activity and role engagement of LPs/LOs? (2) What are the major individual, organizational, and inter-organizational factors that inform LP/LO effectiveness? (3) How do more engaged LPs/LOs differ from those who are less engaged in their specific duties? (4) How do LP/LO perceptions of organizational and peer supports (their individual characteristics and reported levels of activity) relate to the way they enter into the LP/LO role (i.e., volunteered or assigned), and how is this related to their level of engagement? (5) How are evidence-informed practices related to the technical skill, interest, and experience of the activities undertaken by LPs/LOs? and (6) How do internal organizational supports, peer support, personal and role characteristics, and EIP-related attitudes and efforts affect the strategies used by IO (e.g., new staff-training modules, new methods of research synthesis, web-based innovations to promote research sharing more easily) to influence the activity levels of LPs/Los? These questions can be addressed through case studies and/or panel surveys to shed light on the degree to which the major activities of LPs/LOs vary in relation to changes in the professional and organizational settings in which LPs/LOs are embedded.

In addition to research seeking to identify the personal and organizational characteristics associated with different levels of LP/LO activity, future studies need to focus on the question of effectiveness. For example, to what degree are LPs/LOs able to meet the needs of individuals around evidence-informed practice through resource dissemination, individual and group training, and other methods? Similarly, how do the efforts of LPs/LOs contribute to an organization-wide shared understanding of evidence-informed practice and the creation of a learning culture? Finally, intervention research studies could focus on evaluating the impact of LPs/LOs on improving service effectiveness and outcomes.

Conclusion

The development of the link officer role is an organizational strategy for HSOs seeking to integrate research and other forms of evidence into their daily operations. This exploratory study of Canadian LPs and UK LOs sought to understand their characteristics, activities, and sense of support from within their HSOs and from their IO. These findings document the boundary-spanning nature of the role in relation to its organizational and interorganizational context and highlight the importance of developing supportive infrastructures within HSOs and between HSOs and IOs in order to help LPs/LOs engage in the process of embedding evidence-informed practice into the learning culture of their HSO.

Michael J. Austin | 235

References

Anthony, E. K., & Austin, M. J. (2008). The role of an intermediary organization in promoting research in schools of social work: The case of the bay area social services consortium. *Social Work Research*, 32(4), 287–293. doi:10.1093/swr/32.4.287

Austin, M. J., Dal Santo, T. S., & Lee, C. (2012). Building organizational supports for research-minded practitioners. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 9(1–2), 174–211. doi:10.1080/15433714.2012.636327

Austin, M. J., Martin, M., Carnochan, S., Duerr Berrick, J., Goldberg, S., Kelley, J., & Weiss, B. (1999). Building a comprehensive agency-university partnership: The Bay Area Social Services Consortium. *Journal of Community Practice*, 6(3), 89–106. doi:10.1300/J125v06n03_05

Bornbaum, C. C., Kornas, K., Peirson, L., & Rosella, L. C. (2015). Exploring the function and effectiveness of knowledge brokers as facilitators of knowledge translation in health-related settings: A systematic review and thematic analysis. *Implementation Science*, 10, 162. http://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-015-0351-9

Chew, S., Armstrong, N., & Martin, G. (2013). Institutionalising knowledge brokering as a sustainable knowledge translation solution in healthcare: How can it work in practice? *Evidence and Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, 9(3), 335–351. doi:10.1332/174426413X662734

Conklin, J., Lusk, E., Harris, M., & Stolee, P. (2013). Knowledge brokers in a knowledge network: The case of seniors health research transfer network knowledge brokers. *Implementation Science*, 8(1), 1–10. doi:10.1186/1748-5908-8-7

Connor, J. A., Kadel-Taras, S., & Vinokur-Kaplan, D. (1999). The role of nonprofit management support organizations in sustaining community collaborations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 10(2), 127–136. doi:10.1002/nml.10202

Cooper, A. (2014). Knowledge mobilisation in education across Canada: A cross-case analysis of 44 research brokering organisations. *Evidence and Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, 10(1), 29–59. doi:10.1332/174426413X662806

Currie, G., & White, L. (2013). Inter-professional barriers and knowledge brokering in an organizational context: The case of healthcare. *Organization Studies*, 33(10), 1333–1361. doi:10.1177/0170840612457617

Damschroder, L. J., Aron, D. C., Keith, R. E., Kirsh, S. R., Alexander, J. A., & Lowery, J. C. (2009). Fostering implementation of health services research findings into practice: A consolidated framework for advancing implementation science. *Implementation Science*, 4(1), 50. doi:10.1186/1748-5908-4-50

Dill, K. A., & Shera, W. (2015). Empowering human services organizations to embrace evidence-informed practice: International best practices. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership and Governance*, 39(4), 323–338. doi:10.1080/23303131.2015.1050141

Farris, G. (1972). The effects of individual roles on performance in innovative groups. *R&D Management*, 3, 23–28. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9310.1972.tb00992.x

Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature* (FMHI Publication #231). Tampa: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, National Implementation Research Network.

Frost, P., & Whitley, R. (1971). Communication patterns in a research lab. *R&D Management*, 1, 71–79.

Gray, J. A. M. (2009). *Evidence-based healthcare and public health: How to make decisions about health services and public health*. Edinburgh, NY: Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier.

Havelock, R. G. (1967). *Dissemination and translation roles in education and other fields: A comparative analysis.* Center for Research on Utilization of Scientific Knowledge Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Jackson-Bowers, E., Kalucy, L., & McIntyre, E. (2006). *Knowledge brokering. Focus on. . . . Issue No. 4. Primary health care research and information service*. Adelaide, Australia: Flinders Press.

Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.

Kramer, D. M., Cole, D. C., & Leithwood, K. (2004). Doing knowledge transfer: Engaging management and labor with research on employee health and safety. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 24(4), 316–330. doi:10.1177/0270467604267003

Lomas, J. (2007). The in-between world of knowledge brokering. *British Medical Journal*, 334(7585), 129–132. doi:10.1136/bmj.39038.593380.AE

Long, J. C., Cunningham, F. C., & Braithwaite, J. (2013). Bridges, brokers and boundary spanners in collaborative networks: A systematic review. *BioMedCentral Health Services Research*, 13(1), 158. doi:10.1186/1472-6963-13-158

March, J. G., & Simon, H. A. (1993). *Organizations* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

McBeath, B., & Austin, M. J. (2015). The organizational context of research-minded practitioners: Challenges and opportunities. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 25(4), 446–459. doi:10.1177/1049731514536233

McBeath, B., Jolles, M. P., Carnochan, S., & Austin, M. J. (2015). Organizational and individual determinants of evidence use by managers in public human service organizations. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership and Governance*, 39(4), 267–289. doi:10.1080/23303131.2015.1044588

Meyer, M. (2010). The rise of the knowledge broker. *Science Communication*, *32*(1), 118–127. doi:10.1177/1075547009359797

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pettigrew, A. (1972). Information control as a power resource. *Sociology*, *6*, 187–204. doi:10.1177/003803857200600202

Plath, D. (2014). Implementing evidence-based practice: An organisational perspective. *British Journal of Social Work*, *44*(4), 905–923. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcs169

Raffel, K. K., Lee, M. Y., Dougherty, C. V., & Greene, G. J. (2013). Making it work: Administrator views on sustaining evidence-based mental health interventions. *Administration in Social Work*, *37*(5), 494–510. doi:10.1080/03643107.2013.828003

Rivard, L. M., Russell, D. J., Roxborough, L., Ketelaar, M., Bartlett, D. J., & Rosenbaum, P. (2010). Promoting the use of measurement tools in practice: A mixed-methods study of the activities and experiences of physical therapist knowledge brokers. *Physical Therapy*, *90*(11), 1580–1590. doi:10.2522/ptj.20090408

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Shera, W., & Dill, K. (2012). Promoting evidence-informed practice in child welfare in Ontario: Progress, challenges and future directions. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *22*(2), 204–213. doi:10.1177/1049731511406552

Traynor, R., DeCorby, K., & Dobbins, M. (2014). Knowledge brokering in public health: A tale of two studies. *Public Health*, *128*(6), 533–544. doi:10.1016/j.puhe.2014.01.015

Tushman, M. L. (1977). Special boundary roles in the innovation process. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *22*(4), 587–605. doi:10.2307/2392402

Tushman, M. L., & Scanlan, T. J. (1981a). Boundary spanning individuals: Their role in information transfer and their antecedents. *Academy of Management Journal*, *24*(2), 289–305. doi:10.2307/255842

Tushman, M. L., & Scanlan, T. J. (1981b). Characteristics and external orientations of boundary spanning individuals. *Academy of Management Journal*, *24*(1), 83–98. doi:10.2307/255825

Vinokur-Kaplan, D., & McBeath, B. (2014). Co-located nonprofit centers. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, *25*(1), 77–91. doi:10.1002/nml.21110

Waring, J., Currie, G., Crompton, A., & Bishop, S. (2013). An exploratory study of knowledge brokering in hospital settings: Facilitating knowledge sharing and learning for patient safety? *Social Science and Medicine*, *98*, 79–86. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.08.037

Whitley, R., & Frost, P. (1973). Task type and information transfer in a government research laboratory. *Human Relations*, *26*(4), 537–550. doi:10.1177/001872677302600409

Williams, P. (2002). The competent boundary spanner. *Public Administration*, *80*(1), 103–124. doi:10.1111/padm.2002.80.issue-1

Appendix

Scale = Engagement in evidence-informed practice activities (average of 12 items, alpha = 0.85) (drawn from *The Measure of Evidence-Informed Practice in the Human Services* (McBeath, Jolles, Carnochan, & Austin, 2015)).

Question wording: *"On average, how often do you do this at work?"* (1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Continuously).

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Using and searching online databases to identify promising practices	2.82	1.01
Conducting quick literature reviews (to gather the best available evidence) to look for answers to my questions	2.70	0.98
Surveying clients to assess their needs	2.17	1.16
Conducting program-improvement studies to see if the agency is delivering services the best way possible	2.13	1.23
Conducting outcome studies to see whether agency services and programs are affecting clients as intended	2.13	1.25
Reviewing case records from past and/or current clients to see how we are serving them	2.27	1.23
Reviewing agency reports containing information such as quarterly statistics to see how the agency is doing in key areas	3.15	1.26
Involving outside researchers to help improve agency practices and impacts	2.26	0.99
Involving clients in evaluating programs and services	2.16	1.15
Involving clients in planning and improving programs	2.01	1.06
Developing researchable questions in response to current agency needs	2.06	1.05
Reviewing literature to inform strategic planning or potential interventions	2.63	1.19
Average	2.37	0.70

Scale = Interaction with PART/RiP (average of 6 items, alpha = 0.85).

Question wording: *"In general, how often do you participate in the following activities?"* (1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Continuously).

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Distributing PART/RiP materials in the agency	3.88	0.98
Encouraging your agency colleagues to use the PART/RiP website	4.03	0.90
Keeping PART/RiP informed of major changes occurring to your agency	2.49	1.19
Attending link partner/officer-specific meetings	2.93	1.20
Participating in PART/RiP change initiatives	2.96	1.23
Coordinating agency participation in PART/RiP-related meetings and events	3.39	1.16
Average	3.28	0.85

Scale = Promoting evidence-informed practice in the agency (average of 6 items, alpha = 0.87).

Question wording: *"In general, how often do you engage in the following evidence-informed practice activities?"* (0 = I am not required to support this activity, 1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Continuously).

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Promote agency-wide use of evidence to support improving services and outcomes	3.35	1.17
Strategize and plan for evidence-informed practice implementation	2.58	1.26
Coordinate the integration of evidence-informed practice in agency departments/units	2.24	1.21
Cultivate staff interest in involving service users in evidence-gathering projects	2.56	1.37
Engage in administrative tasks related to evidence-informed practice correspondence 'and project management	2.59	1.37
Present information about evidence-informed practice (e.g., staff meetings, conferences, etc.)	2.70	1.21
Average	2.67	0.95

Scale = Staff training around evidence-informed practice (average of 5 items, alpha = 0.84).
Question wording: *"In general, how often do you engage in the following evidence-informed practice activities?" (0 = I am not required to support this activity, 1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Continuously).*

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Train individual staff around evidence-informed practice	2.21	1.53
Lead workshops for groups of staff in evidence-informed practice	1.84	1.25
Lead agency-wide, evidence-informed practice training and learning events	1.89	1.27
Gather feedback from evidence-informed practice training and learning events	2.53	1.32
Periodic sessions to introduce new staff to evidence-informed practice	2.32	1.47
Average	2.17	1.04

Scale = Supporting evidence-gathering projects (average of 6 items, alpha = 0.90)..
Question wording: *"In general, how often do you engage in the following evidence-informed practice activities?" (0 = I am not required to support this activity, 1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Continuously).*

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Identify agency needs related to evidence-gathering projects and Partnerships	2.64	1.33
Develop evidence gathering projects in collaboration with staff	2.63	1.38
Lead special evidence-gathering projects and partnerships	2.40	1.26
Assist students with their evidence-gathering projects	2.56	1.35
Assist staff with their evidence-gathering projects	2.89	1.29
Assist external researchers (e.g., from local universities) with their evidence-gathering projects	2.57	1.27
Average	2.60	1.05

Scale = Supporting evidence-informed practice conversations (average of 5 items, alpha = 0.81).
Question wording: *"In general, how often do you engage in the following evidence-informed practice activities?" (0 = I am not required to support this activity, 1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Continuously).*

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Present evidence at staff meetings	2.24	1.22
Facilitate dialogue about evidence-informed practice at staff meetings	2.26	1.25
Hold regularly scheduled meetings with groups of staff to talk about evidence-informed practice	1.87	1.31
Facilitate "journal clubs" with groups of staff to review current literature	1.14	0.96
Facilitate discussions about current literature with different agency programs/units	1.30	1.08
Average	1.80	0.87

Scale = Locating and sharing relevant evidence (average of 7 items, alpha = 0.86).
Question wording: *"In general, how often do you engage in the following evidence-informed practice activities?" (0 = I am not required to support this activity, 1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Continuously).*

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Search for evidence that would be helpful for staff to improve services and outcomes	2.99	1.12
Search for evidence related to service user perspectives	2.62	1.32
Maintain an online library of relevant evidence (e.g., webinars, reports)	2.38	1.52
Share relevant external evidence (e.g., reports, articles) with specific staff	3.11	1.15
Share relevant internal evidence (e.g., reports, program data) with specific staff	3.07	1.28
Share evidence on service-user perspectives with specific staff	2.55	1.47
Make external and internal evidence available on agency intranet site	2.63	1.38
Average	2.78	0.95

Scale = Frequency of communication with other link partners/officers (average of 8 items, alpha = 0.96).
Question wording: *"In general, how often do you communicate (in person, by phone, or via email) with other link partners about the following topics?" (1 = None, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Constantly).*
Scale = Individual supports for the link partner/officer role (average of 8 items, alpha = 0.87).

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Evidence from outside your agency	1.73	0.89
Evidence from inside your agency	1.83	0.94
Strategies for locating relevant external evidence for your agency	1.82	0.89
Strategies to share external and internal evidence effectively with agency staff	1.90	0.93
Strategies for training staff about evidence-informed practice	1.91	1.05
Strategies for cultivating staff interest in evidence-informed practice	1.96	1.02
Strategies to support evidence-gathering projects in your agency	1.71	0.92
Strategies for carrying out your link partner/officer role more effectively	2.00	0.96
Average	1.86	0.83

Question wording: *"In order to identify potential challenges facing link partners/officers, please note your responses to the following statements." (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Slightly disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Slightly agree, 5 = Strongly agree).*

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
I have enough time to carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	2.28	1.20
Protected time is available for me to attend external evidence-informed practice training workshops.	2.84	1.46
I have enough resources to carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	2.86	1.33
I have enough training in evidence-informed practice to carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	2.99	1.34
I have enough experience with implementing evidence-informed practice in agencies to carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	3.04	1.27
I have enough experience finding evidence-informed practice resources to carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	3.41	1.16
I have enough experience training others in evidence-informed practice to carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	3.02	1.30
I have enough support from key senior managers to carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	3.22	1.33
Average	2.96	0.94

Scale = Organizational supports for evidence-informed practice (average of 12 items, alpha = 0.88).
Question wording: *"In order to identify potential challenges facing link partners/officers, please note your responses to the following statements." (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Slightly disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Slightly agree, 5 = Strongly agree).*

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Evidence-informed practice is supported throughout the organization.	3.88	1.13
Agency staff have enough time to help me carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	2.37	1.08
The agency is required to engage in evidence-informed practice.	3.66	1.21
Funding is available to support evidence-informed practice implementation across the agency.	3.01	1.20
The agency has the resources needed for me to carry out my link partner/officer responsibilities.	3.15	1.13
The major changes experienced by my organization provide opportunities for me to carry out link partner/officer responsibilities.	3.15	1.17
Senior managers act as champions of the link partner/officer role throughout the agency.	2.97	1.32
Senior managers provide mentorship to me as a link partner/officer.	2.46	1.31
Past link partners/officers provide mentorship to me as a link partner/officer.	2.23	1.29
Senior managers possess an understanding of the importance of evidence-informed practice.	4.00	0.94
Senior managers understand how to implement evidence-informed practice.	3.54	1.14
Senior managers support evidence-informed practice implementation.	3.89	1.02
Average	3.20	0.76

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Using Qualitative Data-Mining to Identify Skillful Practice in Child Welfare Case Records

Sarah Carnochan[a], Erika Weissinger[a], Colleen Henry[b], Nicole Liner-Jigamian[a], and Michael J. Austin[a]

[a]Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services, University of California, Berkeley, USA; [b]Silberman School of Social Work, Hunter College, City University of New York, New York, USA

ABSTRACT

Using qualitative data-mining methods, this study analyzed 39 child welfare case records in order to identify examples of skillful practice. Conducted in partnership with a public child welfare agency in northern California, the study found that child welfare workers are implementing many of the practices promoted by statewide and national child welfare practice frameworks. Broad categories of skillful practice identified included: (1) effective communication by social workers, (2) support for client self-determination, and (3) active intervention strategies. Study findings provide support for incorporating case record review processes in training and supervision in order to integrate practice-based expertise with research-based evidence.

While the past 25 years have witnessed declines in child maltreatment rates in the United States, referrals to Child Protective Services remain high. In 2016, there were over 3.4 million referrals involving approximately 7.4 million children, while an estimated 676,00 children and youth were victims of abuse and neglect (Children's Bureau, 2018). For the children and families who enter child welfare systems of care following referral, outcomes are mixed. The Children's Bureau identifies multiple areas where improvement is needed with respect to performance on the federal indicators related to child safety, permanency, and well-being (Children's Bureau, 2014). Children who enter foster care have higher rates of physical and behavioral health issues than children in the general population, and many do not receive adequate services to address these issues while in care (Simms, Dubowitz & Szilagyi, 2000). To address these challenges, the Children's Bureau has called for research to guide efforts to improve the capacity of the child welfare workforce, ensuring that systems have "people with excellent practice skills doing high quality work" (Mitchell et al., 2012, p. 557).

While studies examining challenges related to service quality and outcomes within child welfare systems play an essential role in identifying areas demanding practice improvements, this study addresses the need for parallel research that examines the nature of excellence in child welfare practice. Conducted in a northern California county, it documents frontline practice as reflected in the case records created by child welfare workers (CWWs) as part of their day-to-day work, and identifies skillful practices in these records. The analysis focuses on youth aged 12–18, as this group represents a substantial percentage of the child welfare population and presents particularly complex practice challenges (Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik, 2010; Toro, Dworsky, & Fowler, 2007; White, Havalchack, Jackson, O'Brien, & Pecora, 2007). Qualitative data-mining (QDM) techniques – the mining of narrative text from administrative data – are used to expand understanding of child welfare practice and the utilization of practice frameworks in casework (Henry, Carnochan, & Austin, 2014). Although many of the practices described here are a part of the social work knowledge base for casework, few prior studies have systematically analyzed qualitative administrative data to identify skillful casework in daily child welfare practice.

Study background

A dominant strategy to achieve improved practice and outcomes for child welfare involved children and families is reflected in legislative and regulatory reforms at the federal and state level that have been instituted over the past several decades. Many of these have focused on increasing accountability for system outcomes through performance measurement structures and processes. The key outcomes defined by the federal Child and Family Service Review system (CFSR) were developed by the Children's Bureau under the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act. The evaluation of these child welfare outcomes related to child safety, permanency, and family and child well-being involves a two-stage process: (1) a statewide assessment based on aggregate administrative data, and (2) an onsite review utilizing case reviews and interviews with multiple stakeholders (Children's Bureau, 2017). Case record reviews are seen as important for identifying "what is 'behind' the safety, permanency and well-being quantitative administrative data in terms of day-to-day practice in the field and how that practice is impacting child and family functioning and outcomes" in order to see "how results link to daily casework practices" and how to use the results to "assess and improve practice" (Children's Bureau, 2014).

At the state level, outcome accountability systems have been established in response to the CFSR mandates. California instituted the California-Children and Family Service Review (C-CFSR) system in 2004 under the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636) enacted in 2001. Coordinated with the federal CFSR process, the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) component of the C-CFSR in its current form calls for "an

in-depth, qualitative problem analysis of social work practice by social work professionals, intended to explore actual practice" in order to identify promising practices for replication in other counties (California Department of Social Services, 2014; Attachment D, p. 3; Davis, Johnson, & Saenz, 2003).

Other approaches to strengthening child welfare outcomes and practices can be found in the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (http://www.cebc4cw.org) that lists highly rated programs in 43 topic areas, ranging from behavioral management interventions for adolescents in child welfare to interventions designed to promote reunification. While the value of evidence-based practice (EBP) in child welfare is gaining considerable acceptance, some argue that the EBP emphasis can create an "overly manualized social work landscape" that "overlooks the unique needs of individual clients," (Jensen, Weersing, Hoagwood, & Goldman, 2005). A more broadly defined version of the EBP approach has been proposed by Barth and colleagues (2012) in an effort to develop an integrated model of practice that remains based in EBP research. This approach involves identifying the common elements and components across multiple EBPs in order to synthesize practice principles and create space for exercising professional social work judgment (Michiel et al., 2014; Turnell & Edwards, 1997). Another alternative to the formal implementation of strictly defined EBP programs is reflected in the scholarship on evidence-informed practice, which offers guidelines for individual social work practitioners related to framing practice questions and drawing on research evidence, practice expertise, and service user priorities to inform decision-making (Gambrill, 1999; Shlonsky & Ballan, 2011).

In California, multiple EBP programs are being collectively presented under the framework of safety-organized practice (SOP). Examples of SOP methodologies include group supervision, Signs of Safety, Motivational Interviewing, Structured Decision-Making, and solution-focused treatment. The Child Welfare Core Practice Model (CPM) is designed to integrate these multiple practice models in order to provide systematic guidance for child welfare agencies and workers in California (CalSWEC, 2016). The CPM incorporates an array of theoretical frameworks and articulates core values as the foundation for a set of case work components that include prevention, engagement, assessment, planning and service delivery, monitoring and adapting, and transition. The model further outlines a series of practice elements (e.g., engagement, inquiry/exploration, advocacy, teaming, and accountability), and specifies practice behaviors related to each element (e.g., helping clients "identify and meet their goals" relates to engagement) (CalSWEC, 2016, p. 6).

A close examination of frontline practice is also important given the policy and scholarly emphasis on accountability and practice improvements that reflects, in part, concerns about the considerable discretion exercised by social workers in human service organizations (Brodkin, 2008; Lipsky, 1980). The Children's Bureau Practice Guide notes the role of worker

discretion in child welfare practice (DePanfilis & Salus, 2003). Decision-making tools, particularly risk-assessment tools, provide another example of efforts to limit discretion, but can also be used strategically to obtain a desired outcome (Gillingham & Humphreys, 2010). Responding to calls for drawing on practitioner expertise as an evidentiary basis for decision-making, as well as often negative public perceptions of child welfare practice, this exploratory study sought to describe examples of skillful practice identified in child welfare case records.

Methods

This exploratory QDM project was initiated by members of a university-agency partnership in the spring of 2013 to examine child welfare practice as described in agency case records. QDM methods were selected to minimize disruptions to child welfare staff and clients and explore daily practice (Epstein, 2009; Henry et al., 2014). Researchers have used case record data to examine service delivery systems (Castellani & Castellani, 2003; Coohey, 2003; Fakunmoju, 2009a, 2009b; O'Brien, 2007; Reilly, McKelvey-Walsh, Freundlich, & Brenner, 2011; Sherwood, Lyburn, Brown, & Ryder, 2001; Trickett, Mennen, Kim, & Sang, 2009), how systems achieve desired outcomes (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2009; Neville, Bryce, Robertson, Crombile, & Clark, 1992), the experiences of various stakeholders (Nath, Hirschman, Lewis, & Strumpf, 2008; Prior, 2003; Teaster, 2002), other social issues (Avery, Hutchinson, & Whitaker, 2002; Gordon & O'Keefe, 1984; Pithers, Beal, Armstrong, & Petty, 1989), and issues in child welfare practice (Henry, Liner-Jigamian, Carnochan, Taylor, & Austin, 2018; Taylor et al., 2018). This study employs case record review methods to expand our understanding of child welfare practice. This study was approved by institutional review boards at the University of California, Berkeley and Hunter College. Permission to use these data was also granted by the county agency participating in the study.

Sampling strategy

Using QDM techniques, the research team, consisting of three child welfare policy and practice scholars and one MSW student with extensive backgrounds in qualitative research and QDM, extracted narrative case record data for 105 unique child welfare cases in a county that was purposively selected based upon the interest of the agency in examining child welfare practice using QDM. . The 105 cases were selected randomly from a larger sample of 619 cases that met the following criteria: (1) cases were opened for service by the agency and children received family reunification services between 2006 and 2012, (2) children had received services for at least six months, and (3) children for whom this was their first entry into the child

welfare system. For the purposes of this analysis, a subset composed of all the 39 youth cases in which the focus child was age 12 or older was selected in order to focus on the practice strategies and complex challenges associated with this group (Figure 1).

Previous studies have found that current and former foster youth are at a high risk for homelessness and are disproportionately represented in the homeless youth population (Toro et al., 2007). The literature on youth exiting from foster care notes that between nine and 29 percent of child welfare involved youth engage in delinquency (Herz et al., 2010), and that by the time they reach their teens, 63 percent of children in foster care have at least one mental health diagnosis and 23 percent have three or more diagnoses (White et al., 2007). The range of behavioral challenges among the youth in our sample included a history of runaway episodes, truancy, criminal activity, and mental health issues (Table 1).

Data sources

For each of the 39 cases, the research team extracted narrative documents from the agency's automated data system for the 24-month period following case opening. Document types included 1) investigative documents (referral contact notes and investigative narratives), 2) court documents (detention, disposition, and jurisdiction reports), and 3) practice documents (contact notes, family assessments, case plans, and case plan updates). These documents were determined in a pilot study to provide an in-depth perspective on service delivery and system involvement, including data on children, youth, families, caseworker interventions, involvement with other social service systems, and a child's trajectory through the child welfare system" (Carnochan, Jacobs, Austin, 2015). Documentation methods and content included: (1) recording the client's perspective, often using quotes, (2) incorporating emails or reports from other practitioners directly into the case record to present multiple perspectives on the case, and (3) recording key concerns and strengths about clients, placements, and service providers and explaining how concerns were ultimately resolved. In addition to the narrative case record data, the team also extracted key case and child level variables.
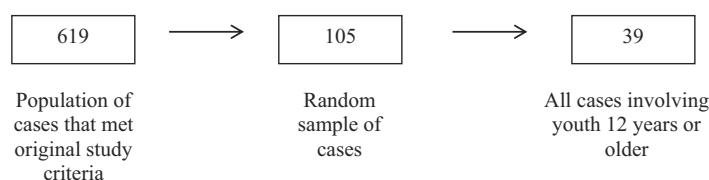

Figure 1. Sampling Stages.

Table 1. Demographic and Case Characteristics of Sample Youth Cases.

Age	Count	Percent of 12+ Population
12–13	8	20.5
14–15	17	43.5
16–17	14	35.9
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian Pacific Islander	7	18.0
Black	19	48.7
Hispanic	4	10.3
White	9	23.1
Gender		
Male	16	59
Female	23	41
Removal Reason		
Care Taker Absence/Incapacity	20	51.3
Emotional Abuse	1	2.6
General Neglect	4	10.3
Physical Abuse	13	33.3
Sexual Abuse	1	2.6
Number of Placements		
1–2	9	23
3–4	15	38
5–6	5	12.8
8–9	5	12.8
10+	5	12.8

Analysis

In the first phase of the analysis, the research team uploaded the extracted case record documents into Dedoose, a Web-based qualitative data analytic software platform for data storage and analysis. In this phase, the research team reviewed and coded the narrative data and created detailed case summaries comprising case narratives and event timelines for all cases. The case summaries documented: (1) family and child characteristics, (2) presenting and emerging problems, (3) case planning, and (4) services delivered from the time of investigation to case closure or 24 months after opening the case, whichever came first. The case summaries averaged 15 single-spaced pages and synthesized hundreds of pages of narrative documents per case, in order to track the social, economic, psychological, policy and practice-based issues that contributed to child welfare involvement and case outcomes. The first cycle of coding employed a qualitative, descriptive coding approach in order to develop a "categorized inventory" of the case record data (Saldaña, 2013, p. 89). The codebook identified 10 general domains with over 70 subcodes that were applied to each case record. The general domains included topics such as: services to minor; services to caregiver; material hardship and economic support; and facilitators and barriers to engagement. This phase of coding identified skillful practice as a central theme meriting further exploration.

In the second phase of analysis, case summaries for the 39 cases were reviewed to identify specific examples of skillful practice. We initially defined practice as

"skillful" if it met one or more of the following criteria: (1) resulted in a positive short-term outcome (e.g., positive interaction between a parent and a minor, improved school attendance, or a positive placement move), (2) reflected a high degree of care for a client (e.g., showing empathy or taking extra steps to promote client safety and comfort), and (3) resulted in positive feedback from clients or the court. Based on these reviews, we created a codebook identifying categories of skillful practice (Table 2). The codebook was compared to a draft of California's CPM to identify potentially missing categories, resulting in the addition of codes for "Preserving Connections" and "Culturally Responsive" (although neither code played a significant role in the final analysis). The codebook was used to guide a second cycle of focused qualitative coding aimed at a more complete and nuanced categorization of the data (Charmaz, 2006).

To carry out the second cycle coding for skillful practice, we first reviewed the case summaries to identify the major events and case timelines. We then focused on the case contact notes as the primary data source, reading, and coding examples of skillful practice in these records. The lead authors co-coded 3 of the 39 cases simultaneously to assess construct validity and inter-coder reliability (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay & Milsten, 1998). In-depth discussions and negotiated consensus were used to resolve coding discrepancies and to revise the codebook language to increase both reliability and construct validity (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). Once consensus was reached, these two members of the research team independently coded the remaining cases. Relevant skillful practice subcodes were applied to each occurrence of the practice documented in the case contact notes. Upon completing case coding, we conducted an excerpt analysis of the most frequently applied codes. We summarized the content within these codes and organized it under three broad domains: effective communication, supporting client self-determination, and active intervention. To validate the second cycle-focused coding, the third author independently reviewed the case contact notes and created a summary matrix displaying the presence or absence of the subcodes across the cases (Table 3).

Table 2. Skillful Practice Codes.

Effective Communication	Client Self-Determination	Active Intervention
• Communication: Active	• Honoring client self-determination	• Placement preservation
• Communication: Affirming	• Demonstrating culturally responsive practice	• Post-reunification support
• Communication: Persistent		• Preserving connections
• Communication: Rapport		• Proactive assistance
• Communication: Therapeutic		• Clarifying parental or caregiver rules
• Communication: Transparent		• Facilitating family dynamics
• Celebration		• Transition
• Strength-based		• Communicating ground rules
• Empathetic		• Sustained effort over time
• Educating		• Creative ideas
		• Contingency planning

Table 3. Skillful Practice Presence/Absence.

Age	Effective Communication				Self-Determination & Empowerment		Active Intervention		
	Rapport	Listening	Strengths	Transparent Comm.	Services & Problem-solving	Placement	Rules & Conflict	Persistent Comm.	Crisis Response
12				x				x	
12	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
12		x	x	x		x	x	x	
12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
13	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
13	x	x	x		x		x	x	
13		x		x	x	x	x	x	
14	x	x		x		x	x	x	x
14	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
14	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
14	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
14	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
14	x		x				x		x
14	x	x		x	x	x	x		x
14	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
15	x	x		x			x	x	x
15	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
15	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
15	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
15	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
15	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
15	x	x		x		x	x	x	x
15	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
15	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
16	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
16	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
16	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
16	x	x	x	x			x	x	
16		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
16	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
16	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
16				x	x		x	x	
16		x		x		x	x	x	
17		x	x	x			x	x	
17	x	x			x	x	x	x	
17	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
17	x	x	x	x			x		x
17		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Findings

The analysis identified three broad themes representing skillful practice: (1) effective communication (establishing rapport, listening actively, acknowledging client strengths, and communicating clearly and openly), (2) supporting client self-determination (related to participating in services, developing solutions to problems, and placement decisions), and (3) active intervention

(clarifying rules and mediating conflict, follow-up to facilitate services, and responding to crises). Each of these skillful practices was documented in many or most of the 39 cases, as summarized in Table 3. We describe and offer examples of these skillful practices below. In these descriptions and examples we removed names and refer to individuals based on their role in the case (e.g., minor, mother, father, CWW) to preserve confidentiality.

Effective communication

Effective communication strategies documented in the case records related to developing a strong rapport with clients, listening empathetically, non-judgmentally, and actively, acknowledging client strengths, and being transparent with clients about agency policies.

Establishing rapport

Establishing rapport with clients provided a foundation for other case management activities and was reflected in the willingness of clients to share aspects of their emotional and social experiences. Minors confided in CWWs about positive life events such as romantic relationships, new friendships, academic accomplishments, feelings of love and acceptance from substitute care providers, and their hopes for their parents to make progress on case plan objectives. Minors disclosed to CWWs their fears about being placed with strangers in foster homes, feeling rejected or abandoned by their parents, conflict with friends and family, experiences with being sexually abused (e.g., being molested, raped, or commercially sexually exploited). They also expressed their feelings about suicidality, depression, and hopelessness, experiences living on the streets, using drugs, having unsafe sex, challenges with teachers, and difficult or unsafe living conditions in foster homes or in their homes of origin. Minors talked about where they wanted to live, whom they wanted to visit, and where they wanted to attend school. CWWs were able to use this information to make appropriate service referrals, make placement changes when necessary, provide effective case planning services, and make recommendations to the court. Parents and substitute care providers confided in CWWs about challenges they faced getting minors to do chores, regularly attend school, do homework, respect curfews, abide by household and school rules, and avoid illegal activities. CWWs listened and recorded the perspectives of parents and substitute caregivers, and provided them with referrals, advice, and support.

In some cases, however, despite CWW efforts to establish rapport, clients refused to engage with CWWs for the duration of the case. In one example, the mother refused to remove her headphones during Team Decision-Making (TDM) meetings and instead listened to music while her case plan

was developed. During another TDM she brought brass knuckles and nearly engaged in a physical altercation with staff.

Non-judgmental, active, and empathetic listening

CWWs actively listened to clients and remained non-judgmental as opposed to reactive when faced with challenging communication dynamics. In one case, the CWW reported that she "actively listened" to the maternal aunt "venting frustration" about having to care for the minor and her fear of neglecting him. The CWW engaged the maternal aunt in thinking about different ways to make the situation less stressful and noted that the aunt sounded "much relieved" by the end of the conversation. In another case, the minor expressed during a TDM that she wanted to emancipate from foster care immediately. The CWW wanted to help the minor get on a "more productive track" but without "shooting down her idea." The CWW suggested alternatives (e.g., specific therapy that might work well given her history) and voiced encouragement about helping her stabilize in her current placement. The worker facilitated a meeting with the youth and her service providers, focusing "on [the client's] side" and doing what was best for her. The minor was receptive to this approach and agreed to remain in foster care.

CWW notes reflected empathy for clients. CWWs acknowledged the sad and difficult feelings clients expressed about their situations as well as the pride they took in their accomplishments and the excitement they felt about positive life changes. CWWs noted their observations about the body language of their clients and the potential impact of their emotions on future actions. In one case, the CWW noted that the minor was happy and talkative upon first seeing the CWW, but when the CWW asked the minor about her biological mother, the minor became withdrawn, "displaying limited affect, and did not make eye contact." The CWW made notations throughout the case about the minor's conflicted feelings about her mother and was able to help the minor move toward guardianship in a timely way when the mother expressed that she did not wish to reunify with the minor. In another case, the CWW noticed that the minor's hands started to shake when she talked about how many high school credits she needed to complete in order to graduate. The CWW encouraged the minor to think about her education one class at a time rather than contemplating all her classes at once. In both of these examples, the CWWs empathetic observations (as indicated in their notations) about the client's emotions enabled them to offer advice and take actions to address the client's needs.

Acknowledging client strengths and progress

CWWs acknowledged client strengths in their meetings with clients and in their case notes about the clients. This included recognizing, naming, and celebrating improvements as they occurred over time, as in one case where

the CWW reflected on how far the mother had progressed in the 12 months since the opening of the case. He noted that when he first encountered the mother, she was unwilling to speak with him and denied any substance abuse issues. One year later, she was taking classes at a community college and had been sober for 10 months. Although the mother was disappointed when reunification did not occur due to her son's unwillingness to return home, the CWW noted that the children remaining in her care benefitted from her sobriety and enhanced confidence about her educational attainment.

Clients responded favorably when their strengths were acknowledged and this reinforced the rapport between the CWWs and clients. For example, before transferring a case to another staff member, the CWW met with the minor to reflect on her time working with him, highlighting the minor's strengths of intelligence and insightfulness and noting how much the CWW had learned from the minor. In another example, when a minor reported a childhood rape and then regretted disclosing the information, the CWW talked about the importance of tackling the issue and processing its effect on his behavior. The CWW reminded the minor about his strength and courage as well as how things in his life had recently improved. In a case involving a minor who had formerly been involved in illegal activities, the CWW noted that the minor had not missed any meetings, improved his grooming habits, was doing everything to stay on track with plans to go to college, and was pleased to hear that someone was noticing his progress.

Transparent communication

In their documentation, CWWs reflected transparency in communicating their expectations to clients, as well as the consequences of their actions or inactions. They documented discussions with parents about topics that included establishing paternity, meeting service objectives (e.g., completing parenting classes), visiting with children, attending therapy, engaging in drug testing, maintaining sobriety, attending court, and not allowing adults with criminal backgrounds to live in their homes. CWWs documented discussions with substitute care providers about topics including obtaining medical and dental care for minors, managing or clarifying rules related to travelling with minors, obtaining and maintaining foster home licensure, and setting appropriate boundaries for minors. They documented discussions with minors about topics including attending school, establishing and maintaining eligibility for foster care beyond 18, complying with group home and foster home rules, maintaining sobriety, practicing safe sex, and generally keeping themselves safe.

CWWs provided clear guidelines to clients on how to achieve their permanency goals. For example, after a mother relapsed, the CWW explained clearly the consequences of her relapse on reunification and developed a support plan that involved the mother calling the CWW every other day to

report on how she was doing. In another example, the CWW stressed the importance of a mother maintaining contact with her son in order to reunify by helping the son feel comfortable with telephone dialogue before moving forward with future visits. In this case, the mother and son were unable to overcome their relationship challenges and reunify. However, the mother was able to comply with her case plan and appeared to benefit from the substance abuse treatment that was a part of her case plan.

CWWs were also transparent about how long internal agency processes might take and what clients should expect on issues such as the home approval processes and adoption or guardianship proceedings. Transparency on the part of the CWWs appeared to elicit a similarly open and honest response from clients, as in this example:

> This worker explained that any [home] approval process would take time and that [the minor] will likely be placed in a foster home in the interim. This worker point blank asked [the minor] if he would run [away] again. He responded that he wasn't sure. This worker thanked him for his honesty. [The minor] said that it depends on where the home is and how the people treat him. This worker explained that there will be a TDM and that foster placement staff will bring the info regarding options at that time.

In another case, a mother explained to her CWW that her son had been "totally out of control to the point that she was afraid he might hurt her." However, the mother said she was afraid to call the police because she did not want her son to be hospitalized. The CWW explained that when her son is out of control, the mother must call the police or she would be considered non-protective. The mother agreed to contact the police in the future.

Supporting client self-determination

The case records indicated that clients were often able to achieve positive changes when CWWs gave them autonomy and decision-making power over how to achieve their goals. CWWs supported client self-determination related to participating in services, developing solutions to problems, and making decisions about placements.

Services and creative problem-solving

One CWW regularly asked clients to describe their needs and how their presenting problems could be addressed. Clients displayed considerable insight when describing their needs and possible strategies for addressing difficult situations. For example, one minor responded that she and her mother needed to continue counseling and family therapy. In another case, after a minor had run away from his placement for two weeks, the CWW asked him what he thought the consequence of his actions should be:

> The minor was remorseful for his choices, and this worker explained the importance of learning from poor decisions. The minor agreed. This worker asked the minor what he thought his punishment should be. He knew he would lose phone and Facebook privileges, and agreed that it was fair. The minor looked over his case plan and signed it.

In another case, a minor had difficulty concentrating on his schoolwork without listening to music. At the same time, he experienced a high degree of conflict with other youth living in his group home. When the minor identified listening to music as a potential solution, the CWW helped him obtain his iPod from his mother and the CWW took the minor shopping to buy a pair of headphones. During a subsequent visit, the minor reported that when he felt angry with his roommate he could now listen to music and this helped him avoid conflict.

In one case, a mother whose children had been removed due to issues related to her substance abuse initially refused to enter an inpatient drug rehabilitation facility because she knew she would lose her Section 8 Housing Voucher if she did. The CWW modified her case plan so that she could instead receive outpatient drug treatment. The mother subsequently relapsed, following which she acknowledged that she was unable to remain sober as an outpatient and voluntarily entered an inpatient program. She was able to reunify with her children and received help to secure housing when she completed treatment. The CWW's ability to support the mother's process, while offering guidance at critical points, enabled the mother to enter an inpatient facility on her own terms and ultimately reunify with her children.

Placement decisions

In one case involving difficult placement decisions, a 14-year-old minor was removed from his adoptive mother (his maternal great aunt) due to physical abuse allegations. He was initially placed with his maternal uncle, but after a few months, the uncle said he could not handle the minor's high-risk behaviors that included running away from home. The minor's maternal great uncle volunteered to take the minor; however, the minor expressed concern about this placement because it meant changing schools and moving away from his friends. As an alternative, the minor asked to be placed with his classmate's mother. Despite the minor's request, the CWW and the family members determined that the minor should be placed with his great uncle, where he proceeded to struggle. He was truant from school, ran away for weeks at a time, and appeared "glum" in his interactions with the CWW. After months of intervening to maintain the minor's placement with his great uncle, the CWW agreed to place the minor with the classmate's mother. Once he changed placements, the minor's school attendance and outlook improved, and he stopped running away from placement.

Michael J. Austin | **253**

At times, CWWs supported client self-determination as a strategy to minimize risk, even when the outcome was not optimal. In one especially complex case, a 13-year-old girl was removed from the home of her mother after witnessing her mother engage in a failed suicide attempt. Her father had a prior substantiated allegation of physical abuse. While in foster care, the minor ran away from multiple placements, including a group home, experiencing eight different placements in less than one year. She admitted to having sex for money, and at one point was thought to be pregnant. During one incident of being absent without leave (AWOL), the minor had an adult male pick her up from the group home in exchange for sex. When the minor was returned to the group home, she stated that she would continue to run away from her placements and have sex for money until she was placed with her mother. After three subsequent AWOL episodes, the minor agreed to meet with the CWW after the CWW promised not to call the police or return the minor to foster care. At this point, the CWW placed the minor with her parents on a 30-day extended visit even though the parents had not made progress on their case plans due to life-threatening health problems. Ultimately, the CWW determined that despite the parents' limitations, the minor would do better living with them rather than continuing to run away and experience sexual exploitation. The circumstances of this case illustrate the complexity that CWWs confront in their efforts to support self-determination for minors while at the same time minimizing their exposure to serious risks.

Active intervention

Documented examples of active intervention included: clarifying caregiver or parental rules and mediating conflict, persistent follow-up with clients and providers to facilitate services, and responding in times of crisis.

Clarifying rules and mediating conflict

CWWs described mediating family conflict between minors and their substitute caregivers or their biological parents. Substitute caregivers were encouraged to provide clear boundaries and expectations for minors related to curfew, chores, school attendance, cell phone and internet usage, healthy eating habits, and safe transportation choices. When minors complained to CWWs about household rules, CWWs often made statements to support caregiver rules. For example: "CWW discussed that minor must submit to caregivers parental control by going to every class and not getting in trouble or risks removal from her home in the future." At other times, CWWs mediated parental or caregiver rules by encouraging caregivers to "pick their battles" and ease up on rules.

CWWs mediated specific conflicts between minors and caregivers as in the following case in which the minor had a history of leaving home without telling his mother: "Minor was given the number for the mobile response team to call if he needs immediate assistance. Agreed if he leaves the home he will leave a note for the mother on a specific dresser. If caregiver discovers him gone without permission and note, she will call the CWW." In several cases, the meetings between family members that were facilitated by the CWW led to productive discussions of the family's challenges and strengths. In one case, when caregivers expressed feeling overwhelmed due to the minor's behaviors, the CWW was able to provide insight into the sources of the youth's behaviors and offer the caregivers the tools for handling them. The placement remained intact.

Persistent follow-up

CWWs engaged in extensive follow-up with clients and service providers to facilitate service linkages. When services such as therapy, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, group homes, or residential treatment facilities were not available due to long waitlists, CWWs continually emailed and called service providers to determine how long the wait would be and when their clients could be served. CWWs documented phone calls and emails, sometimes multiple times each day, for a given service that a minor urgently needed. CWWs followed up with pharmacists when clients experienced problems getting prescriptions filled. CWWs helped clients obtain insurance coverage, and advocated for them to prevent and minimize lapses in coverage. CWWs worked repeatedly to engage educational service providers to ensure that the needs of the minor were being met by facilitating Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and scheduling collaborative meetings with teachers, counselors, administrators, substitute care providers, parents, and minors.

CWWs actively worked to connect clients to services as illustrated by: (1) driving a mother to pick up her children at school and then taking her to her CalWORKs appointment so she would not miss the appointment, (2) accompanying a mother from her home to the locations of her various service providers when the mother described feeling overwhelmed at the thought of learning the routes and bus schedules, (3) initiating referral for services upon learning that mother had been released from jail, and (4) calling upon an extended family support network to assist in locating a mother to remind her of various service referrals.

CWWs also followed up with unresponsive clients, including parents who were ambivalent about reunification and minors who left placements and stopped communicating. In one case, a young mother of a mentally ill teen stated that she was not sure if she wanted to reunify with her daughter. The CWW called and emailed the mother multiple times per day to coordinate

weekend visits even when the mother said she did not know if she would be able to visit at all. In this case, reunification did not occur; however, the mother and daughter were able to heal their tumultuous relationship and the mother was a source of support to the daughter when she later became pregnant. The CWW's persistent, kind, and respectful effort to engage the mother appear to have had a positive impact on the daughter's relationship with her mother.

Responding in times of crisis

CWWs actively intervened in crisis situations that included suicide attempts, threats, physical fights, and minors who ran away. When minors did not respond to CWW phone calls, CWWs made use of texting to communicate, often successfully. One CWW made a point of calling multiple family member and friends of the minor every time he ran away from placement. The CWW communicated his care and concern for the client by encouraging the contacts to notify him if they heard from the minor. On one occasion, the CWW went to the home of a friend where he suspected the minor was taking refuge. The CWW did not enter the house because no adults were present, but spoke loudly so that the minor would be able to hear him if he were present, saying everyone was worried about the minor's safety.

In another case, a 15-year-old female was taken into custody after her mother physically assaulted her. The minor had experienced substantial trauma prior to her removal, and throughout the case, she struggled with suicidal ideation and self-mutilation. She was involuntarily committed to a psychiatric hospital and went AWOL several times. The CWWs in this case were patient and supportive with the minor when the minor did not want to participate in services. At times, the minor lashed out at the CWW, calling her names, saying she hated her, and she wanted a new CWW. The CWW documented responding to the minor's behavior calmly and providing ongoing support. The minor appeared to stabilize in her final placement, a group home that provided her with the structure and therapeutic support she needed. It can be difficult for CWWs to continue the same level of support throughout the life of the case, especially when faced with intense rejection by a client. However, in this case, the CWWs' sustained effort and intensive advocacy efforts resulted in an appropriate and effective placement that was reported to be the best outcome for the minor.

Discussion

The case record review highlighted dimensions of skillful practice carried out by CWWs related to communicating effectively, supporting client autonomy, and actively intervening in order to serve child welfare involved youth. The specific forms of skillful practice documented in the case records correspond in many regards to the practice behaviors identified in California's Child

Welfare CPM. For example, the study documented instances of active and empathetic listening in 36 of the 39 cases, a finding that parallels the CPM core practice element of inquiry and exploration, which emphasizes listening to youth and families. Similarly, support for client autonomy with respect to placement choices was documented in 29 cases, consistent with the CPM practice element of engagement, which promotes encouraging youth to take the lead in assessing needs and identifying solutions. Our analysis also documented extensive follow-up by CWWs to ensure that youth obtained needed services in 38 cases, corresponding to the CPM emphasis on advocacy for services, interventions and supports. One of the most frequent skillful practices involved CWW efforts to resolve and mediate conflicts between youth and caregivers in 37 cases. From a developmental perspective, we might expect increased levels of conflict between caregivers and adolescent foster youth, among whom social disconnection from adults is relatively common (Keller, Cusik, & Courtney, 2007). However, in contrast to the other forms of skillful practice identified in the analysis, conflict mediation does not correspond to a specific practice element outlined in the CPM.

Study findings support several recommendations for practice. First, given the extent of the correspondence between skillful practices documented in case records and the practice behaviors promoted by leading child welfare practice frameworks, case record review emerges as a valuable strategy that child welfare agencies can incorporate in training and supervisory processes, in order to translate the guidelines offered by practice models into concrete, real life examples. Conversely, existing practice models such as the CPM might be strengthened by recommendations targeted to address the developmental needs of adolescents, namely, support and skill-building related to conflict management in family settings.

Second, study findings related to self-determination highlight the ability of youth to identify their needs and develop solutions, calling for attention to models of child welfare practice with youth that are strengths-based. Among youth who are experiencing behavioral problems, strengths-based practice that is focused on abilities and potential rather than problems, deficits and pathologies may increase motivation for change (Saleeby, 1992). Study findings related to effective communication highlight the importance of transparency in practitioner-client relationships, offering a strategy for strengthening engagement with foster youth that is supported in the broader literature on social work practice. Scholars advocating for the importance of relationship building in social work note that "demonstrating humane qualities, particularly honesty, reliability and consistency," is important for children (Ruch, 2013, p. 2147). Studies of service user involvement similarly note that common themes in effective participatory practice with both children and their parents include the "establishment of relationships of

trust and respect, clear communication and information and appropriate support to participate" (Gallagher, Smith, Hardy, & Wilkinson, 2012, p. 74).

The study presented a number of limitations related to the sample, as well as the nature and content of the data. Notably, we must exercise caution when seeking to generalize from this sample of 39 youth cases which were drawn from a single, purposively selected county. With respect to the case record data, CWWs face time constraints that may prevent them from consistently recording nonmandatory case activities, including promising and innovative practices. In addition, since client interactions are described through the lens of the CWW, the records may emphasize positive CWW practice behaviors, and under-report weak or poor practice. As a result, this analysis could not quantify with precision the relative frequency of skillful and poor practice at the level of the CWW or the case. However, the majority of the cases contained rich narrative documentation about the nature and quality of interactions with clients (including positive and negative client impressions of caseworkers, the child welfare agency, or service providers), specific strategies employed, and observations about client progress. The use of qualitative data-mining techniques enabled depth in the analysis, illuminating daily practice in ways that traditional case record review methods cannot achieve.

Also absent from the case records were data related to the characteristics of CWWs (e.g., training, experience, and skill level) and of child welfare practice settings (e.g., supervisory support) that are likely to shape CWW practice behavior. Consequently, research examining the prevalence of both skillful and weak or poor practice at the level of the case and the worker, and the role that caseworker characteristics and agency settings play with respect to engaging in these forms of skillful practice will be important.

Lastly, while the case record data did not always include final case outcome, the case summaries and coding did identify numerous instances in which skillful practice affected short-term outcomes such as mediation of conflict, improved client ability to attend school and engage in educational activities, prevention of self-harming behaviors, and placement stabilization. These short-term outcomes may in turn facilitate longer-term positive outcomes such as strengthened bonds between minors and caregivers, high-school graduation, improved mental health and safety, and permanent placements. However, these child welfare cases involved highly complex issues related to child and adolescent development, parenting challenges among biological and foster parents, and collaboration with other human service organizations to support service goals. Progress was typically made after multiple unsuccessful efforts to support positive change, while periods of positive change were sometimes followed by hardship and tragedy. Further research is thus needed in order to examine the relationship between these skillful practices and short and longer-term outcomes, identifying skillful practice components that lead successively to engagement outcomes, changes

in client attitudes, beliefs and knowledge, development of new client skills and behaviors, and ultimately, enduring changes that include client well-being and resilience.

Findings from this study are promising, suggesting that workers in this county are utilizing the practices set forth in California's CPM, as well as important practices such as conflict resolution that are not included in the CPM. The California Department of Social Services has noted that case record review methods can be used in conjunction with traditional evaluation methods to develop a more complete understanding of the pathways that link skillful practice to successful short- and long-term outcomes (CDSS, 2014). QDM represents a systematic, rigorous approach to case record review that is able to capture the complex work being carried out by skilled practitioners in daily practice. Practitioners, evaluators and researchers can use QDM to generate practice-based knowledge that can inform policy guidelines and practice frameworks in order to strengthen services and improve outcomes for children and families involved in child welfare services. As child welfare systems move to adopt more EBPs and promising practice frameworks, ongoing assessment is needed to determine whether CWWs adopt and successfully implement these practice tools in their daily work, and whether use of these tools results in positive outcomes for children and youth. In answering these questions, the perspectives of children and parents involved in child welfare services regarding the forms of practice that they view as effective will be essential.

Notes on contributors

Sarah Carnochan is the Research Director of the Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services, University of California, Berkeley, USA.

Erika Weissinger is Visiting Assistant Professor at the Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley, USA.

Colleen Henry is Assistant Professor at the Silberman School of Social Work, Hunter College, City University of New York, New York, USA.

Nicole Liner-Jigamian is a Research Analyst at the Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services, University of California, Berkeley, USA.

Michael J. Austin is the Director of the Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services, University of California, Berkeley, USA.

References

Avery, L., Hutchinson, K. D., & Whitaker, K. (2002). Domestic violence and intergenerational rates of child sexual abuse: A case record analysis. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *19*(1), 77–90. doi:10.1023/A:1014007507349

Barth, R. P., Lee, B. R., Linsey, M. A., Collins, K. S., Strieder, F., Chorpita, B. F., & Sparks, J. A. (2012). Evidence-based practice at a crossroads: The timely emergence of common elements and common factors. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *22*(1), 108–119. doi:10.1177/1049731511408440

Bradley, E. H., Curry, L. A., & Devers, K. J. (2007). Qualitative data analysis for health services research: Developing taxonomy, themes, and theory. *Health Services Research*, *42*(4), 1758–1772. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6773.2006.00684.x

Brodkin, E. Z. (2008). Accountability in street-level organizations. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *31*(3), 317–336. doi:10.1080/01900690701590587

California Department of Social Services. (2014, November 20). *All-county letter no. 14-84, subject: Child welfare services case reviews*. Retrieved from http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2014/14-84.pdf

California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC). (2016). *California child welfare core practice model*. Berkeley, CA: California Social Work Education Center.

Carnochan, S., Jacobs, L., & Austin, M. J. (2015). *Assessing the potential for qualitative data mining in practice-based child welfare research*. Berkeley, CA: Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services.

Castellani, B., & Castellani, J. (2003). Data mining: Qualitative analysis with health informatics data. *Qualitative Health Research*, *13*(7), 1005–1018. doi:10.1177/1049732303253523

Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2009). *Race equity review: Findings from a qualitative analysis of racial disproportionality and disparity for African American children and families in Michigan's child welfare system*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from https://www.cssp.org/publications/child-welfare/institutional-analysis/race-equity-review-findings-from-a-qualitative-analysis-of-racial-disproportionality-and-disparity-for-african-american-children-and-families-in-michigans-child-welfare-system.pdf

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Children's Bureau. (2014). *Child welfare outcomes 2009–2012: Report to congress, executive summary*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cwo09_12_exesum.pdf

Children's Bureau. (2017). *Child Maltreatment 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment

Children's Bureau. (2018). *Child Maltreatment 2016*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2016.pdf#page=10

Coohey, C. (2003). Defining and classifying supervisory neglect. *Child Maltreatment*, *8*(2), 145–156. doi:10.1177/1077559502250786

Davis, G., Johnson, G., & Saenz, R. (2003). *The California child welfare outcomes and accountability system*. Sacramento, CA: California Health and Human Services Agency. Retrieved from http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/res/pdf/AB636Workplan_032603.pdf

DePanfilis, D., & Salus, M. K. (2003). *Child protective services: A guide for caseworkers*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Retrieved from https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/cps.pdf

Epstein, I. (2009). *Clinical data-mining: Integrating practice and research*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Fakunmoju, S. B. (2009a). Contested cases of physical abuse: Evidentiary characteristics of modified and overturned outcomes. *Child Maltreatment*, *31*(2), 199–205.

Fakunmoju, S. B. (2009b). Substantiation and adverse appeal outcomes: Content analysis and testing of Drake's harm/evidence model. *Child Maltreatment*, *14*(1), 53–68. doi:10.1177/1077559508320386

Gallagher, M., Smith, M., Hardy, M., & Wilkinson, H. (2012). Children and family's involvement in social work decision making. *Children & Society*, *26*(1), 74–85. doi:10.1111/j.1099-0860.2011.00409.x

Gambrill, E. (1999). Evidence-based practice: An alternative to authority-based practice. *Families in Society: the Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, *80*(4), 341–350. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.1214

Gillingham, P., & Humphreys, C. (2010). Child protection practitioners and decision-making tools: Observations and reflections from the front line. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *33*(8), 2598–2616. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcp155

Gordon, L., & O'Keefe, P. (1984). Incest as a form of family violence: Evidence from historical case records. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *46*(1), 27–34. doi:10.2307/351860

Henry, C., Carnochan, S., & Austin, M. J. (2014). Using qualitative data-mining for practice research in child welfare. *Child Welfare*, *93*, 6.

Henry, C., Liner-Jigamian, N., Carnochan, S., Taylor, S., & Austin, M. J. (2018). Parental substance use: How child welfare workers make the case for court intervention. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *93*, 69–78. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.07.003

Herz, D. C., Ryan, J. P., & Bilchik, S. (2010). Challenges facing crossover youth: An examination of juvenile-justice decision making and recidivism. *Family Court Review*, *48*(2), 305–321. doi:10.1111/(ISSN)1744-1617

Jensen, P. S., Weersing, R., Hoagwood, E. K., & Goldman, E. (2005). What is the evidence for evidence-based treatments? A hard look at our soft underbelly. *Mental Health Services Research*, *7*(1), 53–74.

Keller, T. E., Cusik, G. R., & Courtney, M. E. (2007). Approaching the transition to adulthood: Distinctive profiles of adolescents aging out of the child welfare system. *Social Service Review*, *81*(3), 453–484. doi:10.1086/519536

Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. New York, NY: Russell Sage.

MacQueen, K. M., McLellan, E., Kay, K., & Milstein, B. (1998). Codebook development for team-based qualitative analysis. *CAM Journal*, *10*(2), 31–36. doi:10.1177/1525822X980100020301

Michiel, A., Barbee, A. P., Cunningham, M. R., Antle, B. F., Christensen, D. N., & Boamah, D. (2014). Components of the solution based casework child welfare model that predict positive child outcomes. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, *8*, 433–465. doi:10.1080/15548732.2014.939252

Mitchell, L., Walters, R., Thomas, M. L., Denniston, J., McIntosh, H., & Brodowski, M. (2012). The Children's Bureau's vision for the future of child welfare. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, *6*(4), 43–71. doi:10.1080/15548732.2012.715267

Nath, S. B., Hirschman, K. B., Lewis, B., & Strumpf, N. E. (2008). A place called LIFE: Exploring the advance care planning of African-American PACE enrollees. *Social Work in Health Care*, *47*(3), 277–292. doi:10.1080/00981380801985432

Neville, R. G., Bryce, F. P., Robertson, F. M., Crombile, I. K., & Clark, R. A. (1992). Diagnosis and treatment of asthma in children: Usefulness of a review of medical records. *British Journal of General Practice*, *42*, 501–503.

O'Brien, L. (2007). Achieving a successful and sustainable return to the workforce after ABI: A client-centred approach. *Brain Injury*, *21*(5), 465–478. doi:10.1080/02699050701315134

Pithers, W. D., Beal, L. S., Armstrong, J., & Petty, J. (1989). Identification of risk factors through clinical interviewing and analysis of records. In R. Lewis (Ed.), *Relapse prevention with sex offenders* (pp. 77–87). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Prior, L. (2003). *Using documents in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Reilly, S. H., McKelvey-Walsh, N., Freundlich, M., & Brenner, E. (2011). Training and technology: Improving the quality and timeliness of service plans and case documentation. *Administration in Social Work*, *35*(2), 207–222. doi:10.1080/03643107.2011.557597

Ruch, G. (2013). 'Helping children is a human process': Researching the challenges social workers face in communicating with children. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *44*(8), 2156–2162.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Saleeby, D. (Ed.). (1992). *The strengths perspective in social work practice*. New York, NY: Longman.

Sherwood, P., Lyburn, I., Brown, S., & Ryder, S. (2001). How are abnormal results for liver function tests dealt with in primary care? Audit of yield and impact. *British Medical Journal*, *322*(7281), 276–278.

Shlonsky, A., & Ballan, M. (2011). Evidence-informed practice in child welfare: Definitions, challenges and strategies. *Developing Practice: the Child, Youth and Family Work Journal*, (29), 25–42.

Simms, M. D., Dubowitz, H., & Szilagyi, M. A. (2000). Health care needs of children in the foster care system. *Pediatrics*, *106*(4 Suppl), 909–918.

Taylor, S., Battis, C., Carnochan, S., Henry, C., Balk, M., & Austin, M. J. (2018). Exploring trauma-informed practice in public child welfare through qualitative data-mining of case records. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*. doi:10.1080/15548732.2018.1500967

Teaster, P. B. (2002). The wards of public guardians: Voices of the unbefriended. *Family Relations*, *51*(4), 344–350. doi:10.1111/fare.2002.51.issue-4

Toro, P. A., Dworsky, A., & Fowler, P. J. (2007, March). Homeless youth in the United States: Recent research findings and intervention approaches. Paper presented at the National Symposium on Homeless Research, Washington, D.C.: Abt Associates Inc. and Policy Research Associates Inc.. Retrieved from https://www.huduser.gov/portal//publications/pdf/p6.pdf

Trickett, P. K., Mennen, F. E., Kim, K., & Sang, J. (2009). Emotional abuse in a sample of multiply maltreated, urban young adolescents: Issues of definition and identification. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *33*(1), 27–35. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.12.003

Turnell, A., & Edwards, S. (1997). Aspiring to partnership: The Signs of Safety approach to child protection. *Child Abuse Review*, *6*(3), 179–190. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1099-0852(199708)6:3<179::AID-CAR324>3.0.CO;2-J

White, C. R., Havalchack, A., Jackson, L., O'Brien, K., & Pecora, P. (2007). *Mental health, ethnicity, sexuality, and spirituality among youth in foster care: Findings from the casey field office mental health study*. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Perspectives of Public and Nonprofit Managers on Communications in Human Services Contracting

Sarah Carnochan[a], Bowen McBeath[b], Emmeline Chuang[c], and Michael J. Austin[a]

[a]University of California; [b]Portland State University; [c]University of California

ABSTRACT

Government contracts and grants constitute the largest funding source for the majority of nonprofit organizations. Contracts for complex services, such as those involved in delivering human services, pose substantial challenges for public and nonprofit managers. In this context, concerns have been raised about contract management capacity, including challenges related to proposal and contract development, implementation, and performance reporting, as well as the impact of contract monitoring tools on contractor performance. Relatively few studies have provided a cross-sectoral perspective on the concrete managerial skill sets needed to engage in the interpersonal and technical processes involved in effective contract management. This study reports qualitative findings from a survey of county and nonprofit human service managers regarding approaches to managing challenges that arise in contractual relationships. The results identify the important role played by communication in the relationships between contract managers, illustrate the content of formal and informal exchanges, and identify common perspectives on the characteristics of effective communications, including transparency, a balance of flexibility and consistency, and timeliness. Practice implications for contract management relate to enhancing communication strategies in order to promote stronger contract relationships.

Human services in the United States are delivered at the local level by complex networks of public, nonprofit, and for-profit agencies, linked in a wide array of contractual and collaborative relationships (Smith, 2012). Contracted services account for the majority of public human service expenditures by federal, state, and local government entities (Kettl, 2015). For the majority of nonprofits in the human services and other fields, government revenues via contracts and grants constitute the largest funding source (Boris, de Leon, Roeger, & Nikolova, 2010). Contracts for complex services, such as those involved in delivering human services to vulnerable

populations, pose substantial challenges for public and nonprofit managers (Brown, Potoski, & Van Slyke, 2015; Romzek & Johnston, 2002). Contract management activities, including feasibility assessment, contract formulation, implementation, and performance evaluation, require a broad range of knowledge and capabilities related to substantive policy, negotiation and bargaining, and program monitoring (Amirkhanyan, 2011; Brown & Potoski, 2003; Joaquin & Greitens, 2012; Van Slyke, 2003). In this context, concerns have been raised about public sector contract management capacity to ensure the effectiveness of public human services, including challenges related to managing the transaction costs associated with negotiating, implementing, and enforcing contracts, as well as limitations to the impact of contract monitoring tools on contractor performance (Brown & Potoski, 2005; Fernandez, 2007; Fernandez, 2009; Van Slyke, 2007).

Parallel concerns in the nonprofit sector related to contract management challenges have emerged over the past several decades. Nonprofit human service organizations incur substantial transaction costs associated with contract management in complex human service delivery networks related to proposal and contract development, operations, and reporting (Gronbjerg, 1991). Organizational resources and technological capacity play an important role in determining the extent to which nonprofit agencies are able to engage in performance measurement for strategic purposes (Thomson, 2011), and organization size has been found to be associated with the level of nonprofit agency satisfaction in contractual relationships (Barton, Folaron, Busch, & Hostetter, 2006). Resource issues continue to challenge nonprofits engaged in contracting with government entities, as when the Great Recession increased funding unpredictability, complicating fiscal management demands (Never & De Leon, 2014).

Early research on the experiences of nonprofit organizations engaged in managing government contracts highlighted the complex "balancing act" that contracting requires of managers, which is rendered more difficult in circumstances where performance is difficult to measure or monitor (Hassel, 1997, p. 443). More recent studies have found that nonprofit organizations continue to struggle with performance reporting demands imposed by funders when they lack the time, resources, and expertise needed to engage in formal evaluation (Carman, 2010; Carnochan, Samples, Myers, & Austin, 2014). Insufficient organizational capacity for performance measurement among nonprofit human service organizations, related to funding levels, staff expertise, and information technology, diminishes the extent to which organizations can make use of performance information (Lee & Clerkin, 2017). Research on contracting for child welfare services has highlighted managerial challenges related to

designing monitoring systems that require continuous communication and other boundary spanning activities (Collins-Camargo, McBeath, & Ensign, 2011). In addition to technical challenges, performance measurement poses political challenges for managers, who must balance the interests of diverse stakeholders in efforts to define appropriate measures to monitor complex services (Carnochan, McBeath, & Austin, 2017; Kim, 2005).

Given the prevalence and scope of contracting in publicly funded human services, and the substantial challenges that contracting and contract monitoring pose to managers in the public and nonprofit sectors, relatively few studies have aimed to identify the concrete managerial skill sets required to engage in the interpersonal as well as the technical processes involved in effective contract management (Fernandez, 2007; Van Slyke, 2007). Consequently, research is needed to further our understanding of specific strategies employed by managers in their efforts to develop and sustain contract relationships in order to support contract implementation and performance. Notably, few studies have included the perspectives of public and nonprofit human service managers involved in cross-sectoral contractual relationships (for exceptions, see Amirkhanyan, 2009; Amirkhanyan, 2011; Campbell, Lambright, & Bronstein, 2012; Gazley & Brudney, 2007), making it difficult to compare managerial experiences and identify shared understandings or conflicting perspectives.

This exploratory study reports qualitative findings from a cross-sectoral survey of nonprofit and county human service managers in five California counties regarding their views on managing challenges that arise in contractual relationships related to contract design, service delivery, performance measurement, and other aspects of the contracting process. The study focus on individual managers is consistent with the emphasis in recent public and nonprofit administration scholarship on the value of understanding the perspectives and strategies of the actors involved in public sector accountability relationships (Yang & Dubnick, 2016). The current study applies insights from theories of relational contracting and relational coordination concerning the importance of interpersonal managerial relationships and communication intensity for resolving cross-sector collaboration challenges (Gittell, 2011; Romzek, LeRoux, & Blackmar, 2012).

The results contribute to the literature by identifying and explaining the central role that communication between contract managers plays in managing human service contract challenges. The study illustrates the array of formal and informal exchanges that occur, describes common cross-sectoral perspectives on the characteristics of effective communications, and examines variation in perspectives across the sectors and with respect to nonprofit agency size. Implications for county and nonprofit human service

managers relate to strategies for promoting effective communications in order to strengthen contractual relationships.

Managing contracting challenges in the human services

Human service agencies seek to address complex social problems that are resistant to change, and characterized by unpredictability and uncertainty (Head & Alford, 2015). In delivering complex services to address complex problems, public and nonprofit sector agencies confront multiple, interrelated challenges, which include highly politicized environments, inadequate resources, indeterminate service technologies, difficult-to-define and -measure service outcomes, and diverse client populations (Hasenfeld, 2010; Lynn, Heinrich, & Hill, 2001; McBeath, Carnochan, Stuart, & Austin, 2017; Sandfort, 2010). These challenges have been described as key characteristics of the human service institutional context, in which uncertainty, risk, and complexity: (a) impact public and nonprofit organizational resources, technology, goals, and accountability; (b) involve variation in client needs and service processes; and (c) complicate internal and external managerial roles and tasks (Hasenfeld, 2010; McBeath et al., 2017). Contract management, representing a central component of the human service agency manager's external management role, is shaped by each of these challenges, as managers are called upon to respond to diverse stakeholder interests, allocate or advocate for scarce resources, select and implement effective service technologies, define and measure outcomes, and engage clients in services (Benjamin, 2008; McBeath et al., 2017; O'Regan & Oster, 2000).

The uncertainty, risk, and complexity that are fundamental to human service delivery increase the accountability challenges that characterize all public contracting (Brown, Potoski, & Van Slyke, 2006; McBeath et al., 2017; Van Slyke, 2007). To date, theories of contracting have illuminated many of the dynamics and challenges that play out in the contractual relationships between public and nonprofit human service agencies and managers. Drawing upon principal-agent theory, Brown and colleagues (2006; also see Brown & Potoski, 2005) note the central task of public contract managers related to achieving goals consistent with public policies, while minimizing transaction costs associated with negotiating, implementing, and monitoring contracts. They point to the accountability challenges facing public managers who use contract specification, monitoring, and enforcement to ensure that the nonprofit agency performs according to the contract, and does not exploit information advantages related to service costs or implementation for its own benefit. In contrast, stewardship theory emphasizes the shared values and common interests of county and nonprofit human service agencies, resulting in high levels of trust among

contracting partners, and obviating the need for costly contract monitoring and enforcement mechanisms (Lynn et al., 2001; Van Slyke, 2007). Although the proposed solutions to ensuring accountability differs in these frameworks, concerns with shared values and interests, trust between managers, and imperfect information regarding service costs and outcomes figure prominently.

Given the challenges associated with managing complex human service contracts under conditions of uncertainty, scholars have called for collaborative approaches to contract management, such as public-nonprofit partnering to design contract terms and performance criteria (Brown & Troutt, 2004; Head & Alford, 2015). Such approaches may be appropriate given the expectation of shared values and interests between nonprofit and public sector human service agencies, while narrow reliance on formal contract management strategies, such as contract monitoring and performance measurement, may be insufficient to address the need for trust and information that can facilitate joint problem identification and solving (Lamothe & Lamothe, 2012).

Although some researchers have found that performance measurement is associated with perceived effectiveness of accountability in contract management (Amirkhanyan, 2011), others have raised concerns about performance measurement approaches related to organizational capacity limitations, resource diversion, and mission drift (Carman, 2010; Ebrahim, 2005; Jos & Tompkins, 2004; Siltala, 2013). Nonprofit organizations may struggle to meet reporting requirements, while funders often make limited use of performance data in decision making (Carman, 2010). Performance measurement strategies may concentrate staff efforts on compliance activities, decreasing resources devoted to substantive client services (Jos & Tompkins, 2004; Siltala, 2013). In some instances, contracted agencies may respond to performance measurement regimes by engaging in opportunistic behavior aimed at meeting service targets rather than providing high quality services (Negoita, 2018). Accountability demands made by funders that focus on short term objectives can inhibit important organizational learning and interfere with the mission of nonprofit organizations (Ebrahim, 2005). Finally, performance measurement in the human services presents challenges for both public and nonprofit managers related to balancing multiple stakeholder perspectives in the process of identifying appropriate objectives and measures (Carnochan et al., 2017; Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011).

Relational contracting to address human service contract-based coordination challenges

Ultimately, formal accountability mechanisms such as performance measurement and contract monitoring do not operate in isolation, but are

carried out in the context of relationships among organizational actors (Ebrahim, 2005). Given the limitations associated with performance measurement, it is not surprising that less formal, relational approaches to contracting commonly exist in parallel with formal contractual relationships in human service delivery systems (Lamothe & Lamothe, 2012; Romzek & Johnston, 2005). Relational contracts are typically characterized by "trust, discretion, joint-problem-solving, and information exchange" (Van Slyke, 2007, p. 184). Managerial relationships can thus enhance and expand upon the formal contract (Bertelli & Smith, 2009). Moreover, managerial perceptions of the effectiveness of cross-sectoral partnerships are influenced by interpersonal relationships (Gazley, 2010a). Strengthening managerial relationships through effective patterns of behavior, norms, and expectations can increase the likelihood of achieving mutual benefits for nonprofit and public human service agencies (Brown et al., 2015). Human service managers, who engage in relational contracting work beyond organizational boundaries, act as boundary spanners, who must develop interpersonal skills that include effective communicating and listening (Oliver, 2013; Williams, 2002). In addition, human service managers engaged in relational contracting may be able to "co-construct meaningful approaches" to measuring the effectiveness of human services (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011, p. 384).

In a similar vein, relational coordination theory has emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationship development characterized by norms of reciprocity, shared goals, and a common emphasis on communication quality and intensity (Gittell, 2011). When so engaged, boundary spanning managers can help cross-functional teams address longstanding as well as emergent issues, engage in problem solving, support conflict resolution, and promote performance measurement (Edmondson & Harvey, 2017; Gittell, 2011; Gittell & Logan, 2015). Overall, theoretical scholarship in the relational contracting, relational coordination, and public-private partnership domains highlights flexibility in cross-sectoral relationships to facilitate ongoing adjustments and problem-solving in the delivery of complex services (DeHoog, 1990; Head & Alford, 2015).

Empirical research on relational contracting has found that behavioral patterns and norms related to effective communication among nonprofit and public contract managers play an important role in the development of trust (Van Slyke, 2007). Attention to extensive communication, planning, and coordinating may help to ensure accountability on the part of nonprofit service providers (Brown & Potoski, 2005). Accountability can be maintained in collaborative, networked models of contracted human service delivery through close and continuous interaction between public agency and contractor staff (Negoita, 2018). For example, a study of local government managers in one state found that informal communications are

common, and are deemed by managers to play a significant role with respect to promoting accountability (Marvel & Marvel, 2009). In contrast, in a study involving funders and nonprofit human service agencies, county and nonprofit managers reported that discussion and collaborative efforts related to performance reporting were moderately common, but described relatively lower levels of satisfaction with the level of collaboration about performance feedback (Campbell et al., 2012).

Research thus highlights the role that managerial communication can play in strengthening public-nonprofit contract relationships by building trust and identifying shared values and interests, as well as promoting accountability by addressing concerns related to opportunistic exploitation of information asymmetry (Brown & Potoski, 2005; Van Slyke, 2007). Scholars have begun to examine more closely the association between communication quality and contract relationship strength, with some studies measuring communication quality as the extent to which nonprofit executive directors view their communication with public sector counterparts as good, feel heard by their counterpart(s), and believe they can easily initiate communications (Amirkhanyan et al., 2010; Amirkhanyan, Kim, & Lambright, 2012). Mutual understanding of contract terms and related behavior is critical, requiring clear communication through technological as well as direct personal interaction (Brown et al., 2015). Open communication, as well as frequent face-to-face contacts, have been found to be effective relational strategies (Vosselman, 2016). In a prominent study, Romzek and colleagues (2012) noted the important facilitative role that communication plays in developing informal accountability relationships within the context of collaborative service networks involving contractual as well as cooperative arrangements among organizations. Key themes related to communication included: the importance of frequent and sustained communication; information sharing as an obligation and a source of power; and reliance on multiple formal and informal communication channels (Romzek, LeRoux, & Blackmar, 2012). Finally, some research has found that organizational size is salient, with larger nonprofit human service agencies reporting higher levels of satisfaction with select aspects of contract communications (Barton, Folaron, Busch, & Hostetter, 2006).

In summary, the theoretical and empirical scholarship on managerial boundary spanning to promote organizational collaboration in contract-based human service delivery systems points to the importance of communication skills and processes in cross-sectoral relationships. Communication between organizational actors can strengthen relationships by identifying shared goals and building trust, while facilitating information exchange to promote accountability and joint problem solving of the complex issues that arise in the delivery of human services. A substantial literature

Michael J. Austin | **269**

highlighting the role of communications in public contracting has focused on developing theoretical frameworks to understand public-nonprofit relational mechanisms, while calling for further empirical investigation (Bertelli & Smith, 2009; Brown et al., 2015; Oliver, 2013; Vosselman, 2016). Previous empirical research has contributed to the knowledge base, while tending to report on relatively narrow data sets, including studies in which: (1) nonprofit or public sector participants are absent (e.g., Brown & Potoski, 2005) or participate in small numbers (e.g., Romzek & Johnston, 2002; Romzek & Johnston, 2005); (2) overall nonprofit and public sector sample sizes are very small, as is appropriate for qualitative research (e.g., Van Slyke, 2007); or (3) the service field is limited to a single domain (e.g., Amirkhanyan et al., 2010; Amirkhanyan et al., 2012). Related research has described the purposes and goals of interpersonal, informal communication between managers in an array of collaborative interorganizational relationships that are not, however, dominated by formal contracts that specify roles and responsibilities (Romzek et al., 2012; Williams, 2002).

Therefore, insufficient empirical attention has been dedicated to the specific complex dynamics that characterize the contract-based coordination efforts of public and nonprofit human service managers, including their qualities of communication-related engagement, purpose, flexibility, and consistency (McBeath et al., 2017). To build on these efforts, we report qualitative findings from a multicounty, cross-sectoral survey of nonprofit and public sector managers responsible for overseeing contracts related to a diverse array of services, including child welfare, adult and aging, employment and housing services. The analysis identifies managerial perspectives on strategies for responding to challenges that arise in contractual relationships, and examines differences of perspective across the sectors and with respect to nonprofit agency size. The findings support the central role of managerial communications, illustrate the diverse content of contract communications, and identify shared and differing cross-sectoral views on the characteristics of effective cross-sector communications.

Methods

The study is a component of a longstanding research program carried out by the authors in partnership with two regional consortia of county and nonprofit human service agencies. This analysis reports results from an online survey of managers in county and nonprofit human service agencies conducted in five San Francisco Bay Area counties in 2015. The survey design was informed by dyadic case studies conducted in three consortium counties in 2014 that explored contractual relationships between the county human service agency and a large nonprofit service provider, and by the

Table 1. County Agency Sample.

	Urban/Suburban/Rural	Budget (millions)	# FTEs
County A	Urban/Suburban	723.8	2614
County B	Suburban	775	2150
County C	Urban	932.4	2055
County D	Suburban/Rural	133	578
County E	Suburban/Rural	339.5	970

relevant empirical and theoretical literature. While the survey collected primarily quantitative data (reported elsewhere), the subset of open-ended questions forms the basis for this analysis.

Sample

The county human service agencies participating in the study are responsible for child welfare, employment and cash assistance, and adult and aging services, and reflect variation with respect to agency size and county demographics (see Table 1). The nonprofit agencies represented in the sample are similarly diverse with respect to agency size (ranging from 0 to 4,000 FTE) and budget (ranging from $14,000–$791 million) and provide a broad array of services to a diverse set of client populations. As 90% of the participating agencies were nonprofits (the remaining were private, for-profit contractors), we refer to nonprofit agencies throughout to simplify the narrative.

Survey invitations were sent to 295 county managers who were identified by study liaisons in the five participating county agencies as possessing knowledge of their agency's contracting processes and relationships with nonprofit contractors; 193 responded for a response rate of 65%. County managerial affiliations among survey respondents were: County A ($n = 91$, 47%); County B ($n = 18$, 9%); County C ($n = 36$, 19%); County D ($n = 15$, 8%); and County E ($n = 32$, 17%). Survey invitations were also sent to a primary contact (designated by county agency liaisons) at 329 nonprofit agencies with contracts with one or more of the five county agencies in FY 2013–2014. Responses were received from 483 nonprofit managers at 206 agencies, representing a 63% organizational response rate. Table 2 summarizes characteristics of county and nonprofit respondents related to employment role and experience.

Overall, the number of survey respondents is large for a qualitative study; however, fewer managers responded to the two open-ended questions upon which this analysis is based. In particular, 109 county managers and 210 nonprofit managers responded to at least one open-ended question.

Data collection

The major survey domains related to: (1) contract-based communication and interactions; (2) perceptions of accountability systems; (3) managerial

Table 2. County and Nonprofit Manager Sample.

	County managers		Nonprofit managers	
	Mean or %	Range	Mean or %	Range
Executive	13%		52%	
Program	43%		21%	
Administrative	40%		23%	
Other	4%		4%	
Years in current position	5	0–28	9	0–42
Years in human services	18	0–47	19	0–50

attitudes and organizational norms; and (4) contract performance. Two open ended questions asked about strategies to improve contractual relationships, and address performance measurement challenges (see Figure 1).

Analysis

The first and fourth authors led the analysis, employing manual coding, analytical memos, conceptual mapping, and member checking strategies (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In the first stage, inductive/in vivo coding was conducted jointly by the first and fourth authors in order to identify potentially new insights from the extensive qualitative data (Charmaz, 2014). The first author reviewed the data in total, and identified in vivo codes related to the context of managers' contractual relationships and to managerial communications and provided illustrative excerpts for each code. The code structure was reviewed with the fourth author, who then coded the data and comprehensively extracted excerpts related to each code. The first and fourth authors developed analytical memos and conceptual maps proposing potential relationships between the codes for discussion among the study team, which identified managerial communications as the focus for the next stage of analysis.

This overarching theme related to communication was defined based upon the perspectives articulated by managers participating in the survey, as well as the literature on communications in public-nonprofit contracting. The definition of communication incorporated multiple formal and informal modes of communication, as well as a diverse array of issues and topics as described in the discussion of study findings. Formal modes of communication included the RFP and related guidelines, reporting guidelines, planned monitoring interactions, and required reports submitted by nonprofit agencies. Descriptions of informal communications concerned ad hoc in-person meetings, telephone calls, emails, and informal site visits. Both formal and informal communication methods referred to individual as well as group interactions.

Drawing on relevant literature to enhance the theoretical sensitivity of the analysis (e.g., studies of performance measurement and relational

Nonprofit manager survey	Public manager survey
We are interested in learning how you think contractual relationships with the county HSA can be improved. What strategies would help enhance the contracting process or address challenges in your relationship with the county HSA?	We are interested in learning how you think contractual relationships with contractors can be improved. What strategies would help to enhance this contracting process or address challenges in your relationship(s) with contractors?
Gathering and reporting information on service quality and program outcomes, and then reporting that information to the county HSA, can be challenging. If you can, please describe a challenge you have experienced related to these areas, and any steps your agency and/or the county HSA have taken to address this challenge.	For your contractors, gathering and reporting information on service quality and program outcomes, and then reporting that information to the county HSA, can be challenging. If you can, please describe a challenge you have experienced related to these areas, and any steps taken by your agency and/or your contractors to address this challenge.

Figure 1. Open-ended questions.

contracting), the first author reviewed the data again, identifying and coding themes related to communication (Gilgun, 2015). The communication themes, along with illustrative excerpts, were reviewed and endorsed by the directors of four nonprofit human service agencies that are partners in the regional nonprofit consortium. Each of these themes was prominent in both public and nonprofit manager survey responses, and across the five counties participating in the study. To further explore the existence of patterns or differences with respect to the prevalence of the themes across the sectors, we numerically coded the thematic open-ended data and examined via crosstabs the comparison of county and nonprofit responses with respect to each theme, identifying cross-sector differences within one of the themes as reported below in the discussion of findings.

Lastly, in response to research noting the role that agency capacity and size can play in contract relationships and performance measurement, we explored differences among nonprofit managers related to agency size. The open-ended response thematic data were numerically coded, and linked to quantitative items related to number of staff and total revenues from the nonprofit agency survey and a separate worksheet completed by nonprofit agencies. These linked data for nonprofit respondents were then examined via crosstabs in order to understand the extent of possible variation related to agency staff size and revenue in respondent perspectives on the communication themes. Staff size was defined as total employees with categories defined as small (1–19), medium (20–99), large (100–499), and very large (>500) (Deitrick et al., 2014). Agency revenue categories were defined as small ($1–$999,999), medium ($1 million–$499,999,999), large ($5 million–$9,999,999), and very large (>$10 million) (NTEN, 2015). The analysis of differences among nonprofit respondents related to agency size did not

identify any consistent patterns or differences, and hence details of this analysis are not described in the report of findings. For example, within the themes where notable differences in the prevalence of the theme were observed, the pattern of difference typically varied across the two agency size measures. To illustrate, within one theme, with respect to the staff measure there was a difference of 14 percentage points between the prevalence of responses in the highest and lowest groups, and with respect to the revenue measure, this difference was 10 percentage points. However, the staff size category with the highest percentage of responses was large, while the revenue categories with (equal) highest percentage of responses were small and very large.

Limitations

The study design and methods reflect several limitations in addition to the relatively low response rate for the open-ended questions. First, while the county sample provides substantial variation, it represents only five counties, and may not reflect experiences in other counties or states. Second, given the point-in-time survey design and anonymity of responses, we were not able to pursue follow-up inquiry with study participants to develop further the key themes identified in the analysis. However, the opportunities for member checking provide a level of corroboration for the findings. Finally, it is likely that contract relationships evolve over time in complex, context-dependent ways that this study was not designed to capture.

Findings

When asked to identify strategies for responding to contract relationship and performance measurement challenges, respondents highlighted the central role of communication. They described: (1) the diverse content of managerial communications related to the contractual relationship; (2) the importance of communication in supporting effective relationships and addressing challenges; and (3) factors that they associate with effective communication. The description of the findings below explains and illustrates these common themes, and highlights instances where the analysis identified differences among respondents related to sector.

The content of managerial communications

Respondents described formal and informal managerial communications that address a diverse array of issues throughout the contracting process that extend beyond contract negotiations and reporting (see Figure 2). Managers highlighted preliminary discussions related to identifying

Identifying needs and goals for service delivery system.	County manager: *We could meaningfully include client/stakeholder/community input in the RFP development process, at least the needs assessment stage.*
Developing RFP announcing county agency's intent to contract for particular services.	Nonprofit manager: *Actual performance and progress toward previous contract goals nor role in advocacy to secure funds was not fairly considered when allocating funds between contractors in a single RFP. We made it an issue and while it did not change the outcomes, we have become much more proactive in future contracts.*
Negotiating contract terms.	County manager: *Coming to agreement on clear outcome objectives and service objectives during the RFP and negotiating process that can then be tracked is difficult. We have begun to tighten this process up, but it is a challenge.*
Regularly exchanging information about service delivery.	County manager: *Contractors often serve the most challenging clients, and when unable to meet the outcomes, it gets difficult to have a frank conversation about what is happening. We are striving to build better relationship with contractors to have these conversations earlier on.*
Reporting by contracted agencies regarding services and outcomes.	Nonprofit manager: *In the latest round of contracts, we had multiple conversations about what outcomes to track and whether we could pull those outcomes out of our current tracking system. County [human services agency] has been willing to work with us to match their outcome needs with our current Homeless Management Information System tracking system so that we do not have to duplicate efforts*
Identifying problems and developing solutions.	Nonprofit manager: *Our relationship with the county has improved over the past year. Primarily because we have focused on improved relationships because of shared desired outcomes and increased transparency. We have been able to schedule more problem-solving meetings rather than waiting for something to go wrong.*

Figure 2. Contract communication topics.

community needs and goals, as well as more specific conversations about the content and process for Requests for Proposals (RFP). Communications related to contract reporting included the input of nonprofit managers regarding the selection of performance outcomes to minimize reporting burdens. Of particular interest was the emphasis on problem solving communications designed to prevent or anticipate difficulties throughout the contract process.

Managerial communications and strong contractual relationships

County and nonprofit managers emphasized the importance of communication in fostering positive relationships with their contract counterparts, or as one executive in a large urban county agency succinctly stated: "Communication, communication, communication." Conversely, some managers noted that strong relationships enable effective communication throughout the contracting process. As an executive in a nonprofit multiservice agency explained: "We appreciate the close relationships that we have with our local HSA program and contract analysts. The relationships allow for two-way communication before, during, and after contract periods and flexibility when circumstances change."

Regular and face-to-face communications were perceived by county and nonprofit managers as contributing to stronger relationships. A program manager in the public assistance division of a large suburban county noted: "Our HSA and contractor relationships are enhanced via open communication and regular meetings." A county manager in a large urban/suburban agency described the way in which opportunities for direct, face-to-face communication promote trust and stronger relationships between county and nonprofit staff:

> I think that there definitely needs to be a face-to-face meeting with the contractors and all of the Agency's staff, so that people have a sense that there are humans behind these processes and to cultivate more rapport between the contractors and the Agency representatives. . . . Also, I've recently initiated one-to-one interviews, and have found these to be extremely effective with contractors. I think they like the ability to just connect with just one person, be candid, and also to be in their own space.

An executive in a nonprofit agency providing adult education services expressed concern about the absence of opportunities for regular, face-to-face communication offered by the county agency:

> Gathering and reporting the information is routine and not difficult. We only have 1 or 2 face-to-face meetings a year, and I feel I have little knowledge apart from the basic info we collect and provide as to what service quality they are looking for and program outcomes. It could be this basic information is all they are concerned with. I feel if we had more face-to-face meetings in a year, communication and understanding could be greatly improved.

In addition to contract-specific dyadic exchanges, a number of respondents emphasized the value of network communications that bring together multiple contracted providers within a specific service area. A fiscal manager in a large urban county recommended regular meetings involving agencies providing related services as a strategy to improve contracting relationships: "Quarterly communication meeting where all the contractors under a certain program or area can come discuss issues and get updates on internal items." Similarly, a fiscal manager in a large suburban county pointed to the need for additional forums for information exchange between county and contractor staff on a diverse array of topics related to contracts:

> More steering committees based on services provided would be beneficial to the contractors and the agency. I currently attend a monthly/quarterly steering committee, which includes (HSA) contracts, performance evaluation staff, program staff and contractor staff. The meetings are highly informative, and all stakeholders are kept abreast of important issues relating to the delivery of services, performance, new policies/procedures, and other important contract issues. The contractor is able to share best practices, challenges, success stories, etc.

Finally, public and nonprofit managers pointed to the importance of two-way communications between nonprofit and county human service managers, as a strategy to improve decision making and achieve better program outcomes, while balancing power relations. An administrator in a large urban county highlighted the value of incorporating nonprofit perspectives in contract design:

> Viewing the work of contractors more as shared work between partners who can each add critical information to the whole picture of service delivery, client assessment, and evaluation instead of a more one directional relationship in which the county agency tells the contracting agency what is needed, how much it can cost and how it is to be measured and reported would facilitate better outcomes.

An executive of a large, nonprofit multiservice organization also emphasized the value of bilateral communication, contrasting experiences in their contractual relationships with separate divisions of the county human service agency:

> Because we contract with several arms of the HSA, we find that there are different levels of communication dependent upon which arm the contract is with. Contracting with one division, for instance, is easy: there is a lot of communication; we are made aware of programmatic and contract changes in advance; they work with us to find workable solutions; our representative is open and responsive to feedback. Some of the other divisions, however, are not as easy or open to work with, and communication is lacking or one sided. Sometimes we are simply told not to ask: they are not open to feedback, and communication is one sided.

Factors supporting effective communication

In addition to highlighting the importance of regular, face-to-face, two-way communications, respondents described three characteristics they associate with effective managerial communications related to human service contracts: (a) transparency, (b) balance of flexibility and consistency, and (c) timeliness.

Transparency

County and nonprofit managers perceived transparency in communications as contributing to trust in contract relationships and strengthening understanding of complex contract issues. Respondents highlighted the importance of candid and accurate communications with respect to funding priorities and decisions, contract reporting requirements, and contract performance.

Nonprofit agency managers sought and appreciated transparency on the part of county agencies with respect to overarching community priorities, as well as specific funding criteria. An executive in a nonprofit organization

providing services to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence spoke about the negative impact on trust between contracting agencies that results from a lack of transparency on the part of the county agency with respect to contract processes and funding decisions:

> We would like to see [the] County be more thoughtful and transparent about awarding contracts and funds; seems like they sole-source when there are several qualified organizations. Conflicts of interest in relationships as to who gets funded, and often just as important is [the issue of] who knows what and when they know it. Things have been so relaxed for so long that an e-mail came out last year to a group of shelters where it was clear that one of the shelter directors knew before everyone else about the year's contract award. This creates serious mistrust and a lack of faith in the funding process.

Nonprofit managers also sought transparency related to the contract reporting process, including access to the data they were required to transmit to county automated data systems. An executive at a nonprofit agency providing supportive housing and social services to individuals with mental illness noted that access to performance data was very difficult:

> We were requested to input information into (county data system), but were not able to access the system for many months. The system is not very user-friendly, and extracting any useful indicators for performance indicators is next to impossible. If we are entering data into a system, we should have the ability to access that data in a way that we can use.

Transparency regarding performance reporting requirements is similarly valued; as an executive at a nonprofit agency providing housing and supportive services to homeless adults and families noted: "Our agency has developed practices around data collection, data systems, and contract management. It would help for [county human service agency] to be more transparent and timely about their requirements."

Public managers emphasized the value of accuracy and candor related to reporting of client outcomes. A fiscal manager in a large urban/suburban county echoed the nonprofit manager perspective regarding the role of performance measures in ensuring the flow of adequate information about service delivery: "Training, transparency, and parity. We need to continue to standardize the measures for service categories and develop a unit cost within each category. That would increase transparency and parity." Another manager in a large urban/suburban county similarly highlighted transparency with respect to performance reporting, to ensure that contractors understand the way data are used:

> We have different definitions of service, and they change sometimes with program interpretation. We worked to develop a transparent data sheet that explains to contractors how we achieve the numbers that illustrate their performance, and,

therefore, what we expect them to track. We have them submit numbers along with their invoices, and resolve them with our performance data.

Public managers also expressed views similar to those of nonprofit managers related to the need for clear communications regarding funding priorities and decisions. An executive in a large urban county agency explained the need for clarity about priorities and funding levels in an environment of limited resources:

> All contractors would like more funding to maintain their organization. Due to a finite amount of funding, our department needs to put the services to customers as paramount. The key is to be very clear about the service needs and funding amounts in the Request for Proposals, so there is no misunderstanding once an agency has been funded.

Balance of flexibility and consistency

Consistent with guidance offered in previous scholarship on contractual relationships and public-private partnerships formed to provide complex services (DeHoog, 1990; Head & Alford, 2015), some nonprofit and county managers highlighted the importance of flexibility in contractual arrangements. The importance of flexibility was more frequently noted, however, among the nonprofit managers. Nonprofit managers emphasized the benefits of flexibility with respect to service delivery models and contract performance. An executive in a nonprofit housing agency highlighted the linkage between flexibility and innovation in service delivery: "It would be helpful if there was opportunity for more innovation and flexibility around service delivery models and focuses on outcomes." The executive director of a large community development agency described the importance of flexible time frames with respect to achieving contract objectives, given changes in the community and the political environment:

> Our program outcomes tend to be related to community processes and policy work, so our outcomes are typically difficult to fit into the box of service provision. This type of work is also impacted by community and political dynamics, and can be somewhat unpredictable, needing flexible time considerations for meeting our objectives.

Some county managers acknowledged the need to respond flexibly to challenges that contracted agencies experience related to contract reporting databases, by developing alternative data collection and reporting mechanisms. Several county managers focused on ensuring an appropriate level of responsiveness in contracting processes; for example, one manager in a large urban county stressed the intersection between flexibility, trust, and transparency, noting: "We can tighten up our contracting process to create more trust and flexibility in program interpretation, delivery, and reward.

We can move toward a real transparent performance-based contracting system and remove much of the politics that hinder progress." The need for flexibility with respect to contract language was noted by a program manager in a large urban county, who reported: *"Contracts usually have a 'standard' language across programs, but it is not always relevant from one program to the next."*

In contrast, many county and nonprofit respondents expressed challenges and frustrations related to a lack of consistency in various components of contract communications. As with perspectives on the value of flexibility, complaints about inconsistency were more common among the nonprofit managers than among the county managers, although the difference was not as great. The most frequent issue related to the proliferation of databases across different funding streams, sectors, county agencies, and programs. A program manager in a large urban county highlighted the need for greater consistency with respect to the data systems for performance reporting: "Agencies vary a lot in the degree to which they adopt technologies—lack of a standardized database platform across all agencies. Many times the agency may use a different system in managing the clients and service deliveries, which is different from the county reporting system." An executive in a nonprofit agency providing health and social services to veterans similarly noted burdens imposed by incompatible data systems across multiple funders, describing agency efforts to develop technological remedies: "It has been hard to meet all the data requirements of multiple funders. It isn't so much that they want different information as that they want the same information but in different ways. It can make data collection redundant and occasionally absurd. We have tried to work with our IT group to standardize and translate where possible." An executive at a nonprofit legal services agency noted issues related to variability in reporting requirements and eligibility criteria, highlighting the constraints imposed by external funders:

> Managing different reporting systems is challenging, particularly as a smaller agency. Multiple contracts with different departments also makes it difficult for county staff to refer clients to us, because of the varied eligibility criteria. Is this helpful to clients ultimately? There has been some discussion about unifying this. Regarding collection of specific data points, where the County contract is tied to Federal funds, it seems we are particularly limited in how we can describe our outcomes.

Respondents also sought consistency with respect to contract management guidelines and staffing. A fiscal manager in a large urban county recommended cross-division training to achieve standardized contract management practices between fiscal and program managers, as well as ensure continuity over time in the approach to supporting contractual relationships:

> *My thought would be to train contract, fiscal, and program people together—and create consistency in terms of approach and handling of our contractor partners.*

> *We need to know each other and be a team—across the Agency, across departments . . . [The] benefit of having a solid team/community of agency staff means that there's a built-in succession plan, so when staff retired, other staff carry on in the same manner and spirit of the work—maintaining and supporting contractual relationships in the same, positive manner.*

An executive in a nonprofit community health center similarly highlighted the need for consistent staffing in order to ensure communication is complete and clear: "More consistency in terms of the personnel with whom we interface, and ensuring that the HSA team is all on the same page. Sometimes there seem to be gaps in information and/or communication among HSA staff that can result in confusion for us as a contractor."

Timeliness

County and nonprofit managers reported numerous challenges related to ensuring the timeliness of communications. As one nonprofit executive at a large multiservice agency reported: "We have had ongoing difficulties agreeing on performance outcomes. Ultimately, we reached agreement, but it was difficult to get the right HSA people in the room in a timely manner to resolve this." For some nonprofit managers, including an executive in a nonprofit agency providing mental health, housing and senior services, expectations regarding the timing of responses to communication requests were seen as reflecting the power balance in their relationship with the county agency: "Overall, we often experience a quick response required when HSA reaches out to us; however, we often receive a slower response when we reach out to HSA. [I] would like to see this become more of a balanced relationship, as we both need each other to achieve community goals."

Among public managers, the most common concern about timeliness related to receiving reports from contracted service providers within the time frame specified in the contract. A program manager in a large suburban county who identified challenges with timely reporting highlighted the capacity challenges faced by smaller agencies: "Most challenging issue equals getting reports in a timely manner. Some contractors are very small and do not have enough staff to provide the reports needed on a consistent basis. I 'nudge' and remind contractors for reports needed." Conversely, a program manager in a large urban county agency highlighted the value of providing prompt performance feedback back to contractors: "Increase frequency of monitoring activities to be able to determine service efficiency and/or provide timely feedback to contractors on their performance." An executive of a large nonprofit multiservice agency similarly noted the

importance of timely and consistent performance feedback as part of the reporting process:

> [I]n some cases, we work hard to prepare quarterly reports but we never receive any feedback. We have asked for feedback, but we still do not receive it. There does not seem to be a formal process in place to make sure that the CBOs receive timely and consistent feedback on their performance outcomes. This is not the case for all contracts. Like I said, some of the contracts are well managed, with good feedback, and the data is collected and then evaluated.

Discussion

Study results reveal that county and nonprofit managers similarly highlight the importance of managerial communication in facilitating complex contracts for the delivery of human services. The results build on previous studies that have identified an association between managerial communication and the strength of contracting relationships (Amirkhanyan et al., 2010; Amirkhanyan et al., 2012; Vosselman, 2016). Respondents noted the value of regular, face-to-face, two-way communications in building close relationships characterized by trust and mutual understanding. Conversely, strong cross-sector relationships provide an environment that facilitates effective contract communications. These findings provide evidence of the role that direct interpersonal communication can play in supporting a stewardship or relational approach to contracting (Van Slyke, 2007).

In the current study, the emphasis on regular and face-to-face communications serves as an indicator of the importance of the intensity of relational contacting, and expands upon previous studies with respect to the association between relationship duration and relationship quality. Scholars have emphasized the contribution of repeated interactions occurring over time to the development of trust (Bertelli & Smith, 2009; Brown et al., 2015), while some research has found that the efficacy of informal exchanges regarding performance diminishes in longer term contractual relationships (Marvel & Marvel, 2009). Based on the findings of this study, the quality of the contract relationship is linked to the quality of communications in terms of transparency, flexibility, consistency, and timeliness, as well as frequency of interaction.

From the perspective of public and nonprofit human service managers, contract communications are not limited to the formal exchanges required to negotiate contract terms and report contract outcomes; rather, respondents described formal and informal conversations about wide-ranging topics that include identifying needs and goals; developing the RFP; negotiating contract terms; coordinating service delivery; reporting on performance; and solving problems. This array of topics can be classified

as: (1) contract-based communications that are procedural; (2) client-focused communications that relate to service delivery; and (3) collegial communications that reflect consultation activities. These three content domains make it clear that managerial communication in cross-sector contracting in the human services is embedded in relationships that extend beyond the boundaries of the formal contractual relationship (Bertelli & Smith, 2009; Lamothe & Lamothe, 2012; Romzek & Johnston, 2005; Van Slyke, 2007). Procedural communications related to negotiating contract terms and reporting contract outcomes establish a basic framework for service delivery. However, managers also engage in continuing client-focused service delivery communications that are essential to managing client referrals in an environment characterized by multiple, overlapping eligibility criteria and to serving diverse clients with varying levels and types of need. Consulting communications to address higher level challenges was identified by numerous respondents, including the relationship between changing community needs and designing feasible, relevant performance measures. This form of contract-related communications appeared to be less frequent than procedural or client-related communications.

County and nonprofit managers articulated common perspectives on the characteristics of effective communications with respect to the themes of transparency and timeliness. Nonprofit managers emphasized the role of transparency regarding funding priorities and decisions in fostering trust, as well as promoting a sense of equity. County and nonprofit managers alike valued candor and accuracy with respect to performance reporting and requirements, in order to facilitate informed decision making. In this respect, the findings reveal a common desire for information symmetry that may reflect the shared values and interests of county and nonprofit human service agencies when seeking to provide effective services to address community needs (Van Slyke, 2007). The desire for transparency is notable in light of the politically sensitive environments in which county and nonprofit human service agencies operate as they deliver services to vulnerable populations (Hasenfeld, 2010). The risk of catastrophic events involving child welfare or adult protective services clients, as well as continuing debates over the appropriate allocation of taxpayer dollars to an array of government functions, contribute to an environment where disclosure of errors and performance issues can result in serious negative consequences for county and nonprofit organizations (Regehr, Chau, Leslie, & Howe, 2002). Transparent communications may be especially important in developing and sustaining trust in the context of human services contracting given the inherent risks involved in serving vulnerable children and families and the heightened level of public scrutiny (Hasenfeld, 2010; Van Slyke, 2007).

In view of the resource limitations and practice complexities that characterize human services delivery systems and pose continuing challenges for contract management (Romzek & Johnston, 2002), it is not surprising that nonprofit and county managers prioritize timeliness in contract communications. Delays in contract communications throughout the contracting process increase transaction costs associated with contracting, impelling managers to engage in repeated efforts to obtain needed information, in order to avoid service interruptions or negative consequences from political stakeholders or regulatory bodies (Brown et al., 2006). While many respondents described relationships with their managerial counterparts that are characterized by collaborative problem-solving and mutual responsiveness, some nonprofit managers viewed differential expectations regarding communication timeliness as an indication of a broader power differential. As reported in studies of collaboration between government and nonprofit organizations, managerial perspectives on power and disadvantage are shaped by multiple organizational and individual level factors, including prior experience in collaborative relationships (Gazley, 2010b). These findings lend support to the notion that responsive communication may result on the part of nonprofit managers in more positive attitudes toward collaborative relationships with county managers.

The findings related to the importance of flexibility and consistency with respect to data systems, personnel, and procedures reflected a degree of variation between the sectors, with nonprofit managers somewhat more likely to emphasize the need for communication-based consistency as well as flexibility. In light of the power differential in the contracting relationship and the capacity issues more common among nonprofit organizations, we might expect that they would be impacted more strongly by inconsistent guidelines or inflexible demands involved in contracting communications (Thomson, 2011). In order to provide consistency with respect to contract expectations and procedures, county and nonprofit managers sought continuity of staffing, in line with previous research that noted the importance of stability among managerial counterparts across organizations (Romzek et al., 2012).

The continuing challenges posed by lack of standardization across multiple data reporting systems are consistent with previous studies finding that information technology can interfere with accountability in contracting, and indicate that technology barriers may persist even where government and nonprofit technological expertise is relatively high (Romzek & Johnston, 2005; Stuart, Graaf, Stein, Carnochan, & Austin, 2017). At the same time, respondents highlighted the need for flexibility regarding performance measures and time frames to account for variation in program design and evolving community contexts. As such, the findings portray a

more complex dynamic than is generally proposed in the relational contracting and public-private partnership literature, which tends to emphasize flexible approaches to cross-sectoral relationships in order to allow for ongoing adjustments and problem-solving in the delivery of complex services (DeHoog, 1990; Head & Alford, 2015). A managerial framework that incorporates and balances flexibility and consistency of systems and responses may be more appropriate in some human service contracting environments, particularly among well-established public and nonprofit agencies with a history of successful partnerships.

Several practice implications for county and nonprofit managers emerge from these findings. Consistent with conclusions drawn from previous studies, these findings indicate that managerial communications serve a particularly important function in regards to performance measurement and reporting (Campbell et al., 2012). While respondents noted challenges related to negotiating service objectives and outcomes, engaging in continuous conversations about common goals and related outcomes can facilitate cooperation to achieve shared aims. County managers may be able to enhance the benefits of performance measurement by structuring opportunities for face-to-face interactions throughout the process of contract design, implementation, and monitoring. In order to develop a bilateral approach to performance reporting, county managers should identify ways to provide more complete feedback to their contractors regarding performance data. By providing timely analysis and feedback, county managers could strengthen relationships with their nonprofit partners, and support evidence-informed decision making related to service delivery, as well as other aspects of contracting. County human service agencies typically possess in-house communications expertise that could enable them to support contract managers in framing easily accessible feedback to contracted nonprofit organizations.

More broadly, county managers will need to work toward creating a context that promotes trusting relationships in which transparent sharing of information by nonprofit managers does not bring immediate risk of sanctions. County managers can model transparency in their communications related to agency aims and funding priorities. Responses to inadequate performance by nonprofit service providers could be structured in phases where the foundation includes informal collaborative problem-solving and more formal modes of technical assistance and subsequent phases could include communications about more punitive consequences (e.g., financial sanctions for misconduct or fraud). The demands for consistency and timeliness relate to both organizational and individual capacities. Strategies that organizational leaders might use to support effective and efficient service delivery include providing specialized

training to individual contract managers, structuring opportunities to review and reduce contract management caseloads, and instituting mechanisms for minimizing staff turnover.

Contracts between county and nonprofit human service agencies will continue to play a critical role in the delivery of human services to vulnerable members of local communities. These contracts present complex challenges with respect to ensuring accountability and coordinating services. Further research to build knowledge in support of county and nonprofit contract managers might include the following qualitative and quantitative questions:

1. What is the interrelationship between transparency, consistency, and timeliness in cross-sector contract communications in the human services?
2. What contract communications-related factors most contribute to decreases in information asymmetry and transaction costs related to contract monitoring and performance measurement?
3. Are there other moderating factors in relational contracting that both clarify common interests and increase trust?
4. How are these qualities of the interorganizational contracting relationships and communications similar or different in other public services involving complex contracts and high levels of uncertainty and risk?

In addition, intervention research is needed to investigate how relationships between nonprofit and county human service contract managers might be improved using strategies such as cross-sectoral or joint training, coaching, mentoring, and technical assistance. An important yet unexplored intervention research question is: How does the strength of the contractual relationship impact the outcomes of contracted human services? Finally, the prominence of ongoing client-focused service delivery communications points to the importance of pursuing studies that examine managerial efforts to manage referrals and coordinate responses to clients, so that human services contracting can achieve its broad goals of effective and efficient service delivery.

Notes on contributors

Sarah Carnochan is the Research Director of the Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services at the University of California, Berkeley.

Bowen McBeath is a Professor in the School of Social Work at Portland State University.

Emmeline Chuang is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Policy & Management, Fielding School of Public Health, at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Michael J. Austin is Director of the Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services at the University of California, Berkeley.

References

Amirkhanyan, A. A. (2009). Collaborative performance measurement: Examining and explaining the prevalence of collaboration in state and local government contracts. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *19*(3), 523–554. doi:10.1093/jopart/mun022

Amirkhanyan, A. A. (2011). What is the effect of performance measurement on perceived accountability effectiveness in state and local government contracts? *Public Performance & Management Review*, *35*(2), 303–339. doi:10.2753/PMR1530-9576350204

Amirkhanyan, A. A., Kim, H. J., & Lambright, K. T. (2010). Do relationships matter? Assessing the association between relationship design and contractor performance. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *34*(2), 189–220. doi:10.2753/PMR1530-9576340203

Amirkhanyan, A. A., Kim, H. J., & Lambright, K. T. (2012). Closer than "arm's length": Understanding the factors associated with collaborative contracting. *The American Review of Public Administration*, *42*(3), 341–366. doi:10.1177/0275074011402319

Barton, W. H., Folaron, G., Busch, M., & Hostetter, C. (2006). Satisfaction of contract provider agencies with a state's child welfare agency. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *28*(3), 275–291. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2005.03.008

Benjamin, L. (2008). Account space: How accountability requirements shape nonprofit practice. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *37*(2), 201–223. doi:10.1177/0899764007301288

Bertelli, A. M., & Smith, C. R. (2009). Relational contracting and network management. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *20*(Suppl. 1), i21–i40.

Boris, E. T., de Leon, E., Roeger, K. L., & Nikolova, M. (2010). *Human service nonprofits and government collaboration: Findings from the 2010 National Survey of Nonprofit Government Contracting and Grants*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Brown, T. L., & Potoski, M. (2003). Contract–management capacity in municipal and county governments. *Public Administration Review*, *63*(2), 153–164. doi:10.1111/1540-6210.00276

Brown, T. L., & Potoski, M. (2005). Transaction costs and contracting: The practitioner perspective. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *28*(3), 326–351.

Brown, T. L., Potoski, M., & Van Slyke, D. M. (2006). Managing public service contracts: Aligning values, institutions, and markets. *Public Administration Review*, *66*(3), 323–331. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00590.x

Brown, T. L., Potoski, M., & Van Slyke, D. M. (2015). Managing complex contracts: A theoretical approach. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *26*(2), 294–308.

Brown, L. K., & Troutt, E. (2004). Funding relations between nonprofits and government: A positive example. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *33*(1), 5–27. doi:10.1177/0899764003260601

Campbell, D. A., Lambright, K. T., & Bronstein, L. R. (2012). In the eyes of the beholders: Feedback motivations and practices among nonprofit providers and their funders. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *36*(1), 7–30. doi:10.2753/PMR1530-9576360101

Carman, J. G. (2010). The accountability movement: What's wrong with this theory of change? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *39*(2), 256–274. doi:10.1177/0899764008330622

Carnochan, S., McBeath, B., & Austin, M. J. (2017). Managerial and frontline perspectives on the process of evidence-informed practice within human service organizations. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, *41*(4), 346–358. doi:10.1080/23303131.2017.1279095

Carnochan, S., Samples, M., Myers, M., & Austin, M. J. (2014). Performance measurement challenges in nonprofit human service organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *43*(6), 1014–1032. doi:10.1177/0899764013508009

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Collins-Camargo, C., McBeath, B., & Ensign, K. (2011). Privatization and performance-based contracting in child welfare: Recent trends and implications for social service administrators. *Administration in Social Work*, *35*(5), 494–516. doi:10.1080/03643107.2011.614531

DeHoog, R. H. (1990). Competition, negotiation, or cooperation: Three models for service contracting. *Administration & Society*, *22*(3), 317–340. doi:10.1177/009539979002200303

Deitrick, L., Durnford, J., Narwold, A., Galloway, F., & Schumann, M. J. (2014). *Causes count: The economic power of California's nonprofit sector*. San Francisco, CA: CalNonprofits.

Ebrahim, A. (2005). Accountability myopia: Losing sight of organizational learning. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *34*(1), 56–87. doi:10.1177/0899764004269430

Edmondson, A. C., & Harvey, J. F. (2017). *Extreme teaming: Lessons in complex, cross-sector leadership*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Fernandez, S. (2007). What works best when contracting for services? An analysis of contracting performance at the local level in the US. *Public Administration*, *85*(4), 1119–1141. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9299.2007.00688.x

Fernandez, S. (2009). Understanding contracting performance: An empirical analysis. *Administration & Society*, *41*(1), 67–100. doi:10.1177/0095399708330257

Gazley, B. (2010). Linking collaborative capacity to performance measurement in government—nonprofit partnerships. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *39*(4), 653–673. doi:10.1177/0899764009360823

Gazley, B. (2010). Why not partner with local government? *Nonprofit Managerial Perceptions of Collaborative Disadvantage. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *39*(1), 51–76. doi:10.1177/0899764008327196

Gazley, B., & Brudney, J. L. (2007). The purpose (and perils) of government-nonprofit partnership. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *36*(3), 389–415. doi:10.1177/0899764006295997

Gilgun, J. F. (2015). Beyond description to interpretation and theory in qualitative social work research. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, *14*(6), 741–752. doi:10.1177/1473325015606513

Gittell, J. H. (2011). New directions for relational coordination theory. In K. S. Cameron & G. Spreitzer (Eds.). *Oxford handbook of positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 400–411). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gittell, J. H., & Logan, C. (2015). Outcomes and Predictors of Relational Coordination: Empirical Assessment of an Emerging HRM Theory. March 14, 2018. Retrieved from https://rcrcconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Outcomes-and-Predictors-of-Relational-Coordination-8-16.pdf

Gronbjerg, K. A. (1991). Managing grants and contracts: The case of four nonprofit social service organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *20*(1), 5–24. doi:10.1177/089976409102000103

Hasenfeld, Y. (2010). The attributes of human service organizations. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.), *Human Services as Complex Organizations* (pp. 9–32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Hassel, B. C. (1997). Balancing acts: What charter schools teach us about government-nonprofit contracting. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *26*(4), 442–465. doi:10.1177/0899764097264004

Head, B. W., & Alford, J. (2015). Wicked problems: Implications for public policy and management. *Administration & Society*, *47*(6), 711–739. doi:10.1177/0095399713481601

Joaquin, M., & Greitens, T. J. (2012). Contract management capacity breakdown? An analysis of US local governments. *Public Administration Review*, *72*(6), 807–816. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012.02587.x

Jos, P. H., & Tompkins, M. E. (2004). The accountability paradox in an age of reinvention. *Administration & Society*, *36*(3), 255–281. doi:10.1177/0095399704263479

Kettl, D. F. (2015). The job of government: Interweaving public functions and private hands. *Public Administration Review*, *75*(2), 219–229. doi:10.1111/puar.12336

Kim, S. (2005). Balancing competing accountability requirements: Challenges in performance improvement of the nonprofit human services agency. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *29*(2), 145–163.

Lamothe, M., & Lamothe, S. (2012). What determines the formal versus relational nature of local government contracting? *Urban Affairs Review*, *48*(3), 322–353. doi:10.1177/1078087411432418

Lee, C., & Clerkin, R. M. (2017). Exploring the use of outcome measures in human service nonprofits: Combining agency, institutional, and organizational capacity perspectives. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *40*(3), 601–624. doi:10.1080/15309576.2017.1295872

Lynch-Cerullo, K., & Cooney, C. (2011). Moving from outputs to outcomes: A review of the evolution of performance measurement in the human service nonprofit sector. *Administration in Social Work*, *35*(4), 364–388. doi:10.1080/03643107.2011.599305

Lynn, L. E. Jr., Heinrich, C. J., & Hill, C. J. (2001). *Improving governance: A new logic for empirical research*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Marvel, M. K., & Marvel, H. P. (2009). Shaping the provision of outsourced public services: Incentive efficacy and service delivery. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *33*(2), 183. doi:10.2753/PMR1530-9576330201

McBeath, B., Carnochan, S., Stuart, M., & Austin, M. J. (2017). The managerial and relational dimensions of public-nonprofit human service contracting. *Journal of Strategic Contracting and Negotiation*, *3*(2), 51–77. doi:10.1177/2055563617723225

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: a methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Negoita, N. (2018). Beyond performance management: A networked production model of public service delivery. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *41*(2), 253–276. doi:10.1080/15309576.2017.1408473

Never, B., & de Leon, E. (2014). The effect of government contracting on nonprofit human service organizations: Impacts of an evolving relationship. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, *38*(3), 258–270. doi:10.1080/23303131.2014.896300

Nonprofit Technology Network (NTEN). (2015). The 9th annual nonprofit technology staffing and investments report.

Oliver, C. (2013). Social workers as boundary spanners: Reframing our professional identity for interprofessional practice. *Social Work Education*, *32*(6), 773–784. doi:10.1080/02615479.2013.765401

O'Regan, K. M., & Oster, S. M. (2000). Nonprofit and for-profit partnerships: Rationale and challenges of cross-sector contracting. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *29*(Suppl. 1), 120–140. doi:10.1177/0899764000291S006

Regehr, C., Chau, S., Leslie, B., & Howe, P. (2002). Inquiries into deaths of children in care: The impact on child welfare workers and their organization. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *24*(12), 885–902. doi:10.1016/S0190-7409(02)00250-5

Romzek, B., & Johnston, J. M. (2002). Effective contract implementation and management: A preliminary model. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *12*(3), 423–453. doi:10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a003541

Romzek, B. S., & Johnston, J. M. (2005). State social services contracting: Exploring the determinants of effective contract accountability. *Public Administration Review*, *65*(4), 436–449. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2005.00470.x

Romzek, B. S., LeRoux, K., & Blackmar, J. M. (2012). A preliminary theory of informal accountability among network organizational actors. *Public Administration Review*, *72*(3), 442–453. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02547.x

Sandfort, J. (2010). Human service organizational technology. In Y. Hasenfeld (Ed.) *Human services as complex organizations*, (pp. 269–290). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Siltala, J. (2013). New public management: The evidence-based worst practice? *Administration & Society*, *45*(4), 468–493. doi:10.1177/0095399713483385

Smith, S. R. (2012). Social services. In L. M. Salamon (Ed.), *The state of nonprofit America* (2nd ed., pp. 192–228). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Stuart, M., Graaf, G., Stein, R., Carnochan, S., & Austin, M. J. (2017). *Cross-sector human services contracting: An exploratory study of contractual relationships*. Berkeley, CA: Mack Center on Nonprofit and Public Sector Management in the Human Services, UC Berkeley.

Thomson, D. E. (2011). The role of funders in driving nonprofit performance measurement and use in strategic management. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *35*(1), 54–78.

Van Slyke, D. M. (2003). The mythology of contracting in contracting for social services. *Public Administration Review*, *63*(3), 296–314. doi:10.1111/1540-6210.00291

Van Slyke, D. M. (2007). Agents or stewards: Using theory to understand the government-nonprofit social service contracting relationship. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *17*(2), 157–187. doi:10.1093/jopart/mul012

Vosselman, E. (2016). Accounting, accountability, and ethics in public sector organizations: Toward a duality between instrumental accountability and relational response-ability. *Administration & Society*, *48*(5), 602–627. doi:10.1177/0095399713514844

Yang, K., & Dubnick, M. (2016). Introduction: Accountability study moving to the next level. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *40*(2), 201–207. doi:10.1080/15309576.2016.1266880

Williams, P. (2002). The competent boundary spanner. *Public Administration*, *80*(1), 103–124. doi:10.1111/1467-9299.00296

SELECTED BOOKS

Supervisory Management for the Human Services

MICHAEL J. AUSTIN

The Roots of
Community Organizing,
1917–1939

Neil Betten and Michael J. Austin

with contributions by

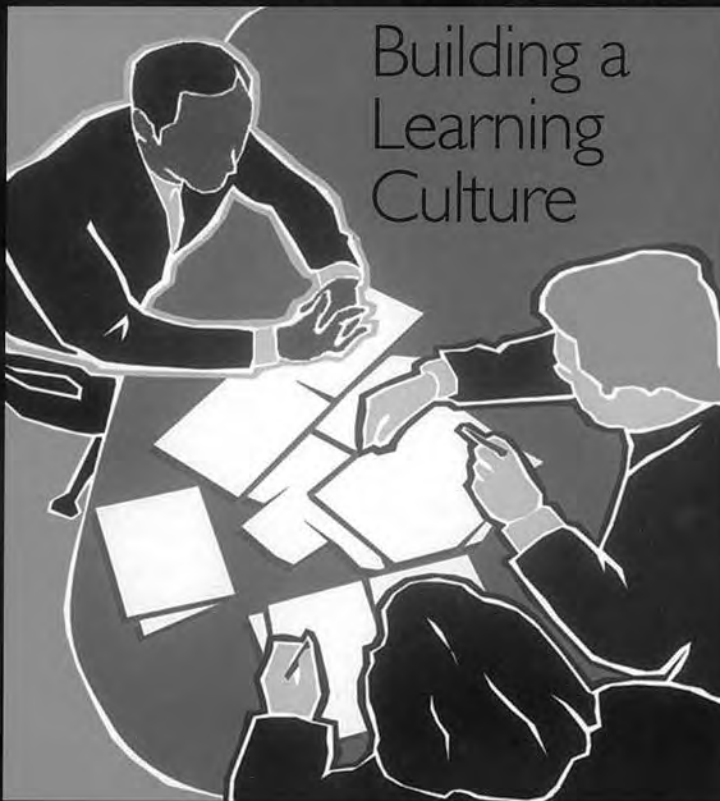*Robert Fisher, William E. Hershey,*
Raymond A. Mohl, and Marc Lee Raphael

The Professional School Dean: Meeting the Leadership Challenges

Michael J. Austin, Frederick L. Ahearn,

Richard A. English

EDITORS

Supervision as Collaboration in the Human Services

Building a Learning Culture

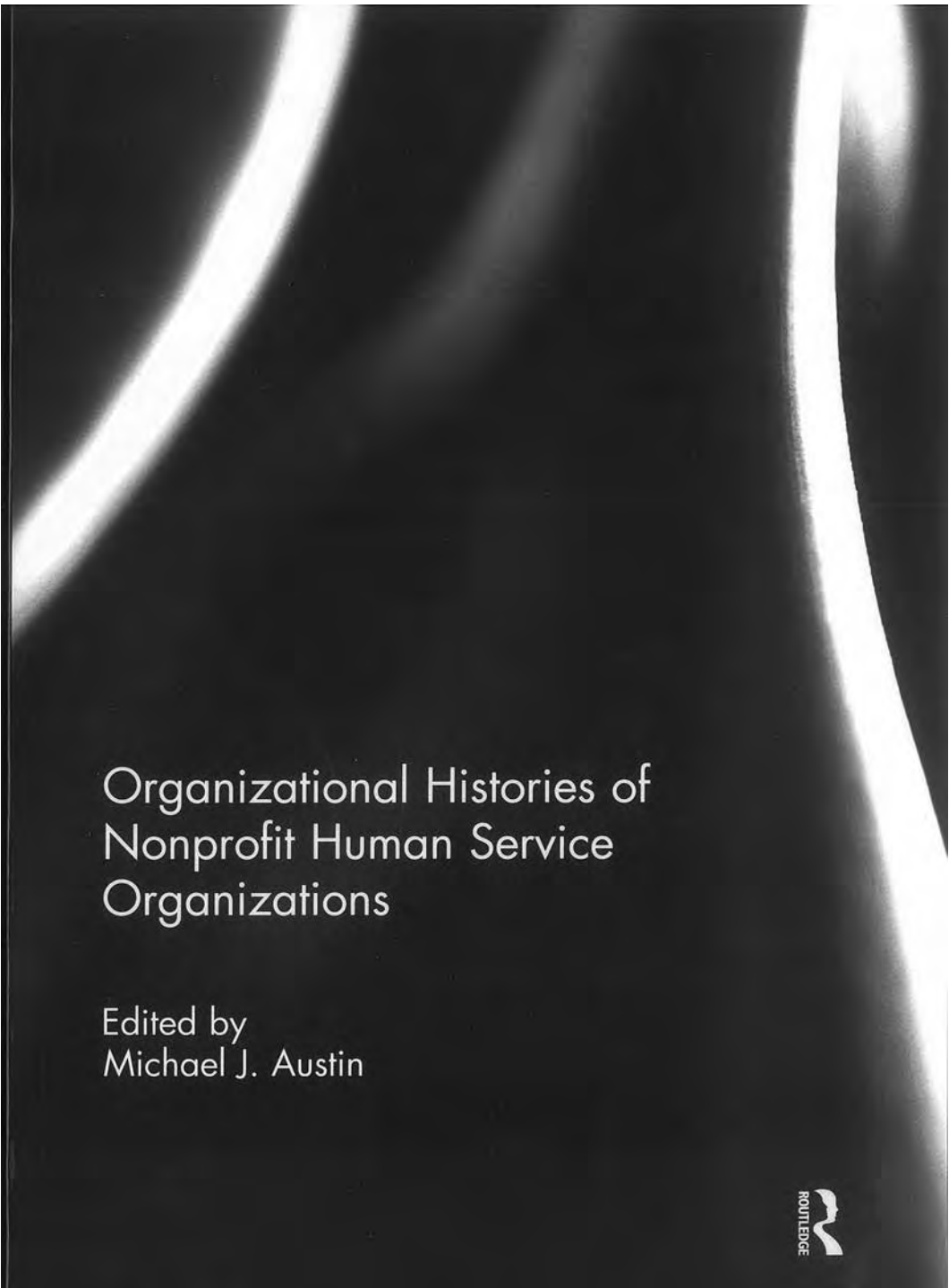Michael J. Austin | Karen M. Hopkins
Editors

CHANGING
Welfare Services

Case Studies of Local Welfare Reform Programs
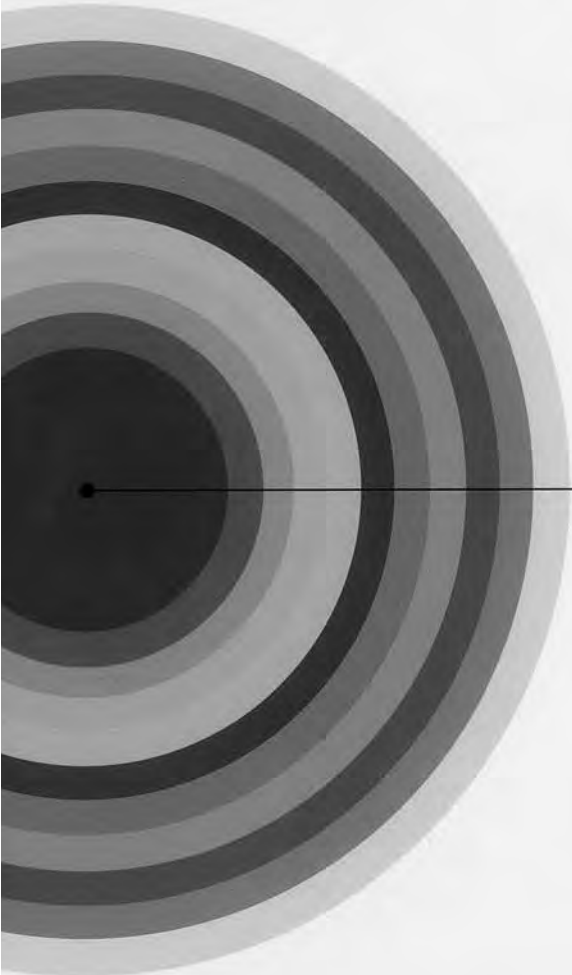
Michael J. Austin
Editor
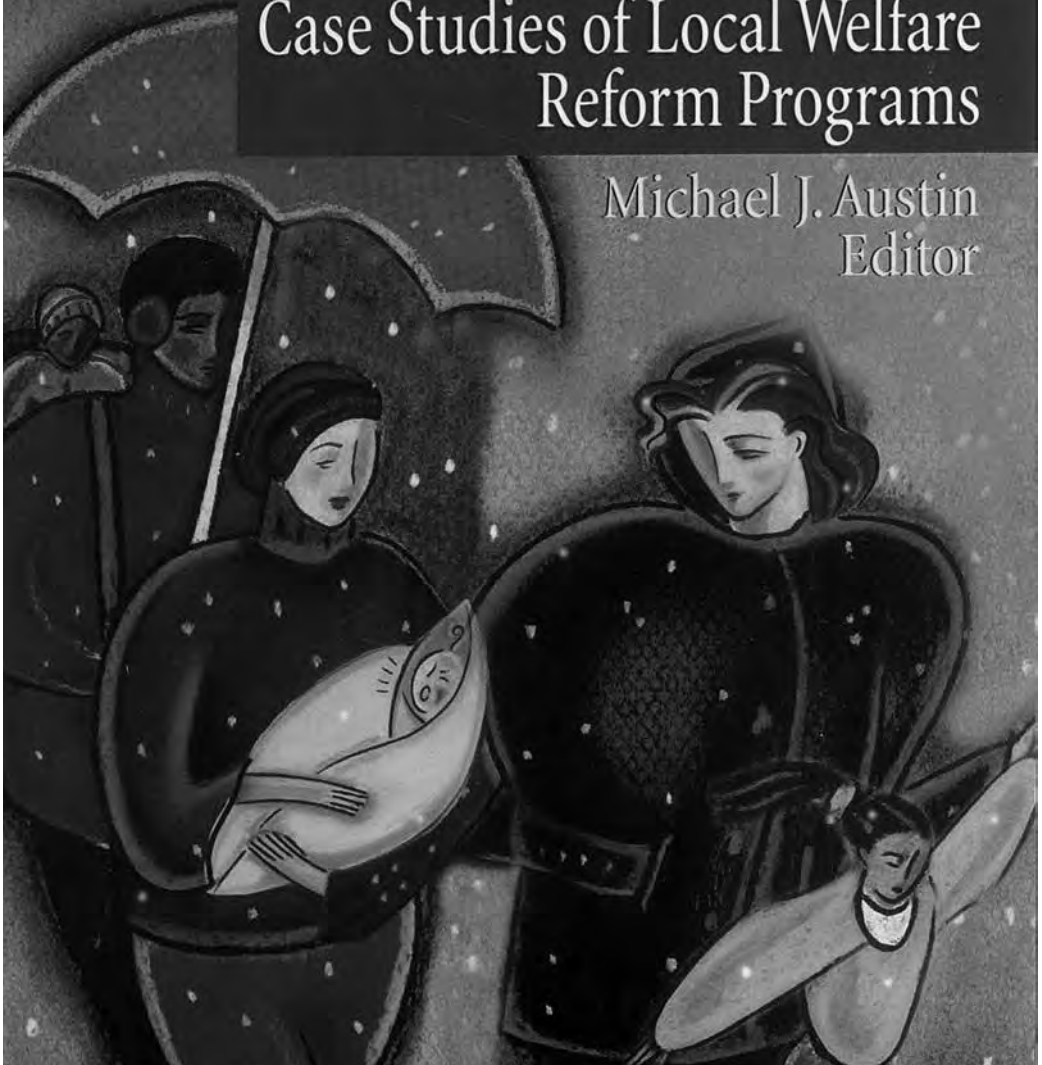
Organizational Histories of
Nonprofit Human Service
Organizations

Edited by
Michael J. Austin

ROUTLEDGE

SOCIAL JUSTICE and SOCIAL WORK

Rediscovering a Core Value of the Profession

Michael J. Austin, Editor

MICHAEL J AUSTIN
SARAH CARNOCHAN

Practice Research in the Human Services

A University-Agency
Partnership Model

POCKET GUIDES TO
SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS