WELFARE REFORM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF WELFARE

POLICY IN OKLAHOMA

By

ELIZABETH ANNE HOWARD EELLS

Bachelor of Arts
Southwest Missouri State University
Springfield, Missouri
1991

Master of Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1994

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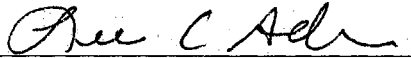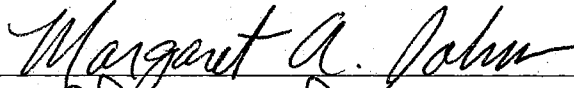
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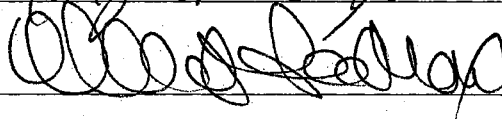
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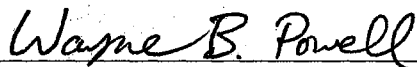
Thesis Approved:

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Thesis Advisor

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Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In 1996, President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work

Opportunity Reconciliation Act into law. This law officially set in motion many changes

in federal and state public assistance. As early as 1992, however, the Oklahoma

Department of Human Services (DHS) began changing its own programs. In August of

1992, the Oklahoma Commission for Human Services (the Commission) authorized a

study of welfare reform. The results proposed changes that would affect data collection

and paperwork and allow social workers to work with clients (Welfare reform succeeds

in Oklahoma: The untold story, online). Through the use of block grants, DHS changed

its focus from simply getting money and basic services to clients (fiscal accountability) to

a greater emphasis on education, training and employment (outcome accountability)

(Oklahoma Department of Human Services [OK-DHS], January 1996b). In 1995, the

Oklahoma Welfare Reform Act was passed. This preceded the federal law and allowed

lawmakers to ratify what DHS had begun years earlier (OK-DHS, June-July 1997).

In the summer of 1996, research conducted for the Oklahoma Poverty Grant

explored the realities of social work and uncovered several attitudes of state public and

private social service providers. In particular, several of the social service providers

believed that state legislators were not aware of the work that was done, nor were they

familiar with the population that was being served. This was seen as a concern for some

of the service providers, particularly those in DHS, and led this researcher to an interest

in the views of state politicians regarding welfare and DHS. Initially the focus was solely

on the legislators and their perceptions of welfare and poverty, but a conversation with a

legislative researcher led to the realization that this focus was short-sighted. Studying only the legislators would not give an accurate picture of the policies that were developed nor would it address the entire issue of whether the legislators knew anything about welfare, the poor, or DHS. Thus, in addition to verifying legislator comments, the decision to include DHS administrators and social workers in the study provided a fuller picture of policy-making.

This study explores the development and implementation of welfare policy within the Oklahoma State Legislature and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and the definitions that participants give to their positions in the process. In particular, the focus is on the translation of the intent of state legislators with regards to welfare policy as filtered through DHS administrators and how this emerges into practice by DHS social workers. The inability to get at this process directly dictates that more subtle methods be used. Thus, the beliefs of each group about poverty and welfare, their definitions of success and their experiences within the bureaucracy of state government are included.

As alluded to above, the research began with an interest in discovering whether the actors in the welfare reform policy-making process at the state level have the same beliefs about and goals for public assistance in Oklahoma. The focus here is on both the structure of the policy-making process and on the individuals within the process. To that end, a structural functional analysis (à la Talcott Parsons, 1966) is used to guide the research, but does not form the entire theoretical base of the study. The analysis goes beyond Parsons and later neofunctional analysis in that micro-processes will be introduced to add depth of explanation to the system. This follows suggestions of Glazier and Hall (1996) who analyzed the shortcomings of the "new institutionalism" and

proposed the addition of micro-sociological theoretical analyses to enhance the macro-sociological bent of the theoretical perspective. Some of their suggestions, most particularly the use of Anselm Strauss' negotiated order theory and David Maines' mesodomain analysis, address the criticisms of Parsons that make his work the broad theoretical base for the current study but not the entire foundation.

The additional theories are also necessary because of the micro-empirical nature of the current study. While the overall structure of welfare policy making is considered, it is deemed important to address the individual actors within the structure. Thus, one aspect of this study revolves around the respondents' orientations toward poverty and welfare. These orientations include the respondents' opinions of welfare, what they see for the future of welfare, changes they would like to see made, and their definitions of success. In addition, research has shown that individuals' beliefs about the causes of poverty influence their attitudes toward welfare (cf., Wilson, 1996; Kluegel, 1987; Feagin, 1975).

The current study differs from traditional policy research in that it focuses primarily on the perceptions and characteristics of the policy-making process. Lester, Bowman, Goggin and O'Toole (1987) point to the variety of research done on policy making and suggest that there is little agreement about the appropriate subject of inquiry. This study adds to the variety, but does so in a way not typically seen. The important focus in the current study is on the perceptions of the participants in the process and the reflection of the larger structure in which those participants reside.

As discussed in Chapter Four, this latter concept is addressed through the combination of in-depth interviews and a questionnaire. Respondents initially included

state legislators, DHS administrators and DHS social workers. Selected members of the Human Services Committee and a policy-writer for DHS were also interviewed because it became apparent during the research process that they were critical to the policy-making process. In the larger sense, this study attempts to gain an understanding of the state of poverty and welfare politics in Oklahoma.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Underpinnings

If theories are "sensitizing structures for the production of understanding" (Denzin, 1989: 242), then it is logical that understanding potentially complex phenomena that exist on both the macro and micro levels might require more than one theory. This study engages in what Denzin (1989) terms theoretical triangulation, a method in which all or many possible interpretations are considered in the analysis, thus bringing a variety of theoretical perspectives to bear on the empirical data. The current study addresses both structure and individual interpretation and thus requires a theoretical base that does the same.

The theoretical base for the current study utilizes the following combination of theories including historical institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1995; Skocpol, 1995), Parsons' structural functionalism (cf. 1966), neofunctionalism (Luhmann, as cited in Turner, 1991; Alexander and Colomy, 1990), and negotiated order theory (Strauss, 1978). This combination opens the horizon to a fuller interpretation of data gathered to discover a processual phenomenon: the flow of welfare reform policy-making in Oklahoma and the interpretations and background definitions of some of the actors involved.

Historical Institutionalism

Historical institutionalism, the first theory to be discussed, is based, in part, in structural functionalism. This theory is associated with political science and shows promise for incorporation in this study. Historical institutionalists, similar to Parsons, see the polity as a system of interrelated parts, but they do not agree with Parsons' arguments

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that the different systems (social, personality, and cultural) are the prime drivers of institutional action. Rather, historical institutionalists see the way that the institution is organized as being the primary force behind the interactions and actions within the system. In addition, historical institutionalists look at the inequalities in power associated with institutions (Hall & Taylor, 1995). They "assume a world in which institutions give some groups or interests disproportionate access to the decision-making process" (Hall & Taylor, 1995: 941). In this study, the input of DHS workers on the policy-making and implementation process associated with welfare and poverty policy is one focus of concern.

Hall and Taylor (1995) argue that historical institutionalism views institutional development as one of path dependence and unintended consequences. In other words, previous actions influence the institution, but do not determine its outcomes. This corresponds with Theda Skocpol's (1995) suggestion that institutional development is informed by previous policies. As a result the history of welfare and poverty policy in Oklahoma is included in the current research.

Finally, Hall and Taylor suggest that historical institutionalism is "especially concerned to integrate institutional analysis with the contribution that other kinds of factors, such as ideas, can make to political outcomes" (p. 938). This is the juncture in historical institutionalism that allows for the incorporation of values and attitudes in the consideration of policy outcomes. This is also the juncture within which negotiated order is placed recognizing that the actors involved in the process account for both their own attitudes and values as well as the overarching institutional structure.

Historical institutionalism makes four causal claims, three of which are discussed here and which resonate with the other theories included in the study. The first claim suggests that "institutions determine *the capacity of governments to legislate and implement policies*" (Pontusson, 1995:119). The second claim suggests that institutions both constrain actors and offer them opportunities. Here, we see the influence of Parsons' structural functionalism. The subsystems in the government, in part, are viewed as determining the types of action that take place and the normative conditions of the subsystems constraining the actors. Finally, the third claim suggests that institutions "determine *who the actors are and/or how the actors conceive their interests*" (Pontusson, 1995:119). This latter claim can be seen in the negotiated and structural contexts of Strauss' negotiated order theory (1978). Pontusson, however, points out that historical institutionalists do not believe that institutions are the sole causes of political behavior. He looks to Thelen and Steinmo (1992) who suggest that "an institutional approach does not replace attention to other variables - the players, their interests and strategies, and the distribution of power among them" (in Pontusson, 1995:119). Rather, institutions provide the context within which these factors work.

This is how the combined institutions of the legislature and DHS are viewed in this study. The institution itself is not under consideration, rather it is the actors and processes within the overarching structure that are studied. However, to ignore the potentially constraining impact of the institution and its normative conditions would err in the opposite direction of determinism.

These last points regarding the attention to other variables allow for the introduction of mesodomain analysis and negotiated order theory. Both of these justify

the use of a more micro-scale approach to the analysis. Before addressing these topics, however, it is important to view the relevant contributions of structural functionalism and neofunctionalism.

Parsons and Functionalism

A brief discussion of a portion of Parsons' work is necessary here in order to solidify the theoretical base upon which this study stands. As mentioned earlier, Parsons provided one of the theoretical parents to historical institutionalism. In addition, his ideas, beyond what is apparent in the latter theory, are relevant to the current study. A simple presentation of his ideas, however, will not suffice because his work generated so much criticism and revision. Thus, common criticisms of Parsons are addressed here because they are the same criticisms that provide points of departure from Parsons for the current study. These criticisms include his emphasis on consensus of values, his focus on equilibrium (suggested by Alexander, 1978 to be a misreading of a focus on order), and his macro level analysis which avoids the study of interpersonal interaction. Included in the theoretical nest of this study are Luhmann (as cited in Turner, 1991) and Alexander and Colomy's (1990) versions of neofunctionalism, Strauss' (1978) negotiated order theory, and the mesodomain analysis of David Maines (1982). The rationale for the inclusion of these theories goes back to the criticisms of Parsons and the openness of historical institutionalism to ideas and concepts not contained in the institutional structure.

However, it is important to understand that the original base of the dissertation is comprised of both Parsons' functionalism and historical institutionalism. Turner (1991) suggests that Parsons has become the "straw man" of sociological theory and that no

"theory in sociology is considered adequate unless it has performed at least some portions of a ritual rejection of Parsons' analytical functionalism" (78). To this end, this study will also reject certain parts of Parsons' work, but with the understanding that much of what he theorized is still relevant today.

The basic goal of Parsons' General Action Theory is to understand "how institutionalized patterns of interaction (the social system) are circumscribed by complexes of values, beliefs, norms, and other ideas (the cultural system) and by configurations of motives and role-playing skills (the personality system)" (Turner, 1991: 57). The fundamental assumption of this theory is that "all acts necessarily have meaning relative to the conditions of action situations and, through that meaning, systematic relations to one another" (Parsons, 1966: 105). In other words, Parsons believed that action did not occur in a vacuum; rather actors, in this case individuals, interacted based on the normative and situational conditions in which they find themselves. The key criticism of Parsons that is applicable here is his emphasis on the constraining nature of values and norms and his assumption that all actors agree on the overarching value and norm system (Bourricaud, 1977).

If we consider the society within which the actor functions to be a system made up of actions, then we must acknowledge that the system must have ways and means of surviving. Parsons referred to these as the requisites for the general system of action. For Parsons, these requisites are the Adaptive, Goal-Attainment, Integrative, and Pattern-Maintenance subsystems (AGIL). Adaptation involves the development of varying resources that allow the system to cope with different demands that occur in the environment. The Goal-Attainment subsystem is where the parts of the system work

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together to achieve those optimal relations or valued outcomes. The Integration subsystem oversees the working of the system, allocates advantages and disadvantages, and generally makes sure that everything contributes to the order of the system. Finally, the Pattern-Maintenance subsystem "involves upholding the basic ordering principles of the system with regard to both the value of such patterns and the commitment of system units to them" (1966: 105). Interchanges between systems are based on symbolic media (money, power, and influence).

With this framework we set up the institutional structure upon which this study rests. With regards to the polity, the executive branch is the goal-attainment subsystem, the integrative subsystem is the legislature and judiciary, the adaptive subsystem is the bureaucracy, and the pattern-maintenance subsystem is the Constitution or legitimating documentation that gives the political system its legitimacy (Parsons, 1966). This study concerns itself with the integrative and adaptive subsystems, but rather than treating them as separate systems, the view of the two is of one integrated system of policy-making that would then have its own AGIL system.

Parsons' AGIL schema offers a general framework within which to place the institution of welfare policy making. This framework, however, is not the only aspect of Parsons' theoretical legacy that is of interest here. Rather his ideas about the constraining influence of norms and values on unit action, developed before his general theory of action, are also relevant to the current study. Finally, his discussion of the polity and the collective goals of a subsystem are directly applicable and provide for more coherent research questions. To this end, a general discussion of some of his concepts and ideas, including his views on value consensus, follows.

First, the *polity* can be defined as "...any system involving the coordinated action of a plurality of individuals oriented to the attainment of a collective goal or a system of collective goals" (Parsons, 1966: 72). For the purposes of this study, the polity is not limited to the legislature or the executive branch. Instead, the polity involves the executive, legislative, and bureaucratic branches of state government.

A *collective goal* is any relation between the polity, or collectivity, and an intra- or extra-societal actor that is optimal. The existence of the collective goal implies a commitment to a certain set of procedures and a commitment of the resources available to the collectivity. This latter point may also prove problematic within welfare reform for not all actors within the collectivity may be equally committed to the goal or in agreement about the amount of the resources to commit. Prior research with social workers suggests that many believe that the executive and legislative branches are not entirely committed to the collective goals, which could prove problematic to the achievement of that goal (Maril, 1999 forthcoming). This same study also suggested that the social workers' definitions of the collective goal may be different from other actors' definitions due to the position of the social workers in the process - on the front lines, so to speak. Commitment to the collective goal is important because its achievement implies that the collectivity, here DHS, the legislature, and the Human Services Commission, is a functioning and beneficial part of the larger system.

It is important to note that Parsons' takes commitment to the collective goals to be a given. This commitment resulting in action is based in some value-standard which Parsons calls 'effectiveness' (1966). The basis of the value-standard is assumed. For Parsons, there was no need to question the Central Value System. For the purposes of

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this study, the value standard is assumed to be the dominant American values discussed in Chapter Three (competitive individualism, equality, freedom, democracy, limited government, free enterprise and hard work). However, in light of the moral multiphrenia espoused by postmodern theorists, we cannot honestly accept a 'whole' set of values in our society. The assumption of value consensus and commitment to the collective goal are the points where the current study deviates from Parsons. Additionally, the emphasis on values as non-taken-for-granted ideas is one factor that leaves the theoretical base of this study open to the addition of negotiated order theory and mesodomain analysis.

According to Parsons, members, whether they be individual actors or subcollectivities, must be committed to the values of the collectivity. They must make decisions that support those values and that "integrate the collectivity's commitments with their own roles and statuses within it" (1966: 75). Members have to implement decisions in a way that protects the collectivity's interests. Finally, they have to implement decisions constituting particular roles. If the members are not committed to the collective goals of the organization, then the door is open for conflict and dissension. This impairs the functionality of the organization and inhibits its ability to achieve its collective goals. Does this mean that the organization will founder and disintegrate? While this is extremely doubtful, this dissension could open the way for organizational change.

Another concept that Parsons (1966) addresses is *bindingness*. This means that there must be some assurance that decisions about the implementation of policies will be obeyed. In addition, there must be some commitment on the part of members to be a part of the collective process. Finally, bindingness also relates to the issue of sanctions. It is

necessary to know what to expect when noncompliance occurs. Within Parsons' framework, we are talking about sanctions against social workers, but there is also the issue of sanctions against the client. This suggests that the clients are a part of the collectivity.

For Parsons, authority is "...the legitimated right to make certain categories of decisions and bind a collectivity to them" (1966: 76). The authority of the collectivity ideally stops "at the boundary of the collectivity of reference" (Parsons, 1966:78). However, for DHS, the boundaries may be unclear because they have limited authority over unusual aspects of clients' lives.

Parsons considers the *constituency* to be a legitimate section of the political system. This points to a dual role for DHS clients: They are both constituents of policy-makers and employees of DHS. They are employees because their participation in DHS programs is voluntary yet DHS has the authority/power to sanction them for not contributing to the collective goals. These collective goals, as stated by the DHS mission statement, then become individual goals for the client.

Substantive Criticisms of Parsons of Concern to this Study

While Parsons' functionalism offers some potential insight into the structure influencing policy-making, there are three concerns that pave the way for the inclusion of other theories and analyses in this study. First, as mentioned earlier, Parsons assumes the content of the values overarching the system (1966). Given the exploratory nature of this study, bringing out the values of the participants will be one focus. The conflictual nature of the subject matter, welfare and welfare reform, was expected to resonate within individuals' basic value systems, so a discussion of the values themselves is relevant. To

this end, a discussion of values and their impact on policy-making is presented in Chapter 3 and the survey and in-depth interviews were designed to identify the value bases of the respondents.

In a related criticism, Parsons places too much emphasis on socialization and how it ensures the internalization of values and norms (Turner, 1991). The contention in this study is that not everyone shares the same values and beliefs about welfare. While there may be a dominant set of American values (as is discussed in Chapter 3), previous research suggests that the actors involved in welfare policy and implementation do not necessarily share the same values and beliefs. This will be examined in the survey.

At the level of analysis, Parsons' focus has been consistently macro since he moved beyond his initial formulations of the unit act (Turner, 1991). The study at hand was designed to focus on the actors involved in the process. More than simply a model of policy-making, this study is an exploration of the perceptions and definitions of the actors involved. Following Glazier and Hall's (1996) discussion of "new institutionalism" and their advocacy of the use of mesostructuration, Strauss' negotiated order theory (1978) is introduced to account for the focus on the understandings that participants have of the policy-making process and their positions in it. First, however, the neofunctionalist contributions to Parsons' ideas are offered, followed by a discussion of negotiated order theory and mesostructural analysis.

<u>Neofunctionalism</u>

On a broad scale, one of the relevant revisions to Parsonian functionalism pertains to the view of society that it takes. Given the nature of the subject matter at hand and the frequency with which human failings are used to account for poverty and welfare

dependence, this new view seems especially apt. Alexander and Colomy (1990) have proposed that Parsons took a view of society embodied by liberal optimism. A product of the historical and social events of his time, Parsons expected society and its participants to work toward improvement. In contrast, Alexander and Colomy have proposed that neofunctionalism replaces this optimism with a critical modernism more attuned to the dark sides of society. Again, the emotional responses and rhetoric often associated with poverty, welfare and welfare reform may be much better suited to a less optimistic view of society.

In addition to his optimistic view, Parsons postulated the consensus of values and argued that this consensus had a constraining impact on the actor to the extent that said actor would act in ways that benefited the overall subsystem (Bourricaud, 1977). This could occur because actors were socialized into the values and norms of the system, internalized them, and then were guided in their actions within the system. Saiedi (1988) has advocated a departure from the overly deterministic view of the actor and instead presents a view of an actor who actively interprets situations and the normative system "within the context of a power-oriented space of social interaction" (803). While not denying that normative structures constrain the actor, Saiedi has suggested that they pave the way for new definitions and negotiations that are not necessarily functional for the system. These negotiations and definitions are the subject of the next theory under discussion, negotiated order theory.

Negotiated Order Theory

Negotiated order theory is used here because of its emphasis on the interactional nature of organizational outcomes. The theory assumes that the rules, policies and

divisions of labor within an organization provide the background "through which and within which people interact on a daily basis and attempt to get their work done" (Maines, 1982:269). This theory is useful for this study because it allows for individual interpretation to occur within the larger overarching structure of the organization. However, these interpretations and negotiations do not occur in a vacuum, hence the other reason for the usefulness of negotiated order theory. There is a structure and a context within which these negotiations take place, thus, facilitating the addition of negotiated order theory to the functionalist base of this study.

To further explicate this theory and its place in this study, it is necessary to understand the basis of negotiated order theory. Within an organization, actors engage in negotiations that resolve ambiguities in the structure and allow the organizations to persist or change. These negotiations occur because, according to Dingwall and Strong, "all social order is negotiated" (1985: 207). In addition, these negotiations take place in a systematic fashion and are temporally limited. In other words, there is a patterned way in which the negotiations take place and these negotiations do not have infinite jurisdiction. Instead, the outcomes of negotiations last only until other negotiations either supercede or reinforce them, one of which must occur for the outcomes to have impact. Additionally, "the negotiated order on any day consists of the sum total of the organization's rules, policies and local working understandings or agreements" (Dingwall & Strong, 1985: 207). Finally, any changes that occur within the organization require renegotiations (Dingwall & Strong, 1985). Thus, what we see is a structure that supports the interactions within an organization. Strauss (1978) refers to this structure as being made up of two parts: the negotiation context and the structural context. The former contains

the aspects of the environment which are relevant to the interactions and become part of the negotiations and influence their course. The latter refers to the potentially constraining influences of the larger circumstances in which the negotiations take place. What is relevant here is the reflexive nature of the process. Negotiations can ultimately influence the structural context and the structural context can constrain the types of negotiations that occur.

For this study, the structural context includes the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 passed by the federal government and the overarching organization of the state government and DHS. The negotiated context may then become the ways that the Welfare Reform Act is promulgated into specific policies in the state and the procedures that are used to implement those policies.

According to Maines (1982), negotiated order theory lies within the realm of mesostructural analysis because of its recognition of the unity of subject and object. Shades of Parsons and further rationale for the inclusion of this perspective can be seen in the argument that negotiated order theory sees actors as existing within situations, but at the same time, being constrained by these situations that, by their making, have power over them. However, this perspective goes beyond Parsons and fully enters the mesostructural realm in its interest in the treatment of the conditions or context (normative for Parsons, negotiated and structural for Strauss) as part of the "lines of activity" (Maines, 1982: 275). Mesostructural analysis does not deny the structures of social systems, but it "does deny that those structures can be understood without understanding how they are enacted" (Maines, 1982:276). In other words, this analytical perspective would allow for an understanding of the participants' perceptions of their

own contexts with regards to the implementation of welfare reform policy in this study. The inclusion of this perspective allows for what Maines (1982: 278) calls an "interpenetration of structure and process" so that the overarching structure of the organization (legislature and DHS) is not divorced from the actors involved in the policy-making process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the theoretical background of the current study. The study started with historical institutionalism as a wide base, added Parsons' functionalism for further structural emphasis, adopted critiques of Parsons from neofunctionalism, and connected with negotiated order theory in order to link the structure and the individual.

From historical institutionalism, the study takes its initial focus on institutions and its acceptance of other variables such as values. The constraining nature of institutions (in this case the state legislature and DHS) on the policy-making process is also adopted from historical institutionalism.

From Parsons, the study takes the functions of the various subsystems involved in policy-making. More importantly, his ideas concerning the commitment to attaining a collective goal are utilized and explored. Efforts to achieve this collective goal are structured within the subsystems of Parsons' AGIL schema. Whereas Parsons takes this commitment as a given, the current study does not. Thus, part of the study involved determining whether all of the participants were committed to the collective goal as defined in Chapter 5. In addition, Parsons assumes that all of the individuals within the subsystems of the legislature and DHS are committed to the same values because of similar socialization experiences. Neofunctionalists, in particular Saiedi (1988), have

provided a departure from this view and have suggested that Parsons' view is overly

deterministic and does not allow for the interaction and interpretation of the individual.

This view opened the way for the use of Strauss' negotiated order theory (1978).

Negotiated order theory is applicable here because it allows for an active individual while

also recognizing the potential constraints of the structure within which the organization

rests. This is important for the current study because the focus is a dual one. On the one

hand, the study attempted to uncover the actual process by which welfare reform policy

was made and transmitted to social workers. On the other hand, the perceptions of the

participants in the policy-making process were addressed to find out if they matched the

actual process.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review

This chapter addresses the literature related to the study at hand. Due to the nature of the study and a varied literature review this chapter is presented in four sections. The first section addresses the literature concerning attitudes toward poverty and welfare and values. The second section addresses the variety of research on poverty and welfare policy not discussed in connection with other topics. The depth and breadth of the available literature precludes a comprehensive review of the poverty and welfare research. Therefore, the material has been condensed into the most relevant research.

Attitudes about the Causes of Poverty

Extensive studies have been done regarding the public's beliefs about the causes of poverty. Wilson (1996), for example, finds that people attribute both individualistic and structural causes to poverty. Those who attribute individualistic causes to poverty tend to focus on the responsibility of the poor for their poverty. These individuals hold that lack of effort, ability and/or morals within the individual cause poverty. On the other hand, those who attribute structural beliefs about the causes of poverty focus on the circumstances surrounding the poor. They consider poverty to be beyond the individual's control and located within factors such as lack of jobs, low wages, inadequate schools, or discrimination.

Studies like Wilson's typically focus on the beliefs of Americans in general (see, for example, Wilson, 1996; Lee, Jones, and Lewis, 1990; Bobo, 1991; Kluegel, 1987; Wagstaff, 1983; Kluegel and Smith, 1981; Alston and Dean, 1972; and Feagin, 1975) or

on the attitudes of specific groups (Schwartz and Robinson, 1991; Reeser and Epstein, 1987; Rosenthal, 1993 – social work students; and Sharma, 1989 – the poor). Wilson (1996) suggests that the dominant American ideology (equality, success, and democracy) supports individualistic beliefs about the causes of poverty. Structural factors are often considered secondary and without significant influence. This is further supported in studies by Feagin (1975) and Kluegel and Smith (1986), both of which asked respondents for reasons for the presence of the poor in this country (in Lee et al. 1990). Both studies received nearly identical responses and found personal traits to be more important to respondents than structural factors.

Earlier research highlights the suggestions of the studies discussed above. Alston and Dean (1972) discussed socioeconomic factors associated with attitudes toward poverty and welfare. Specifically, they suggested that one of the most persistent beliefs was that those receiving welfare should have to work. This was based in the assumption that "the poor are poor because of their laziness and their tendency to avoid work, which is thought to be easily available to those who really want it" (Alston and Dean, 1972: 13). In addition, they found that older individuals were more sympathetic to the poor, as were those with a high school education or less. In contrast, the lower-status white-collar workers and farmers were the most likely to attribute individual causes to poverty. Finally, those who blamed lack of effort on poverty (individual causes) were more likely to cite dishonest reasons and to feel that too much money was being spent on welfare programs. This individualistic attitude, it can be argued, dominates much of human services policy-making.

With regards to politicians, only one study has analyzed politicians' attitudes toward poverty and welfare, although it did not address the attributed causes (McClosky, Hoffmann, and O'Hara, 1960). This analysis was a small part of a larger study of issue consensus among party leaders and followers. McClosky et al. (1960) found distinct differences between Republicans and Democrats with regards to what they called "equalitarian and human welfare issues." For example, Democrats were more likely than Republicans to support increases in funding to social programs (education, public housing, social security, minimum wages, and enforcement of integration).

While not directly addressing politicians' attitudes toward the poor, Kluegel (1987) has suggested that politicians may use the poor to deflect anger and frustration regarding economic problems. "Anti-welfare rhetoric has become commonplace in U.S. politics, holding a status of symbolic importance far out of proportion to the fraction of government spending it comprises" (Kluegel, 1987: 84). He has further proposed that the use of this rhetoric to reduce government spending has increased negative attitudes toward the poor. Interestingly, he found no clear relationship between macro-economic troubles and anti-welfare, anti-poor sentiment. In general, regardless of the state of the economy, people tended to view poverty as a result of individual failings. This was heightened by political rhetoric. For example, President Clinton, in a speech addressing the signing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (discussed in detail below), referred to welfare recipients as "trapped" in the system. He also referred to people no longer on welfare as having "worked their way from welfare to independence" and suggested that "good people" got off of welfare

(Clinton speech, 1996). To this end, one piece of the current study explored the attitudes

of some of the politicians involved in welfare policy-making.

Attitudes Toward Welfare and Welfare Policy

"Welfare policy is the slate on which our most trenchant social anxieties are

written" (Kornbluh, 1991: 24). While federally-supported welfare has been deemed

necessary since the Depression (at least on the federal level), attitudes toward welfare

have generally been negative. Ellwood (1988) has suggested that welfare leads to

conflict and tension (in Burton, 1992). In fact, much of today's conglomeration of

welfare and policy is a negative legacy of the 1960s' War on Poverty. Since the War on

Poverty, criticisms have abounded including the belief that welfare has inhibited

economic growth and promoted incompetence and fraud (Burton, 1992). Other

objections to welfare include the expense (Hazlitt, 1973), the destruction of family values

– including the dissolution of the family and out-of-wedlock births (Burton, 1992), the

belief that welfare promotes additional children (Hazlitt, 1973 and Gilder, 1981), the

notion that welfare promotes laziness and dependency, and, the fact that welfare gives too

much power to government and bureaucracy (Atherton, 1989). On a positive note, the

War on Poverty focused attention on the poor and prompted the expansion of programs

like Food Stamps and Medicaid which Burton (1992) has suggested help the poor to the

extent that without them they would face even worse circumstances.

Counters to the objections came from several sources. For example, Beeghley

(1983) has pointed out in response to charges of fraud that less than one percent of AFDC

cases involved fraud. Wilson (1987) has countered criticisms that welfare leads to the

break-up of the family or to out-of-wedlock births with the assertion that there was no

evidence to support these claims. *The Twentieth Century Fund* (1995) has presented

evidence with regards to out of wedlock births that appeared to contradict Wilson;

however, the evidence is confusing and ultimately inconclusive. Burton (1992) has

suggested that the conservative view of welfare as a ponderous bureaucracy serving a

lazy poor is not supported by the facts. He has also proposed that people who claimed

that welfare created dependency did not recognize that those who have become

dependent on welfare—far from having access to positive role models and good jobs—

often "lead lives of desperation and futility" (98). In fact, Brown (as cited in Kerbo,

1996) found that 80 percent of food stamp recipients did not get enough nutrition for

long-term good health.

Additional evidence from *The Twentieth Century Fund* (1995) has suggested that,

prior to the new law, the typical AFDC recipient was characterized as the following; a

child under six years of age, cared for a by a mother over 25 years of age who was

divorced, widowed or separated, unemployed, had at most a high school education, gave

birth to her first (emphasis on first, as in not only) child between the ages of 18 and 20'

and had received public assistance for no more than 3 years. In addition, the *The*

Twentieth Century Fund (1995) presented evidence suggesting that the teen birthrate had

declined since 1960 and that 72.7 percent of AFDC families had two or fewer children.

While AFDC is admittedly only a small part of welfare, it is the part that typically

receives the most attention because it involves cash benefits. This evidence further

counters the view that a large welfare bureaucracy has created a large population of lazy,

unmotivated individuals.

Despite the evidence presented above, the negative view of welfare as a dependency-creating, value-destroying, baby-producing bureaucracy remains. This leads to policies that promote disincentives for welfare recipients (as seen in a five percent reduction in AFDC benefits in Oklahoma in 1995) and an emphasis on work and responsibility (reflected in the current welfare reform). While it is not argued that the latter is bad, it should be apparent that the focus is still on the individual—at least from the policy-makers' perspectives.

Values

Another aspect of this situation concerns values. Fischer (1980) has suggested that public policies "are essentially political agreements designed for the practical world of social action where facts and values are inextricably woven" (2). However, he pointed out that most individuals do not attempt to justify their values when making decisions, rather they operate within a general consensus on "high-level" values. This echoes the theoretical postulations of Talcott Parsons (1966) in his General Theory of Action. Policy-makers choose between policy alternatives that are based on this consensus of values. This normative aspect of policy-making, Fischer has suggested, has often been separated from the fact side of policymaking, a decision that has left a void in policy analysis. While this study does not propose to evaluate the poverty and welfare policies of the Oklahoma State Legislature in any substantive way, the point made by Fischer regarding the importance of values in policy-making cannot be ignored for it is this point that provides the basis for the introduction of functionalism. As discussed earlier, the literature suggests that it is important to understand the basic context within which people

live (their values, their definitions of situations) in order to better understand their

positions within the larger social structure, hence this discussion of values.

With regards to specific values, Feagin (1975), in a pivotal work on the public's

attitudes toward the poor and welfare policy, pointed to the 'ideology of individualism' as

part of America's basic value system. He suggested the following as integral to the belief

system in the U.S.:

1. That each individual should work hard and strive to succeed in competition
   with others;
2. That those who work hard should be rewarded with success (seen as wealth,
   property, prestige, and power);
3. That because of widespread and equal opportunity those who work hard will
   in fact be rewarded with success; and
4. That economic failure is an individual's own fault and reveals lack of effort
   and other character defects (p. 91 –92).

Feagin refers to these values as traditional, conservative values. For the purposes of this

study, they will be referred to as either conservative values or traditional welfare-critical

values. Regardless, the values being referenced are ones that focus on the efforts of the

individual.

Values and Public Policy.

A final aspect of the discussion of values centers on values in the making of

public policy. Papadakis (1992) has suggested that symbolic values are significant in

policy formation. This is reminiscent of the national values approach in which policies

are said to emerge out of the "hegemony of liberal values" in America. Skocpol (1992)

has argued that this approach does not explain policy adequately. The national values

approach has offered arguments that are "too holistic and essentialist to account for

variations in policies" (Skocpol, 1992: 22).

Too often national values explanations one-sidedly derive political outcomes from values, without revealing that experiences with governmental institutions and political processes profoundly affect the way people understand and evaluate alternative policy possibilities within a given frame (Skocpol, 1992: 22).

Other Research on Poverty and Welfare

The body of research that has amassed on poverty and welfare is immense and cannot be fully covered here; however, certain subsections of this research deserve mention. For example, several articles have been written regarding the measurement of poverty or welfare (cf., Lanjouw, 1997; Ravallion, 1996; Ruggles, 1990). Others have been written exploring ways to reduce poverty (cf., *Reducing Poverty in America*, 1996). Still other researchers have focussed specifically on policy relating to poverty and welfare (see, Vanderschueren, 1996; Schensberg, 1996; Patterson, 1994; Quadagno, 1994 - who added race as a significant variable; Katz, 1983; and Lynch, 1973).

Relevant to the current study and focusing on policy implementation is research conducted by Copeland and Wexler (1995) and Lester, Bowman, Goggin and O'Toole (1987). Copeland and Wexler have suggested that attention be paid to social workers as a valuable resource in policy-making. This recognition of the importance of those in the field as important in policy development is acknowledged in the current study. Lester et al. have differentiated the characteristics of the policy-making process from what emerges during the process and from the outcome of the process. They have done this as a critique of implementation researchers who have disagreed on the appropriate subject of inquiry and have focused on everything from the initial statement of policy to the impacts of the outcome. The current study breaks from this tradition and focuses primarily on the perceptions of the participants involved in the policy-making process combined with a more traditional exploration of the mechanics of the process.

CHAPTER FOUR

History of US and Oklahoma Social Policy

To set the stage for the study, it is important to understand the historical context upon which it is based. To this end, a history of US social policy is offered, followed by pertinent aspects of Oklahoma social and political history.

US Social Policy

Arguments that the US has always focused on individual effort and decried public assistance appear to be false. Skocpol argues that US social policy did not begin during the New Deal era as most like to think. Instead, she has suggested that the first national public provision "benefited a socio-economically, ethnically and even racially diverse category of Union veterans and their dependents" (1993: 89). In addition, the US had "the most inclusive system of primary and secondary public education in the industrializing world" (Skocpol, 1993: 89).

For example, Skocpol (1995) has discussed the paternalistic and maternalistic welfare states of Europe and the US, respectively. She found that European welfare states centered on "male bureaucrats (who) would administer regulations and social insurance "for the good of breadwinning industrial workers and their dependents" (12). The US, on the other hand, developed a maternalistic welfare system, run primarily by female-dominated agencies, which focused on helping mothers and children. The argument that could be made here is that European countries focus on helping workers work and be productive, whereas the US initially focused on helping mothers remain at home and rear their children. Skocpol (1995) has pointed out that a large number of

regulations and benefits for male workers were defeated at the same time that laws authorizing benefits for impoverished widowed mothers, limiting working women's hours, and implementing maternal health care were passed.

Skocpol, Abend-Wein, Howard, and Lehmann (1993) have pointed to mothers' pensions "the forerunner of the Aid to Dependent Children portion of Social Security" as the "first explicit welfare benefits established outside of poor relief in the United States" (668). Mothers' pensions, enacted between 1911 and 1920 in 40 states and in 4 more states in the 1920s, seemed to embody the value society placed in the family in the US (Skocpol, 1995). According to Skocpol et al., social reformers at the turn of the century were convinced that "home care and mother love were better for children than any kind of institutional care" (1993: 688). Although initially the emphasis was on private mothers' pensions because of the stake that private charities had in raising money for "worthy widows," publicly-funded programs were eventually established in 46 states (Skocpol, 1992).

<u>Oklahoma History and Social Policy</u>

In order to understand better the current political structure and culture in Oklahoma (à la Skocpol), it is important to understand something about the political history of the state. Following the tradition of historical institutionalism, a brief history of the state focussing on politics and social services is offered to frame the ensuing discussion.

<u>Politics in Oklahoma.</u>

Angie Debo has suggested that Oklahoma's political turmoil is related to its agrarian base and Jacksonian political tendencies. She has pointed to the findings of the

Brookings Institute study discussed below that summarized Oklahoma as "advanced materially, but retarded politically" (1987: 39). Debo has suggested that this had begun pre-statehood, in the factional disagreements faced by the Native Americans, in the city rivalries, and in the political parties that fought for federal control. In addition, Debo has pointed to the patronage system that emerged in the state, where "presidents and faculties of the state colleges were appointed on the basis of their service to Oklahoma Democrats" (1987: 42). Oklahomans historically have not been familiar with their officials and, perhaps subtly, were encouraged not to be. It could be suggested that many Oklahomans still vote by guess, though now it is not because the information is not out there, but perhaps because there is too much information to deal with.

The political parties active in Oklahoma, prior to statehood and beyond, were the Socialists, the Democrats, the Republicans, and the Populists; however, Oklahoma could be considered a predominantly one-party state for much of its history (Kirkpatrick, Morgan, and Kielhorn, 1977). Until the 1920s, no Republicans won statewide office. Prior to statehood, Indian Territory was considered Democrat and Oklahoma Territory was Republican.

The Democrats won control of the first Legislature, giving them the opportunity to create the basic laws that the state would follow and to establish a political machine in the state to ensure its survival (Gibson, 1981). The first legislature set up the judicial system, the counties, the education system and state taxation. Income, property, inheritance, and production and revenue taxes were established. Gibson has suggested that the first legislature was progressive and reform-oriented—bank deposits were protected, labor reform codes were written, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission was

established and lobbyists were regulated. Prohibition was also a clause in the initial constitution (Gibson, 1981; Debo, 1987). Despite their initial gains in the Oklahoma political scene, the Democratic Party saw its power decline in the face of the Socialists in the 1910s, a split in the Progressive coalition within the party, and the growing popularity of the Republican's business orientation in the 1920s (Morgan et. al, 1991). It was not until the 1930s that the Democrats regained political control.

To understand better the vagaries and eccentricities of Oklahoma politics with regards to public relief, it is important to look at one of the state's most famous governors, "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, elected in 1930. Goble and Scales (1983) have suggested that the politics of personality began to prevail in Oklahoma with the 1930 elections. The issues were not as important as the candidates running for office. As Gibson (1981) has noted, "The times called for strong, energetic leaders. The election of 1930 produced for Oklahoma a leader with such ability" (150). Murray ran in 1930 against Republican Ira Hill from Cherokee. He based his campaign on the resentments of Oklahomans against the wealthy and offered himself to Oklahoma as an advocate of the poor and minorities. To his opponents, "Murrayism" meant "a frightful concentration in the hands of an outrageous demagogue...To the governor's ill-coordinated legions, it meant their champion's battle against entrenched wealth, arrogance and greed" (Goble and Scales, 1983).

Murray's main contribution was his ability to provide relief for the "able-bodied" poor of Oklahoma in the face of a $5 million state-government deficit (Gibson, 1981). He was also able to get free seed and food for the poor from the Thirteenth Legislature. In 1931, the legislature appropriated $300,000 for relief. As if that was not enough,

Murray "exacted 'voluntary' contributions of 1.5 percent of the salaries of state employees to replenish the relief fund. Murray also used gas tax collections in excess of $1 million to hire the unemployed for public work for the highway department. In one of his more unique solutions to the widespread poverty in the state, he allowed 10 unemployed men to plant vegetable gardens on the unused land between the governor's mansion and the Capitol (Goble and Scales, 1983). In addition, Murray used the Oklahoma militia to enforce his decisions. For example, he stationed Oklahoma National Guardsmen at 3,106 oil wells to enforce quotas. He also used the Guard to close private toll bridges while opening public ones for free access (Gibson, 1981). When Phillips Petroleum decided to stop supplying its surplus, commercially-worthless gas free to some state residents, Murray gave the company 30 minutes to turn it back on. Phillips did.

By the end of his term as governor, however, Murray's popularity had dropped considerably. He lost a bid for reelection to E. W. Marland, founder of what would later be known as Conoco (Gibson, 1981; Goble and Scales, 1983). "Alfalfa Bill" Murray took Oklahoma solidly into the realm of state-supported public assistance.

<u>Oklahoma Public Assistance History</u>

As the above section began to demonstrate, Oklahoma has had a long history of government assistance to those in need. From the first appeal to Congress for assistance om 1890 because of a severe drought to the Block Grants of the 1990s, Oklahoma government has tried to provide assistance to its poor and disadvantaged citizens. For example, in 1897, the territorial legislature made the first appropriations for the speech-, hearing-, and vision-impaired. In 1900, it instructed counties to "support the 'poor and indigent persons lawfully settled there whenever they shall actually need assistance' "

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(Oklahoma Department of Human Services, September 1986). In 1901, each county was allowed funds for a poor house. The original Oklahoma Constitution provided for the creation of the Office of Commissioner of Charities and Corrections. The first commissioner, Kate Barnard, used her office to fight for laws that instituted compulsory education, humane care for prisoners and the mentally ill, restricted child labor, and established juvenile courts. In 1915, children whose fathers were either dead, in prison or insane were eligible for government assistance. This trend of assistance continued through the creation of the Crippled Children's Hospital in 1927, the Emergency Relief Board in 1932, and the formation of the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) in 1936 (later the Department of Human Services) (OK-DHS, September 1986).

The DPW was created following a Brookings Institute study in 1935 that suggested that something be done to oversee the relief efforts in progress during the Depression. Through much of the Great Depression, relief work was done through the American Red Cross and in church kitchens (through soup lines) (OK-DHS, September 1986).

Goble and Scales (1983) have suggested that the state could not afford the services it normally provided, much less provide new ones. "The wonder is not that the state did no more, but that it could do anything at all" (9). The New Deal came to Oklahoma at the end of Murray's term. With the New Deal came the Public Works Administration, the Work Project Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Governor Marland followed Murray in his advocacy of the New Deal, and his program as governor was referred to as the "Little New Deal." He believed that relief efforts could be made more effective through state organization. To that end, Marland proposed five

new agencies (planning, housing, highway, new industries, and flood control boards) and a budget of $35 million for 1935. To fund the budget, he asked for a 3-cent sales tax and an increase on gas and oil taxes. After a strong opposition was mounted by Senator Phillips, he was granted a mere twelve percent of his budget and only the planning and flood control boards (in much diminished form). Marland also attempted to get an old age pension passed through a popular vote, but was thwarted by the state Supreme Court. In 1935, Oklahoma, following the US Social Security Act, allowed pensioners a maximum of $30 per month.

In the following year, the DPW was established. Marland began to lose favor with the voters, in part due to the corruption in the state government. Goble and Scales (1983) reported that the appropriation and distribution of relief funds was not all altruistic. Legislators "insisted that the relief money, much of it matched by federal funds, be distributed by their allies on patronage-ridden and notoriously inefficient county welfare boards. Within a year, the use of welfare funds, including the federal contribution, became a national scandal" (Goble and Scales, 1983:18-19). Federal investigators found that some counties had more elderly on the assistance rolls than were in the entire county.

<u>Human Services Today or The Context for Welfare Reform</u>

Today, human services in Oklahoma stand in transition, long divorced from its corruption-fraught roots. Early focuses on eligibility, mandated by potential federal sanctions for improper paperwork eligibility determinations, have evolved into a client-focused approach that tries to meet clients at their level, rather than trying to force them into a state-determined mold (DHS: <u>Welfare Reform succeeds in Oklahoma, the Untold</u>

story, online). The state of human services, however, does not exist in a vacuum. Both agency and political factors influence the development of the structural context within which welfare reform is occurring. This section addresses three aspects of the structural context: the Federal views and laws relevant to welfare reform, in particular PL 104-193, state political views and developments, and developments within the Agency. Before addressing the federal context, however, a more general context needs to be defined.

Heclo (1994) has made a few fundamental points regarding poverty and politics. The first is that the poor have little power. They pay less attention to and participate less often in politics. Given the structure of power in society, this contributes to a lack of their voice in the political scene which translates into a lack of impact on policies that affect them. "Antipoverty policies are less a matter of demands poor people make in the political process and more a function of what other people decide to do to and for them" (Heclo, 1994: 397). Another point that Heclo has made is that poverty policies are frequently tied to the state of the economy. When times are good, people are more likely to feel generous. At the same time, people are more likely to see the poor as deviant. Conversely, when times are hard, people are more likely to sympathize with the poor, but are less willing to help them.

Heclo (1994) has also pointed out that the current trend toward work and responsibility is not new. He has demonstrated that the emphasis on a "hand up, not a hand out" – a popular phrase at the beginning of the War on Poverty and in times since – can be traced to the 1800s. American society has maintained the belief that the government should help those who cannot help themselves but has deplored welfare because it has been seen as a system that has been taken advantage of by able-bodied

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individuals (Heclo, 1994). In fact, in a 1991 commencement speech at the University of Michigan, President Bush suggested that the welfare system was addictive, fostered dependency, and weakened the morality of individuals (as cited in Axinn and Hirsch, 1993).

In part, this view stems from a view of the poor that held sway in the 1960s and beyond called the "culture of poverty." While this view has since lost favor, it can be argued that it is intuitively correct. It is presented here because it helps set the context for the analysis. The key thing to remember about the culture of poverty is that it focuses on the individual, a theme that arises again and again in both the current study and previous ones.

Coined by anthropologist Oscar Lewis (cited in Burton, 1992), the term refers to the idea that the poor have a distinct and slightly different set of values, norms, and beliefs than does the rest of society. These values, etc. are transmitted from one generation to the next and can be used to explain the persistence of poverty in families and communities (see, for example, Della Fave, 1974; and Coward, Feagin, and Williams, Jr., 1974).

> The culture of poverty is both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified, highly individuated, capitalistic society. It represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair which result from the realization of the improbability of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society (Lewis, 1965 as cited in Burton, 1992).

Corcoran, Duncan, Gurin, and Gurin (1985) have suggested that this view leads to blaming the poor. Burton (1992) has agreed that this is frequently the result of the "culture of poverty" view, but points to Lewis himself who has denied this. Later work on the culture of poverty modifies the concept to suggest that what is at work is more

subcultural dynamics than an overarching cultural system (Duncan and Tickamyer, 1988 as cited in Burton, 1992; Morris, 1989; and Corcoran et al, 1985). Morris (1989), in a well-reasoned article comparing the "culture of poverty" with the "underclass," refers to subcultural dynamics at work in the perpetuation of poverty. He has also suggested that this is the common ground between the "culture of poverty" view and the "underclass" debate that succeeded it.

The Federal Context:

On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed PL 104-193, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. This law was designed to change the welfare system from one of entitlements to one requiring work in exchange for limited assistance (Fact Sheet, 1996). President Clinton introduced the law in a speech to the nation saying, "What we are trying to do today is overcome the flaws of the welfare system for the people who are trapped on it" (Clinton, 1996, speech). The focus of the new law was on work, "the dignity, the power, and the ethic of work" (Clinton, 1996, speech). Embodied in the law were strong indications of the desire to move welfare from a long-term, dependency-creating system, to a short-term, temporary, empowering, and responsibility-enforcing program. Included in this program was a five-year time limit, increased resources for child support enforcement, increased funding for child care and expanded medical coverage. In addition, states had some flexibility with regards to how they developed programs (i.e. pre-approved state waivers and job subsidies), but little flexibility with regards to the percentages of welfare recipients that had to be employed (Fact Sheet, 1996). States had the option to refuse additional benefits to recipients who give birth to children while receiving cash assistance; Oklahoma voted

to give benefits in the form of vouchers (see Table 1 for more details on the federal and state requirements). Funding occurred in the form of Block Grants to states, only 15 percent of which could be used for administrative purposes; thus reinforcing the emphasis on getting people off (APWA, 1996).

Prior to the current new law, however, the federal government passed the Family Support Act of 1988. Intended as a comprehensive attack on welfare, it fizzled, in part because of the economic hardships that followed its passage (Heclo, 1994). So, while the intentions were good, the economic downturn found caseloads increasing, placing more of a burden on states and leading to benefit cuts in the early '90s (Heclo, 1994). Finally, looking at legislation following Family Support Act, Heclo (1994) highlighted four types of welfare initiatives promoted by different states: benefit cuts, work programs, education initiatives, and, initiatives promoting family values and punishing its opposite. The new law can be seen to be a combination of these types of initiatives and it occurred in a time of relative economic prosperity.

The State Context:

With regards to the situation in the state, it is important to discuss income and poverty statistics in Oklahoma. Compared to other states Oklahoma has a greater number of poor individuals and a lower median income. For example, in 1994, Oklahoma ranked 44th in terms of disposable income per person ($15,575). Oklahoma also ranked 44th in terms of median income and 9th in percent of population in poverty. Interestingly, in 1993 (the only year with available figures), Oklahoma ranked 28th in terms of public-aid recipients. This would be surprising were it not that a study conducted earlier for the Department of Commerce found that nearly two-thirds (61%) of the respondents to a

telephone survey of poor Oklahomans had not received any form of public assistance (Maril, 1999 forthcoming). Thus, while Oklahoma had relatively more poor people in the state, the majority of those individuals did not receive assistance. This suggests that, in Oklahoma welfare recipients make up a minority of the population.

Welfare reform began in Oklahoma long before Congress passed PL 104-193. In 1995, Oklahoma proposed the Oklahoma Welfare Reform Act. This act focussed on tightening up loopholes in AFDC and other programs. Specifics of the act included a 36-month limit on AFDC benefits,; an educational attainment limit (applicants with a bachelors degree or higher would be ineligible for AFDC), goals to strengthen families by removing the marriage penalty in AFDC, mandates for education for minors, and, limits in benefits for additional children. Many of these changes were found in the later federal welfare reform bill.

Table 1

Federal Requirements under PL 104-193 and additional State Requirements set by the state for Welfare Reform

Federal	State
1. "A lifetime total eligibility period of five years to receive assistance. Child-only cases receiving TANF are not subject to the five-year limitation."	1. Increases in the value of resources that an individual may own (the allowable automobile value increases from $1500 to $5000; there is a $2000 cap on an individual development account for the recipient).
2. A requirement that single parents receiving assistance have to participate in some form of work activities at least 20 hours per week. Two-parent families must work at least 35 hours per week.	2. Revised food stamp eligibility. All able-bodied adults age 18-50 who do not have dependent minors are eligible for food stamps for only three months out of any 36-month period unless they work for 20 hours or more. In addition, a recipient who is delinquent with child support payments could lose their Food Stamp eligibility.
3. Unmarried teens with a minor child at least 12 weeks old have to participate in approved educational or work activities.	3. "Encouragement of the establishment of statewide One-stop Career/Employment Centers linking resources and programs to create collaborative partnerships between governmental agencies and private and nonprofit entities to assist persons in gaining employment."
4. "(N)o later than two years after initial receipt of benefits a recipient must participate in one of the following work activities: full or part-time employment, a program of work experience, on-the-job training, assisted job search, job readiness assistance which may include supervised or unsupervised job-seeking activities, community service programs, literacy and adult basic education programs, child care training or vocational-educational programs not to exceed a 12-month period. Exceptions from participating in work activities may include: (numbers 5 and 6)"	4. Allows for emergency assistance to legal immigrants who meet eligibility requirements. These funds would come from the state, not TANF, and can be used for such things as "housing, food, short-term cash assistance, clothing and social services for children."
5. "A single custodial parent with a child up to one year of age may be exempt from work activities for a lifetime total of 12 months; and"	5. Requires that adults develop and enter into a personal responsibility plan.
6. "For a single-parent family, except for teen parents, educational activities other than vocational-technical training do not count toward meeting the required 20 hours of work activity. The same regulation applies for two-parent families concerning their 35 hours of required work activity."	6. Requires vouchers for clothing, food and other necessities for individuals who give birth to additional children while receiving TANF.
Source: Human Services and Community and Family Responsibilities. A DHS publication. http://www.lsb.state.ok.us/house/97high09.htm	

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better strategies to help people become employed in worthwhile employment." He

suggested that Oklahoma had just begun to make progress in reducing caseloads to their

absolute minimum (Taylor, 7-15-97:3).

Additionally, a proposed five percent increase in cash benefits to welfare

recipients in 1996 (following a five percent decrease in the previous year) was met with

opposition from Republicans. Representative Dunlap suggested that it was ironic to

consider a "pay raise" for welfare recipients when the average Oklahoma citizen could

not expect a pay raise that year. "One of the reasons we've been able to trim the welfare

rolls is because the reduced benefits have made it less attractive to be on welfare"

(Dunlap, Media Division Press Release, 1-25-96). This view is supported by Gilder

(1981) who has suggested that increasing benefits deters productive work and by Murray

(1984) who has proposed that soaring welfare benefits could make living in poverty a

viable alternative. Murray (1984) has argued that welfare gives individuals the

opportunity to raise their children while unemployed and/or unmarried. He saw welfare

as part of the cause of the problem of poverty rather as a solution.

Meanwhile, Oklahoma legislators were busy passing laws that brought them into

compliance with PL 104-193. For example, Table 1 above outlines the state

requirements as determined in HB 2170. HB 2170 eliminated the state AFDC program

and established the STARS (Statewide Temporary Assistance Responsibility System)

program. This program is "an integrated and coordinated systems approach" designed to

provide TANF recipients with the necessary tools which will assist them in making the

transition from public assistance programs to independence (Human Services and

Community and Family Responsibilities, OK-DHS). Related legislation includes SB

109, which appropriated more than $30 million for welfare reform in the state (less than $1 million of which actually went to DHS), with $5 million of this earmarked for support for TANF recipients (e.g. eyeglasses, dental exams, and car repairs) (Capitol Media Division, 5-23-97). This highlights one of the other requirements of PL 104-193 which was that states had to maintain their spending at a minimum of 80 percent of their FY1994 levels, referred to as maintenance of effort or MOE (Fact Sheet, 1996). This is important to states because their MOE determines the amount of federal funding for which they are eligible.

Another piece of legislation, SB 639, does not relate directly to TANF, but it does have the potential to decrease one incentive for remaining on public-assistance, medical coverage. Sponsored by Senator Angela Monson and Representative Bill Mitchell, SB 639 expanded medical coverage for children of low-income families. Coverage was extended, free of expense, for children of families who fall at no more than 185 percent of the poverty threshold. For families making no more than 200 percent of the poverty threshold, SB 639 established a cost-sharing plan. Senator Monson saw the bill as a way of helping families go off welfare and into jobs (Oklahoma Legislative Weekly Reporter, Friday June13, 1997).

Relevant here are the problems that faced states as they implemented welfare reform. These problems became apparent at the various meetings that the researcher attended at the State Capitol between July and December of 1997 while conducting the research. First, states have had to contend with the participation rates established by the federal government (APWA, 1996). Included in this is the fact that states can only exempt 20 percent of their TANF population from these requirements (this includes

recipients who are disabled or have infant children in the home). As more people move

off the TANF rolls, the remaining population has tended to consist of those individuals

who are harder to place. This exemption limit will place a strain on states as they

struggle to maintain their welfare reform efforts. Second, there was concern about how

the Fair Labor Standards Act applied to welfare recipients, in particular the minimum

wage. This was a concern because some clients started out in work-training situations

that paid below minimum wage (Action Alert, May 19, 1997). Third, there was

confusion about the timing of state access to federal funds and how much states had to

contribute to the programs in order to get federal funding (maintenance of effort or MOE)

(Action Alert, July 19, 1997). Fourth, what was clear about state MOE was that it had to

be at least 80 percent of 1994 levels, an amount that was difficult for some states to

maintain given budget cuts. Fifth, there was fear that the federal government would

impose limits on Medicaid and Food Stamps (Action Alert, September, 1997). Finally,

there was concern because the House was trying to limit the flexibility of states with

regards to the investment of child support incentive funds (Action Alert, October, 1997).

The Agency Context:

In 1992, long before the passage of PL 104-193, DHS conducted a study of

welfare reform. Subsequently, the agency applied for waivers from the federal

government. One of these was for learnfare which allowed DHS to decrease the amount

of cash assistance that individuals received if they were not in school. Another aspect of

these waivers increased the allowable automobile value to $5,000 (interview with a

legislative researcher). In 1994 and 1995, when Oklahoma welfare reform became

politically official, the legislature incorporated the waivers into their legislation (HB

1673). Thus, it can be seen that Oklahoma began efforts to reform human services, especially AFDC prior to federal mandates. This suggests that the agency and legislature were already open to welfare reform before it became a requirement and that the policy-makers were already predisposed to think in those terms.

In 1997, then-Director Miller touted the success of welfare reform efforts in Oklahoma and credited the front-line (i.e. social workers) with this success. "They have been carrying this message to the community for three years that work is better than welfare and someone has been listening" (Taylor, July 15, 1997). At the same time, Director Miller recognized that the easiest part was behind them. He suggested that the clients that were left in DHS caseloads were the ones that were going to be the most difficult to place in employment. This meant that DHS was going to have to work even harder to maintain their level of success (Inside DHS, August/September, 1997).

One could argue that the reason for Oklahoma's success, defined as the decrease in caseloads, is that the assumption has been that almost all able-bodied adults can work in some way (Welfare reform succeeds in Oklahoma: The untold story, online). In 1996, Oklahoma was cited as having a 34 percent drop in its welfare caseload. This drop was double the national average and put Oklahoma fourth out of the 50 states in caseload decline (Welfare reform, online). DHS managers attributed much of this decline to the changing focus of the agency. Prior to 1992, as was true in the rest of the country, Oklahoma social services focussed on establishing eligibility and verifying information to avoid federal sanctions. In the 1990s, however, the focus moved to emphasizing services for families and children that fit their needs rather than bureaucratic structures (Yessian, 1995; Farrow, 1991). This included an interest in packaging services into bundles or in

training social workers to move away from program specialization to a more generalist position of handling multiple programs (Yessian, 1995). DHS referred to this as a move toward case management. This implied a more holistic approach to providing services to clients and required an in-depth understanding and awareness of the client's life and environment on the part of the social worker (Inside DHS, June & July, 1997).

Another trend evident in social services was Total Quality Management (TQM). Transferred from private industry to social services, TQM in the latter arena asked social workers to focus on improving client satisfaction while simultaneously assessing needs and delivering services. Ideally, TQM practices empower social workers to best serve their clients by promoting administrative/management support (Moore & Kelly, 1996). Comments from respondents have indicated mixed feelings about the implementation of TQM in Oklahoma's DHS. On the one hand, social workers have gained a sense that they have input into the process of DHS, but, on the other hand, more work has been created for them and they are not sensing a great deal of support from administration. For example, many social workers talked about how the agency has been cutting back on clerical staff. This has put an increased burden on social workers who must now take on some of the clerical duties in addition to working with clients in the office and at clients' homes and filling out paperwork. Another example is "model county," a computer project where select counties are going 'on-line.' The project was supposed to facilitate communication between different social workers on a specific case, reduce the duplication of questions to the clients, and reduce the workload of workers. Due to the predominance of workers with limited computer skills it would seem that this will not be the case initially.

A final trend evident in the Agency and around the country is the pressure toward privatization of human services. Administrators recognized this pressure and encouraged their staff to focus on quality, efficiency and reduction of errors (with regards to Food Stamps) in order to avoid providing decision-makers with rationales for privatizing case management completely (Inside DHS, June & July, 1997). While some services (i.e. those related to Medicaid) are being contracted out, it remains to be seen how far this trend will go.

Table 2 outlines key statements about DHS—its mission, values, and goals. These statements echo the sentiments of the federal government and the general American values discussed earlier. They suggest a commitment to high ideals of service. They are, however, just words. Yet they are the words that ideally guide every action and interaction within the agency. The importance of these statements rests in the ideological portrait that they paint of DHS—one of commitment to the family, to work, and to quality service to those in need.

Table 2

DHS Mission, Values and Goal Statements

DHS Mission
♦ "To treat all people fairly, promoting dignity and self-respect; and
♦ "To provide quality services to enable people to lead healthier, more secure, independent and productive lives;
♦ "To administer public resources in a fiscally responsible and ethical manner.*
DHS Values
♦ "We believe in the dignity of the individual, and are totally committed to fair, honest, kind and professional treatment of all individuals and organizations with whom we work.
♦ "We believe our first responsibility is to the clients we serve and we respect their need for privacy and dignity.
♦ "We recognize and accept diversity among ourselves and others and value the individual's right to fair and equitable treatment, in an environment free of bias and prejudice. We believe the family is the foundation of society and that preserving the family is critically important.
♦ "We aspire to maintain high moral and ethical standards and to reflect honesty, integrity, reliability, and forthrightness in all relations."**
DHS Goals
♦ "DHS will assist clients to become independent, employed , productive citizens.
♦ "DHS will provide services that support and strengthen the family and protect its members.
♦ "DHS will provide services in home- and community-based settings.
♦ "DHS will promote health care accessibility.
♦ "DHS will continuously improve systems and processes to achieve agency goals."***

*http://www.onenet.net/okdhs/statment/dhsmissi.htm
**http://www.onenet.net/okdhs/statment/dhsvalues.htm
***http://www.onenet.net/okdhs/statment/dhsgoals.htm

Another aspect of DHS that is relevant to the current study is the organizational structure of the agency. The section of the organizational chart relating to the field operations is presented below in Figure 1. Important here is the distance between the Human Services Committee and the social worker. Each level processes policy for the level below it. Conversely, if input on policy occurs, each level could potentially process

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the input information. The first level of the chart is the Human Services Commission. The Commission is a nine-member committee whose members are appointed by the Governor (see Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion). As such, it is separate from DHS but oversees it and approves DHS policy. The next two levels account for the state office. Although the Office of Field Operations is only one department in the state offices, it is the one most relevant to the current study. The fourth level represents the area offices. Oklahoma is divided into six areas; each headed by an area director. Each area is composed of counties run by county directors. The area and county directors deal with all of the programs within DHS (e.g. Aid to the Blind and Disabled, Child Welfare, and Developmental Disabilities Services), whereas the supervisors and social workers generally have more limited domains.

Figure 1.

Portion of the DHS Organizational Chart.
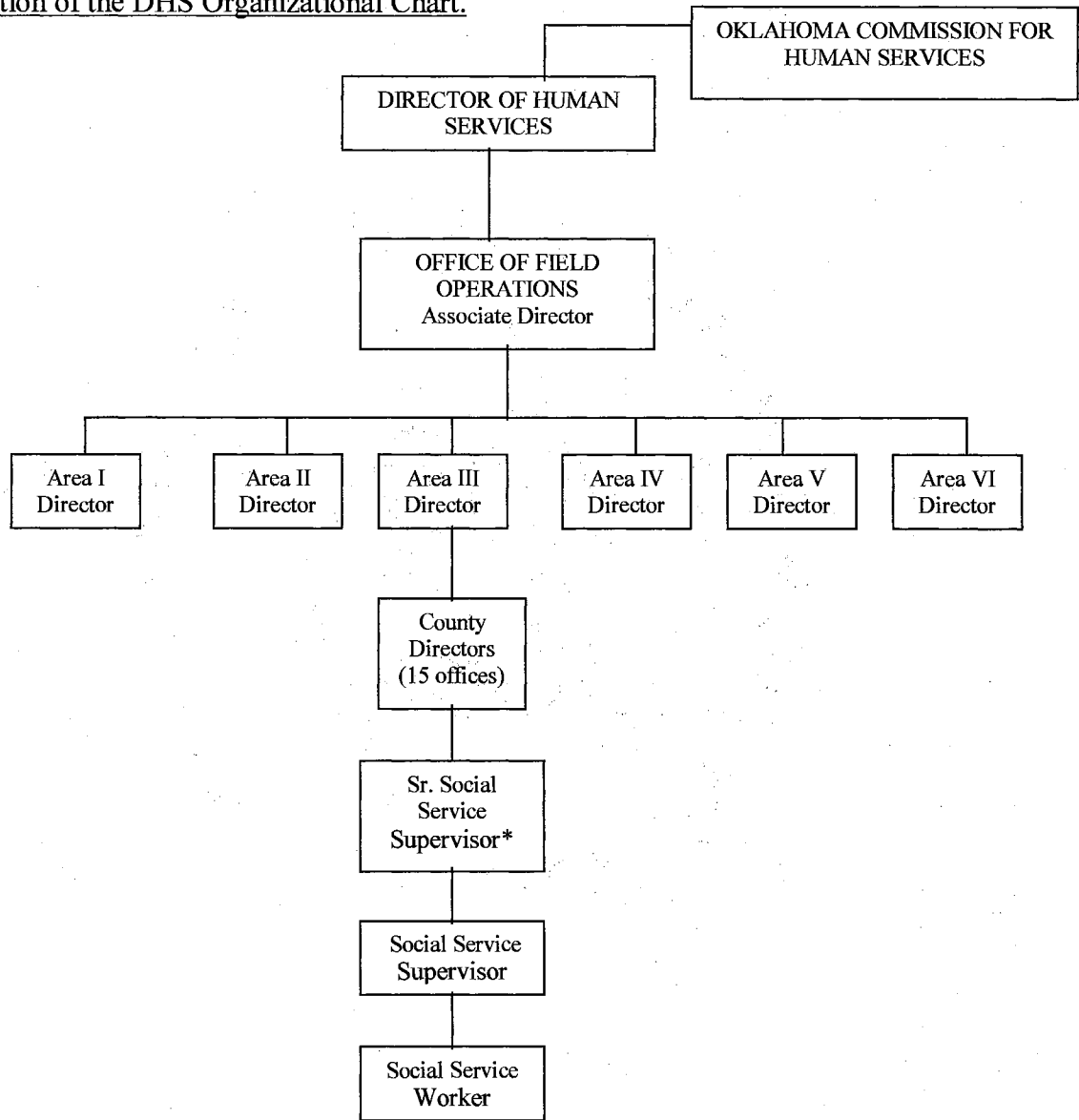
* Note: From this point downward, the chart is based on respondent information. In addition, according to one respondent, this position does not exist in all counties.
Source: Internal Document - Oklahoma Department of Human Services, effective 2-1-97

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Methods

Having discussed the theoretical influences on this study (Chapter 2), the history

of US and Oklahoma public policy, and the relevant literature on related research

(Chapter 3), attention turns to the methodology of the current study. This chapter

specifies the research design utilized, the research questions addressed, and the methods

of data collection. In addition, the validity and reliability of the measurements and

methods will be discussed, as will the generalizability of the results. Finally, this chapter

ends with a discussion of the limitations of this study.

The Research Questions

This study explores the process of welfare reform policy development and

implementation in Oklahoma. It also addresses the issue of whether the participants are

"on the same page" with regards to their views of welfare, their commitment to the

collective goal of human services, and their roles within the process. According to

Parsons (1966) this solidarity of purpose and commitment is necessary for the efficient

functioning of the system. The intent is to model the process with the aid of in-depth

interviews and a questionnaire. The in-depth interviews were designed to uncover the

perceptions of the actors involved in the process as well as explore the process itself,

while the questionnaire was designed to provide a better understanding of respondents'

beliefs and attitudes about poverty and welfare. To utilize more fully the depth of

information available in the interviews and to address the issues raised in the theoretical

discussion, the study also addresses the perceptions of the actors with regards to the

collective goal, their commitment to the goal, their part in achieving that goal, and their perceptions of the other actors' commitment to the collective goal.

It is important to reiterate here that this is an exploratory study, one that has not been done before in this exact form. The rationale, as discussed Chapter 1, was to explore comments made in previous research conducted by the researcher for Maril (1999, forthcoming) regarding the lack of awareness of state legislators regarding the welfare population. Because of the precedent to the research and its exploratory nature, general hypotheses or research questions emerged as the primary directors of the study, rather than the specific hypotheses found in much explanatory research.

Research Question #1.

First, **how do policies get from the legislators to the people that they address (i.e. individuals on welfare)?** This question involves a general analysis of the flow of information from legislators through administrators to social workers. This also involves more simplistic questions including: does the Federal Government solely mandate policy? Do Agency administrators direct policy? Or, is policy also suggested by social workers and developed per their suggestions? It is this research question that provides the basis for the model of policy-making to emerge. It is addressed in the in-depth interviews with the questions about legislators' perceived responsibilities to DHS administrators and social workers and indirectly through questions regarding legislators' contact with employees at the agency. The interviews with administrators addresses this first research question with questions about how the administrators get information about policy changes, and what they consider to be their responsibility with regards to this information, especially how they get this information to their workers. The social worker

interviews contain questions about how social workers get information about policy decisions and who determines how those policies are to be implemented. (See Appendix B for the in-depth interview questions for each group) Finally, this research question was addressed through document research.

Research Question #2:

As the study progressed it became apparent that a law, the Administrative Procedures Act, governs a great deal of the policy-making that occurs in DHS. The Administrative Procedures Act governs the ways that rules, or policies, are promulgated. It also determines what kinds of rules can be developed. Through interviews with a respondent who is heavily involved with the Administrative Procedures Act, the mechanics of the policy-making process were discovered. In addition, discovery of the Administrative Procedures Act and a key informant associated with it introduced new actors into the system and provided for another research question. As such the second research question asks, **what are the roles of the various actors in this system according to their own perceptions**? The question of the legislators' authority over DHS emerged as a new group of actors came to light, the Human Services Commission, frequently referred to as simply the Commission. Although earlier research had uncovered the Commission's existence, it was through the interviews that its importance in the process became apparent. This was the point in the research where the focus shifted from one on the legislators' impacts on policy to a more general questioning of the process. This question is addressed through the use of the in-depth interviews.

Research Question #3:

The third research question is: **What are the participants' overall views of welfare and do they match the views outlined in the survey?** This research question fully embodies the exploratory bent of this study. Because policy does not occur in a vacuum (Skocpol, 1992), the background expectancies of the participants is needed to form the context within which policy is developed and implemented in the state. This question is addressed through questions in the in-depth interviews and by comparison of the answers to responses to the survey.

Research Question #4

The fourth research question asks: **Are all of the actors committed to the collective goal of welfare reform?** This question relates back to the Parsonian postulation that actors in a system must be committed to the collective goal of the system. The collective goal is defined, in part by the Federal Government (as discussed in references to President Clinton's 1996 speech in Chapter 4) and in part by the mission of DHS (also described in Chapter 4). This research question uses the participants' views of success with regards to welfare and their support of various programs (in the survey) to determine their commitment to the collective goal. The implication is if success is defined solely by a reduction in caseloads, the policies that will emerge from the state will be different than if participants define success in another manner. The emergent policies are not under consideration, but the results from this question could indicate future directions.

In addition to the research questions, the study proposes four hypotheses. These hypotheses center around one of the assumptions upon which the study is based; that, in general, people do not like welfare.

Hypothesis #1

The hypothesis is **that all of the respondents attribute individualistic causes to poverty, but it is expected that legislators will be more likely to attribute individualistic causes to poverty than either administrators or social workers.** If Parsons' ideas hold true and there is a consensus of values, then the participants should attribute individualistic causes to poverty because the dominant public ideology supports this. This is addressed through analysis of Section D of the questionnaire (see Appendix D).

Hypothesis #2

The second hypothesis relates to the first, but focuses on support for programs. The second hypothesis is that the **respondents, particularly the legislators, will be less likely to support spending on welfare programs.** This hypothesis is addressed through Section B of the questionnaire (see Appendix D).

Hypothesis #3

The third hypothesis is that the **respondents, especially the legislators, hold traditional welfare-critical values and thus are generally opposed to welfare.** That traditional conservative values are associated with opposition to welfare was demonstrated in the discussion of Feagin (1975) in Chapter 3. This hypothesis is analyzed with Section E of the questionnaire.

<u>Hypothesis #4</u>

The final hypothesis relates to neutralization theory and suggests that the

respondents, in general, think that welfare is a bad thing, but support it under

certain circumstances. Section F of the questionnaire addresses this with the situational

ethics exceptions scale. Ideally, the scale will identify under which circumstances the

respondents think that welfare is acceptable.

In addition to the research questions and hypothesis presented, this study

identifies a general profile of respondents' orientations to poverty and welfare. These

orientations include: (1) selected demographics (see Appendix D - section A); (2)

participants' support for and knowledge of specific programs (see Appendix D - sections

B and C); (3) participants' beliefs about the reasons for poverty (see Appendix D -

section D); (4) participants' attitudes toward welfare (see Appendix D - section E); and,

(5) participants' situational support for welfare (see Appendix D - section F). These

orientations are used to supplement the background expectancies (Research Question 3)

of the participants. The small number of respondents precludes exhaustive statistical

analysis.

<div align="center">The Data-Collection Procedure</div>

<u>The Interview</u>

The primary method used for collecting the data to explore the above-specified

research questions was what is referred to as the in-depth interview, by Singleton et al.

(1988) as unstructured interviewing, and by Denzin (1989) as nonschedule standardized

interviewing. This method involves a predetermined list of information desired, but no set

order for the questions. This type of interview allows the interviewer to "adapt the interview to capitalize on the special knowledge, experience, or insights of respondents" (Singleton et al., 1988). For ease of reference, the questions were numbered on the interview schedule.

The interviews were conducted over the fall months of 1997 with a sample of legislators, agency administrators and social workers in Oklahoma. The total sample for the in-depth interviews was 53 individuals. Twenty interviews from each group of respondents, legislators, administrators, and social workers, were attempted, but not all of the potential respondents that were contacted, responded. Thus, the final sample includes 16 legislators, one representative from the executive branch, 17 agency administrators, three members of the Commission for Human Services, and 16 social workers. The majority of the legislators were purposively chosen for their positions on key committees in the House and Senate. A few legislators with no ties to these committees were chosen to provide another view of the process. The specific process involved contacting the legislators' administrative assistants in person at the state Capitol in the fall of 1997. The study was explained to the administrative assistant and an interview was requested. Frequently the contact and explanations were made and followed up by phone calls, but a few interviews were scheduled at the initial contact. Every member of each of the pertinent committees (Health and Social Services in the Senate and Human Services in the House) was contacted and/or called several times. Those that responded positively by the end of the study were interviewed. In addition, as mentioned previously, the sample also includes legislators who were not associated with either committee. This was done to offset some of the bias involved in the selected sample.

The administrators and social workers were selected using a snowball sample. The initial administrator contact was made through a legislator. Subsequent administrative respondents were contacted at the suggestion of either an administrator or a social worker. Potential respondents were called, the study was explained and an interview was requested.

The initial social worker respondent resulted from individuals known to the researcher. From that point, each respondent was asked to provide the names of a few potential respondents in other counties. Administrators and social workers in TANF, Food Stamps, employment training, and Medicaid were chosen over child welfare and developmental disabilities workers.

Each respondent was given a written consent form prior to beginning the interview. This statement offered a general summary of the nature of the research being conducted and emphasized the ethical issues of voluntary participation and the anonymity of their participation (see Appendix A for the complete consent form). After the interview was completed, the respondents were given the second part of the study, a copy of the questionnaire paper-clipped to a self-addressed, stamped return envelope and a cover letter (see Appendix C and D for the complete versions of the cover letter and questionnaire). Respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaire and to mail it back to the researcher at their earliest convenience.

The Survey.

The questionnaire mentioned above comprises the second method employed in this study. This method is called a 'one-shot case study' by Denzin (1989) and a self-administered questionnaire by Smith (1991). The main difference in this questionnaire is

that the sample was not random. Instead the respondents were the same respondents who participated in the in-depth interview (N=53). Unlike the in-depth interviews, the researcher was not present to ensure the completion of the questionnaire. Thus, a 100% return rate, while expected, was not achieved. It was expected because the interviewer gave the questionnaire to the interviewee at the conclusion of the interview, after rapport had been developed. The researcher was also present to reassure the respondent that the survey would not take long to complete and to emphasize the importance of the survey to the overall study. Despite these measures, only 36 respondents returned completed surveys (a response rate of 67.9%). Once this was determined, a mailing was sent to those respondents who had not returned their questionnaires (this mailing included the original cover letter and an additional copy of the questionnaire - see Appendix C), but no surveys were returned in response to this mailing. For the legislators, the reason for the lack of return might have been the timing of the mailing. The mailing occurred in the spring, during the legislative session.

<u>Description of the Sample</u>

The 53 respondents comprising the in-depth interviews are characterized by two demographic variables, which were either elicited or observed during the course of the interview (length of service in the respondent's occupation and sex). The in-depth interviews did not elicit specific demographic characteristics because it was expected that this would be covered in the questionnaire that followed each interview and those questions interfered with the flow of the interviews. The lack of response to the questionnaire creates a problem in that the demographic information is incomplete. The questionnaires, however, addressed several demographic variables including: sex,

race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, level of education, party affiliation (for legislators), marital status, and length of service in either the legislature or DHS.

For the in-depth interviews, just over half of the respondents were female (53% or n=28) with an average length of service in either the legislature or DHS of 13 years (see Table 3 below). Of the legislators interviewed, the majority (81%) was male. Overall, the legislators reported an average length of service to the state of 7.3 years. The administrators were nearly evenly divided between male (48%) and female (52%) and had an average length of service to the agency of 20.25 years. The occupations of the administrators ranged from an assistant to an area administrator to supervisors of specific DHS programs. In addition, four interviews within this subgroup were conducted for information-gathering purposes only. These interviews were with DHS employees in the state offices. Unlike the administrators, the social workers were overwhelmingly female (87%) and reported an average of 11 years of service. This last number is distorted because four of the social workers did not indicate how long they had worked for the agency and the progress of the interview precluded the question (in other words, the interview was so engrossing, the interviewer forgot to ask that question.).

As can be inferred from Table 4, the survey sample was fairly evenly split between males (52.8%) and females (47.2%), predominantly white (80.6%), Protestant (94.4% when condensing all of the Protestant subcategories and looking at the responses in the Other category), well-educated (88.9% having at least bachelors degree and over a third having advanced degrees), and overwhelmingly married (88.9%). In addition, the average length of service for legislators was 9 and a half years and the average length of service for Agency employees was approximately 13 years.

Table 3
Characteristics of the In-depth Interview Respondents

	Overall	Legislators	Administrators	Social Workers
Overall				
Male	19	10	7	8
Female	17	3	9	2
Length of Service (in years)	12.25	9.5	16.85	9.6
Race/Ethnicity				
Native American	1	0	1	0
Black	3	0	3	0
Hispanic	1	0	0	1
Asian-American	1	0	0	1
White	29	12	9	8
Other	2	1	0	1
Educational Attainment				
Some College	4	3	1	0
Bachelors Degree	19	4	6	9
Graduate Degree***	13	6	6	1
Religious Affiliation				
Catholic	2	1	0	1
Baptist	7	3	3	1
Episcopalian	3	2	1	
Methodist	4	2	1	1
Presbyterian	3	0	2	1
Lutheran	3	1	1	1
Other	12	3	4	5
Marital Status				
Single	2	1	1	0
Married	32	11	12	9
Divorced	2	1	0	1
Political Affiliation				
Republican	4	4	na	na
Democrat	9	9	na	na

* This group also includes a representative of the executive office.
** This group includes members of the Human Services Committee
***Includes Juris Doctor

Table 4
Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Survey Sample
(in frequency and percent)

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex		
Male	17	7
Female	19	6
Average Length of Service	n/a	11.56
(in years)		
Legislature	n/a	9.15
DHS	n/a	13.7
Race/Ethnicity		
Native American	1	2.8
Black	3	8.3
Hispanic	1	2.8
Asian-American	0	0
White	29	80.6
Other	1	2.8
Refused	1	2.8
Level of Education		
Some College	4	11.1
Bachelors Degree	19	52.8
Graduate Degree***	13	36.1
Religious Affiliation		
Catholic	2	5.6
Baptist	8	22.2
Episcopalian	3	8.3
Methodist	4	11.1
Presbyterian	3	8.3
Lutheran	3	8.3
Other	12	33.3
Refused	1	2.8
Marital Status		
Single, never married	2	5.6
Married	32	88.9
Divorced	2	5.6

Table 4 *continued from previous page*

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Political Affiliation (legislators only*)		
Republican	4	35.7
Democrat	9	64.3
Occupation**		
Representative	6	16.7
Senator	6	16.7
Commission	3	8.3
Administrator	10	27.8
Social Worker	10	27.8
Executive Branch representative	1	13

* This group also includes a representative of the executive office.
** This group includes members of the Human Services Committee
***Includes the degree of Juris Doctor

Variable Conceptualization and Operationalization

The main focus of the study is on the process of welfare reform policy development and implementation in Oklahoma. The time period under consideration is from 1995 to December 1997. This time period is chosen because it marks the first state welfare reform bill in the 1990s (HB 1573). Because of the potential for a large number of programs being affected by HB 1573, this study will focus primarily on the TANF program, including Food Stamps, Medicaid, and Vocational Rehabilitation when necessary.

The process of policy development and implementation was ascertained using the in-depth interviews. In this study, the interest falls heavily on the side of the respondents' perceptions of the process. The actual mechanics of the process emerged during the course of the interviews. These mechanics, however, did not emerge in interviews with the original sample, rather, side comments from respondents led to interviews that were originally unintended, but which proved quite informative.

In addition to the process of policy development and implementation, the in-depth interviews also explored the background expectancies of the respondents. As mentioned earlier, this was done because policy does not emerge in a vacuum. Instead, as Skocpol (1992) has acknowledged, policies emerge from a combination of experience, values, and beliefs; this makes up the normative conditions of Parsons and the structural and negotiated contexts of Strauss. These background understandings revolve around the participant's involvement in welfare reform. Questions include 1) the respondent's perception of their role in the process, 2) the respondent's opinion of welfare, 3) the changes that he or she would like to see in the state regarding welfare, 4) the future of

welfare in the state, 5) how the respondent defines success with regards to welfare reform, and, 6) the respondent's perceptions of the best programs related to welfare reform. When the interview allowed, respondents were also asked to share their personal experiences with poverty in order to infer personal motivation (see Appendix B for the exact wording and appropriate targets of the in-depth interview questions).

In addition to the questions asked in the in-depth interviews, the survey further addressed issues designed to illuminate the background beliefs and assumptions of the respondents regarding welfare and poverty. These issues include respondents' beliefs and attitudes about poverty and welfare, respondents' support for various welfare programs, and the situations in which they would support welfare (based in the conservative assumption that welfare is a negative thing) (see Appendix D for the complete questionnaire).

The beliefs of the respondents regarding reasons for poverty were determined using Feagin's (1975) Reasons for Poverty Scale and Attitudes toward Welfare (see Appendix D, Sections D and E of the questionnaire). The former consists of eleven items that break down into individualistic factors (items 1, 2, and 4), structural factors (items 6 through 10), and fatalistic factors (items 3, 5, and 11). The Attitudes Toward Welfare Scale (the latter scale) consists of seven items that show whether the respondents support the traditional position critical of welfare (agreement with items 1, 2, 3, and 7 and disagreement with items 4 through 6).

Respondents' support for welfare programs was determined using McClosky, Hoffman, and O'Hara's Ratio of Support Index (1960). This scale comes from McClosky et al.'s section on "Equalitarian and Human Welfare" (see Appendix D,

Section B of the questionnaire). The original scale contained the following items:

Federal Aid to Education, Slum Clearance and Public Housing, and Immigration into the

US. This scale was revised to bring it into congruence with the current human services

situation. To revise the scale the second item was reduced to 'Public Housing.' In

addition, the fourth and fifth items were removed and replaced with Temporary

Assistance to Needy Families, Family Support Services, Food Stamps, Medicare, Child

Welfare, Minimum Wages, and Employment Training Programs.

The final scale, the Situational Support for Welfare scale, was developed using

Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralization theory as a framework (see Appendix D, Section

F). The ten items follow the ten neutralizations developed for that theory (the first five by

Sykes and Matza, the last five by Klockars [1974], Minor [1981], and Coleman [1985]).

However, because welfare is not illegal, neutralization theory does not apply directly,

instead, values replace attitudes toward behavior. The implication is that if the

respondents accept the initial statement, welfare is not a good system for providing for

the poor, then the scale items will illustrate those exceptions they are willing to make. As

Dodder and Hughes (1987) point out "accepting both the norm and the situational

exceptions to it is the essence of neutralization theory" (p. 74). This study uses this basic

idea and applies it to values and beliefs.

The rationale behind the use of this scale is that, if welfare is seen as an

essentially negative situation (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4), its existence must be

explainable in some way. This scale offers one way of explaining the existence of

welfare. Of course, the reasoning behind viewing welfare as a negative must also be

elaborated. In a 1998 DHS report, the state is touted as being second only to Wisconsin

in its success in welfare reform (DHS: <u>Welfare Reform: The untold story</u>, online). Welfare reform itself is predicated on the belief that the current system is malfunctioning because people tend to stay on it for years and years. This point is contradicted by information from Bane and Ellwood (1994) who suggest that, our perceptions of the number of people on welfare is a temporal phenomenon. The *majority* of welfare recipients stay on welfare for 2 years or less, but *at any given moment*, the majority of people on welfare have been on it for 10 or more years. However, as this study suggests, perceptions are important and the perception is that welfare creates dependency. Another indicator of the negative view of welfare can be found in a speech given by President Clinton in August 1996. In his speech, he referred to people in the audience who had "worked their way from welfare to independence" and whom he was "honored" to have present. The President also referred to a remark made by a woman regarding the best thing about being off welfare. The woman's response was that her son could now tell people where his mother worked. There is also an apparent stigma associated with being on welfare – people are trapped in it – exiled "from the entire community of work that gives structure to our lives" (speech, Clinton, 1996:2). The speech addresses a common perception, the dignity of work and the responsibility of America's citizens. Thus, it can be surmised that welfare is seen as a negative, albeit sometimes necessary, program. Finally, the demographic information requested in section A of the questionnaire was used to round out the profile. These questions were generic demographic questions discussed in the description of the sample (see Appendix D, section A of the questionnaire).

Sampling and Elite Populations

This study uses purposive sampling for the in-depth interviews. Purposive sampling, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), refers to selecting respondents based on their knowledge of and influence on the phenomenon of study. Purposive sampling is related to interviewing elites (i.e. in this study, the legislators and high-level agency administrators). According to Hertz and Imber (1995), elites are rarely studied because they are "by their very nature difficult to penetrate" (p. viii). Dexter (1970) defines an elite interview as the following:

> An interview with <u>any</u> interviewee...who...is given special, nonstandardized treatment. By special, nonstandardized treatment I mean
> 1. stressing the interviewee's definition of the situation,
> 2. encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation,
> 3. letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent...his notions of what he regards as relevant, instead of relying upon the investigator's notions of relevance" (p. 5).

Hertz and Imber (1995) suggest that the best studies of elites involve multiple methods combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques, something that this study does. They suggest that community and political elites are the most commonly researched group in part because of their visibility. In addition, they deal with things that researchers produce (polls, surveys) so that a certain degree of compatibility exists.

Measurement Validity and Reliability

Denzin (1989) suggests six criteria for successful interviewing. Each is addressed with respect to the method used. First, unstructured interviews are better suited to *convey meaning* because the questions can be reworded. In unstructured interviews, it is the job

of the interviewer to maintain the *respondent's interest* and motivate a reply. Interviewer

bias is a potential problem in in-depth interviews and one of which the researcher was

aware. Denzin's fourth and fifth criteria relate to construct validity and were addressed

with the use of "experts" (namely committee members and a professor in political

science). The sixth criterion, fabrication, relates to the provision of false information by

the respondent. The unstructured interview allows questions to check information. In

part, the validity of the respondents was verified by interviewing legislators and DHS

workers from their districts. Specifically, questions relating to contact between

legislators and DHS were used to test the validity of some of the respondents. Denzin

(1989) refers to that fact that, because interviews are freely entered into, there is a certain

high-level understanding that the information given will be true. There are tensions,

however, that emerge during the interview with regards to sensitive or personal questions

or questions that arouse some undesired thought or emotion. While these tensions cannot

be controlled for, they were anticipated by the researcher. Welfare and poverty have the

potential to arouse strong feelings, but the researcher attempted to maintain a professional

front in the face of strong reactions. The intent was not to depersonalize the issues, but

rather to provide a calm receptor for the responses. In addition, Denzin (1989) suggests

that the roles of the interviewer and interviewee may interfere in the process. In this

study, the interviewer was constantly aware of the time imposition on the respondents

and in some cases of the social position of the respondents. As such, the researcher was

conscious to maintain a professional demeanor throughout the interviews.

Ostrander offers the following suggestions for studying elites (in Hertz & Imber,

1995). First, she suggests that contacts and networks may be as important as planning.

Second, she stresses the importance of the order of the interviews, suggesting that there is often a correct person to start with. Next she points to the importance of background work and knowledge of the issues. Her experience suggests that elites will try to test you and will also ask "what you expect to gain from the research as well as what you intend to give back to them" (p. 149). She advocates a straightforward approach as essential to establishing and maintaining the rapport essential to the research process. Especially helpful is Ostrander's advice regarding the status differences of the interviewer and interviewee and the control of the interview. She suggests making clear the goals and conditions of the research and early on establishing the researcher's control over the process. Deference and compromise may be necessary, but not to the detriment of the research.

Galliher (1983) discusses the way that elites will often volunteer damning information in interviews because they are so certain that they are right. He also discusses the paucity of hostility and refusals that he experienced in his own interviews with political and community elites. Willing to use duplicity if necessary, he never found it so. Finally, Galliher offers important advice on self-presentation during the interviews. Dressing as similarly as possible to the 'style' of your respondents is likely to affect the rapport established and the refusal rate. He was so successful in his interviews with Mormons that he received no refusals and was asked to join the church.

The survey consists primarily of existing scales, which have been examined for validity and reliability. The scales used by Feagin (1975) demonstrate validity in their item-to-item associations reported by Feagin as follows: individualistic factors +0.43 to +0.59; and structural factors + 0.08 to +0.38. Their use in subsequent research also

indicates the extent to which it measures what it purports to measure. While McClosky et al (1960) do not directly address the face validity of their instrument they do address the content validity. They suggest that the limitations of their study led to a reduction in the facets of the concept that could be studied. The same could be said for the current study, although every attempt was made to include the pertinent and timely issues. The Situational Ethics Exceptions scale was developed by the research under the direction of an advisor. This scale was revised and modified until it reflected the desired meanings.

The issue of reliability relates to the probability that the interviews and questionnaire would yield the same results at a different point in time. The likelihood of getting the same information regarding attitudes and beliefs about poverty and welfare is low because the system is in flux. Future questioning could reveal an increase in the respondent's knowledge of those questions.

This latter point offers another issue with reliability. There is the possibility, albeit slight because of purposive nature of the sample that the respondents would not know about the issues being addressed. In the survey, this was partially accounted for by Section C and the in-depth interviews. The researcher was available to gauge the knowledge of the respondents. Reliability issues related to coding of the interview data were avoided through the use of a single coder, the researcher. While this does not mean that the coding was valid, it does avoid the problem of differing interpretations.

Generalizability

Results from this study are not intended to be generalizable beyond the samples under study. This research is focused on Oklahoma and the results may not be accurately extended beyond the state. Other issues related to generalizability include the presence of

the interviewer and the potential influence on the findings, the analysis of the interviewer, and the purposive sampling. Additionally, the temporal nature of the subject matter impacts the level of generalizability. Specifically, welfare reform was officially implemented in this state in 1996, although it began years earlier with waivers. Added to this is the fact that in less than three years, some welfare recipients will no longer be eligible for services and the success or fallout of that may dramatically alter both the agency and perceptions of those associated with human services.

Limitations

Findings made in this study must be qualified in light of several limitations relevant to the current methods utilized. Demming (1944) offers a list of thirteen sources of error in survey research (as cited in Denzin, 1989). Those that apply are discussed here. The first, variability in responses, will be accounted for with the use of political party. Errors related to the questionnaire form are also a concern. It was anticipated that the in-depth interviews corrected for some of that error. The issue of non-response was a concern, and apparently rightly so. It was realized that the respondents, both legislators and human service respondents, had busy schedules and were frequently asked to participate in research. Thus, the timing of the questionnaires, after the in-depth interviews, was intended to mitigate any tendency to avoid responding to the questionnaire. The non-response rate of 32.1% might indicate significant differences between those who completed the questionnaire and those who did not. Even though the non-respondents were interviewed, the views that were expressed in the questionnaires were not directly addressed in the in-depth interviews.

In addition to the above-mentioned limitations, Singleton et al. (1988) point to difficulties in determining cause and effect, eliminating alternative explanations, the lack of flexibility of surveys, and the impact of reported rather than observed behavior. Because policy is not the direct focus of this study, the potential problems of cause and effect are minimized. The intent of the study is to present a profile of a process. The lack of flexibility inherent in surveys is mitigated somewhat by the use of in-depth interviews.

Another limitation relates to surveying public opinion about the poor and welfare. Papadakis (1992) suggests that surveys may disguise lack of knowledge about the issue under question; thus, bringing into question the validity of the responses. In addition, ignoring the context in which the opinions are formed also leads to questionable results. The flexibility of the in-depth interviews controlled much of the knowledge factor as well as provided a context for the attitudes displayed. Papadakis also points to questions addressing more than one issue (i.e. poverty and inequality). These questions can confound results and leave the researcher with little solid information. The questions in this study were designed to address only one issue at a time and the in-depth interviews provided a forum for clarification when necessary.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this study investigates the process of policy development and implementation in Oklahoma with regards to the specific policies of welfare. The intent, as has been shown, is not only to arrive at an understanding of this process, but also to gain a greater understanding of the attitudes of the participants within the process. The latter is crucial because it is important to understand the location of individuals (legislators, Commission members, administrators and social workers) in a chain of

decision-making that ultimately affects a group of individuals (welfare recipients) who typically have very little voice in the making of policies that directly influence them. Thus, the interest is in the movement of decisions from those far-removed from the poor to those that work directly with them on a day-to-day basis. The hope is that this study will identify paths of information that could be enhanced to better serve those whom the policies are originally intended to serve, assuming that this is the case.

CHAPTER SIX

Data Analysis and Results

The following section presents the results of the data collection as they pertain to the research questions and hypotheses discussed in the previous section. Given that the primary method of data collection was the in-depth interview, for each research question, the appropriate interview questions are discussed with summaries of the responses given of each subgroup of interview respondents (legislators, DHS administrators, DHS social workers and Commission members). In addition, the results include information that further fleshes out the context within which welfare reform in Oklahoma is occurring. This information came from a few interviews that were conducted specifically for the purpose of information gathering. These interviews were counted in the total number of interviews obtained, but the respondents were not asked all of the same questions as the other respondents. Much of the information obtained from these respondents provides the basis for the discussion that precedes the presentation of the research question results. This discussion provides added depth to the context presented in Chapter Four.

Fleshing Out the Context

Perceptions of Welfare and Workers' Power

Unrelated to any specific research question, but directly relevant to the study is information gained regarding the context in which welfare reform is occurring in Oklahoma. Previously discussed in Chapter Four, the information presented here further details the environment and history preceding the current movements in welfare reform.

A Senator, referring to welfare reform in particular and government in general said, "We all get kind of vested in the situation as it is...But, as we try to change and redesign the system—and it's a process—it is impossible for us to eradicate and redesign a system completely so we fiddle around the edges." A social worker related a similar comment saying, "They (long-term employees) have disengaged from it. When you make the decision to stay here for a long time, you have to accept the agency and understand it." A colleague in the office concurred and said, "It's almost like they're caught in it." They had started out the interview talking about Quality Oklahoma, a quality management program implemented at DHS. "We're supposed to practice 'Quality Oklahoma' which is based on that theory that the people who are actually doing the work know best what is to be done. I don't think that that is the way it is working. The legislators wrote the policy and the state was in a hurry to be out front in implementing it. It feels like we're throwing the baby out with the bath water." A colleague added, "Somehow it (Quality Oklahoma) got lost. The people at the top are not going to give up their power." A field liaison both agreed and disagreed and said, "Communication issues are such a big deal. It's not done on purpose; people don't leave others out of the loop intentionally. That's where all of our flaws come from." Yet, he added later, "I think that things have gotten dramatically better in our agency. We've gone from hierarchical to more participative." Finally, a county director in a rural county suggested that the administration of DHS has been increasingly turning to the field for input. He indicated that there is a movement to allow more local decision-making about funding, but added that DHS is a "way, way, way, long way from having real input. The organization is just not there. It is still in the mode where the federal government passes

laws and they still have to interpret federal expectations." It appears that those near the top of the hierarchy feel that DHS is becoming more flexible in its management and communication styles. Many of those at the bottom, even though they acknowledge the changes, do not feel that they are working properly yet.

Related to the power of those at the bottom, an employee in the state offices of DHS stated, "You will find out that administrators and social workers have little impact on the legislative process." This same person suggested that the real movers and shakers were on the appropriations subcommittees in the House and the Senate. She felt that no state agency got the attention that it needed in those subcommittees. Finally, this same respondent suggested that welfare was not a favored thing in Oklahoma, especially with the current Governor. This last sentiment was echoed many times throughout the interviews. There appeared to be a general feeling that the executive branch was not fully behind the efforts of human services. One representative, however, suggested that the Governor wanted to increase the co-payments in an extended Medicaid bill so that people who found jobs and got off welfare would not be jumping off a cliff.

Referring back to the perceptions of welfare in the state, one representative was more general in his assessment and said, "Historically, if it just says DHS, it sends up a red flag. A lot of people would just as soon kick it." These attitudes may be exacerbated by the publication of reports about welfare. For example, during the interviews, the researcher was given a copy of a report from the Office of State Finance Fiscal Staff (1995). This report offered a monthly breakdown of payments to vendors and welfare recipients. The total of the monthly payments was $1,536, computed for the year to equal $18,432. It was also reported the 42% of the state's employees do not make that much

money after taxes (excluding benefits). This profile is mentioned because it was available to all state employees and legislators. The information presented, while specifically stating that it should be interpreted carefully, offered a picture of welfare as a lucrative alternative to employment. Burton (1992) has countered the claim implicit in this report and has suggested that "the idea that all poor people receive practically every benefit available to them is unwarranted" (85). He cited pride, lack of knowledge about the programs or ineligibility (a primary focus of the state at that time) as support for his claim.

DHS and its History

Another aspect of this context involves the history of DHS. The director of DHS from 1951 to 1982 was Lloyd E. Rader. In 1936, a one-cent sales tax increase was dedicated to DHS. In 1937, it was increased to 2 cents (OK-DHS, September 1986). This dedicated sales tax was revoked by the legislature in 1987 (OK-DHS, January 1996a). However, during the time that he ran DHS, Rader, described by one respondent as man so powerful he could not even think out loud, used that tax to build an enormous agency. Several respondents suggested that the legislature could not touch DHS and that some legislators became so used to that situation, that many members still feel that DHS should be left alone. In the 1980s, however, the mood was different. The sales tax was revoked and the legislature began to dismantle DHS. The Children's Hospital and Juvenile Justice were taken from under the DHS umbrella. In addition, respondents have suggested that they expect Child Welfare to be separated from the agency in the future. Respondents have also suggested that these actions are a reaction to the years in which Rader reigned over DHS. It was suggested that every legislator owed him a favor and

that prior to 1982 (when Rader resigned), you could not work for DHS without a note from your legislator. In addition, a respondent who worked closely with Rader reported that every time there was a new Governor, Rader would walk across the street and offer to resign. His power was such that, until the 1980s, DHS had not presented a budget to the legislature. The attitude, according to one respondent, had been "here's the money Mr. Rader, spend it as you will." Rader and the history of DHS, however, are only one part of the story. There is also a committee that, in a sense, runs DHS - the Human Services Commission.

The Commission for Human Services

Information about the Commission for Human Services was obtained throughout the research process. What follows is a compilation of the information that was obtained. In 1936, the Oklahoma legislature created the Oklahoma Public Welfare Commission (Article 25 of the Oklahoma Constitution), now referred to as the Human Services Commission, or the Commission. Article 1 of the bylaws of the Oklahoma Commission for Human Services states that the purpose of the Commission is to "effectuate the Constitutional mandate" to provide relief to the needy and to those who cannot care for themselves (OK-DHS, September 1994). The Commission is a 9-member committee whose members serve 9-year terms. The purpose of the Commission is to approve all of the policy for DHS. The members are unpaid and receive only travel and Commission-related expenses, thus, as one respondent suggested, they tend to be wealthy. Every year, one of the members' terms expires and the Governor of Oklahoma is allowed to appoint a new member. The Commission is considered to be a part of the Executive Branch, but no single Governor is supposed to be able to gain a majority of appointees on the

Commission. According to several respondents, the current Governor had appointed six of the Commission members (before the research ended, the Governor was able to appoint a seventh member of the Commission due to the resignation of the chairperson of the Commission). The general feeling among respondents who referred to the Commission was that it was becoming a direct arm of the Governor.

The power of the Commission, according to two respondents, is potentially immense, but rarely fully utilized. The Commission meets monthly and votes on all policy affecting DHS. Thus, the Commission can shape the direction of the agency. The Commission also has the power to hire and fire the Director of DHS. In addition, the Commission reviews the organizational structure of DHS at least every three years and evaluates the director of DHS annually (OK-DHS, September 1994).

It was suggested by more than one respondent that the Commission, during the days of Rader, was a "rubber stamp" commission. They would hold the obligatory vote, always 'yes' and then have dinner. One respondent referred to this as Rader's preference for meeting over dinner. "We're going to make some big decisions, we're going to put some groceries on the table and sit a spell and think on it." The rationale for the 'yes' votes, according to two respondents, was that Rader already had everything taken care of. If he wanted something, he would find other people who needed things, get it to them and end up getting what he needed in the process. Similar to comments made about the director of DHS at the time of the study, respondents frequently said that Rader's word was his bond.

Recently, the Commission has undergone a few changes. First, the Governor has been able to gain a majority of the appointments on the Commission. Second, the

chairperson of the Commission resigned shortly after a vote cutting welfare benefits by 5 percent. While it is unclear that this is the sole reason for the resignation, respondents suggested that the chairperson wanted to let the Governor appoint a new chairperson, "one more in line with his way of thinking." As mentioned above, this gives the Governor seven members that he has appointed.

This information presents a picture of an agency with a past that still influences it today. In almost every interview with someone who had worked at DHS before 1982, Rader's name came up and the respondent was generally positive. He was well liked by his employees but not apparently by lawmakers. DHS was seen as an agency that had too much power and too much autonomy. Given the frequency of reference to Rader in the interviews, it is likely that his legacy continues to influence perceptions and actions today. In addition, the existence of the Commission, especially given the recent changes, presents an interesting feature in the policy-making process.

A Comment on the Legislative Process

An issue that arose during the interviews with the legislators and that bears mentioning here is the amount of legislation that lawmakers review over the course of a typical session. One Representative called it a "crisis" saying that over 2,000 bills had been introduced last session. He cast over 1200 votes in the last session and remarked that he often did not have time to even ask questions about the bills before it was time to vote. When asked about the welfare process he replied, "It operates in crisis...It is very difficult to be well-informed." While this information is apparent to anyone involved in or knowledgeable about the legislative process, it bears mentioning because it offers insight into the number of issues that legislators confront during the session. It became

apparent to the researcher that legislators rarely have the time to become fully informed about all of the issues presented to them. In a sense, they have to choose their battles.

A Comment on 'New' DHS programs

During the course of the interviews, respondents made references to programs that either had been implemented or were in process of being implemented. The two programs that bear mentioning are Model County and Flex Funds. According to DHS (OK-DHS, August 1995), Model County involves one-stop shopping for services, communication between agencies, improved access to and storage of information, and on-line policies and procedures. Model County is a test program that puts administrators and social workers on-line. One aspect of Model County involves social worker access to client information through relational databases. In addition, DHS envisions laptops, cellular phones, and other technology (OK-DHS, August 1995). To the respondents in this study, Model County means headaches and more work. A county director reported that the day Model County went on-line, the entire system crashed. In addition, several of the longer-term social workers felt that the training was inadequate. Despite these feelings, respondents had high hopes that Model County would work.

Several respondents also mentioned Flex Funds. No written information was found regarding this new program so the findings presented here come from the interviews. According to respondents, Flex Funds is a new program designed to help clients with problems not traditionally addressed by public human services. These problems include, but are not limited to dental and eye care, automotive repair, gas money, and interview clothing. Ideally, Flex Funds are supposed to help eliminate some of the barriers to employment. Respondents were enthusiastic about the program but

frustrated by the limitations imposed on it. These limitations seemed to include restrictions on the number of times a client could be helped by Flex Funds and the amount of money that could be spent. Respondents, while lauding the arrival of the program, felt that more was needed.

Assessment of the Research Questions and Hypotheses

An Assessment of Research Question #1

How do policies get from the legislature to the people that they address?

This question is supplemented by questions asking about the impact of various groups on the policy development and implementation process: the Federal Government, DHS administrators, and social workers. Several questions from the in-depth interviews were used to address this first research question. First, however, the results of interviews done specifically to target the process that policy goes through are presented.

There are several ways that policy can be created for DHS. First, the federal government can pass a law mandating certain actions in the states. Second, the state legislature can pass a bill. Third, the Human Services Commission can develop and approve policy. Finally, DHS can suggest policy. Regardless of the initiator of policy, the process is essentially the same.

The policy process could not be found in written form and practice would likely be different anyway. Thus, the information presented below was pieced together based on interviews with state office respondents and review of the Administrative Procedures Act. The policy process is as follows:

1. Policy is suggested by DHS or the Commission or mandated by federal legislation or a state bill.

2. Policy analysts at the state evaluate the policy and direct it toward the appropriate division or divisions within DHS.
3. The division/s write the policy and send it to the state office policy analysts.
4. The policy analysts then correct the wording, correct the conflicts and send it to the Commission.
5. If the Commission approves the policy, it then goes to the Governor.
6. If the Governor signs the policy, it goes to the state legislature
7. The legislature has the opportunity to disapprove it. If no action is taken, it is considered approved.
8. The policy is then published in the Oklahoma Register and the public is given an opportunity to comment.

Following this comment time, the policy is ready to be implemented. According to one respondent, the implementation procedure (the mechanics of implementation) is part of the policy-development process and goes out to the county offices along with the policy.

According to the Administrative Procedures Act, for all policies there are three types of policy or rule making: emergency, pre-emptive and permanent. This applies across the state to all agencies and is directed by the Administrative Procedures Act. Permanent rules are exactly that. They go through the entire process outlined above and when they take effect, they do not expire unless they are superceded by another rule. Emergency rules can be promulgated if the governing board of the agency (the Commission) deems that there is imminent peril or some other compelling reason that the policy has to go through. Funding is generally a reason to use an emergency rule. Under emergency rules, you do not have to get public comment or have the legislature's approval. Emergency rules, however, expire after one year. Pre-emptive rules, the final type of rule making, are the sole domain of DHS. They work like emergency rules in that they avoid public comment and legislative approval, but are different in that they are permanent. For the legislature to overturn a pre-emptive rule, there has to be a statute or joint resolution. "You can see what a powerful tool that is," stated one respondent.

"You're not only bypassing legislative oversight, but also avoiding public comment." According to this same respondent, and supported by another, the rationale for preemptive rules was that a great deal of what DHS does is mandated by the Federal Government and is generally tied to funding. According to one respondent, the preferred method of rule making for the lawmakers is permanent. This makes sense because it reduces the workload in the long run. But what frequently happens, according to two respondents, is that emergency rules are used and then superceded with permanent ones within the year. The rules or policies that are promulgated end up in the Secretary of State's office as part of the Code of the agency. Typically, policies that affect the internal workings of the agency and have no impact on private citizens do not go through the above-described policy process.

The actual process of policy-making is one thing, the perceptions of the process are quite another. This study, as discussed earlier, emerged from interviews with social workers that indicated that lawmakers did not understand the impact of the policies that they were making. These same social workers seemed to feel disconnected from the process of making the policy (Maril, 1999, forthcoming). Thus, it is not sufficient to merely outline the process of policy-making. It is also important to get at an understanding of the perceptions of the participants involved. Therefore, the respondents were asked several questions designed to elicit their understandings of the policy-making process and to identify the amount of interaction between the various participants (questions 7 and 8 for the legislators, questions 7 through 10 for the administrators, and questions 8 through 10 for the social workers).

<u>Responsibility</u>

One of the questions related to the amount of responsibility that legislators had with regards to DHS administrators and social workers. The general feeling amongst the legislators who responded was that their primary responsibility to DHS employees related to the fact that they were state employees or constituents. One legislator suggested that he could do better but that "...the longer you're here the harder it is to be where the rubber meets the road." The two exceptions to this were legislators who took a more personal interest in DHS, either because they had social workers as friends or were in close contact with them in the community. One legislator suggested that his job was to "create an environment so that they can do social work...and to listen. Since they are in the trenches, they have a better understanding of what works and what doesn't."

The administrators were also asked about their responsibilities regarding policy. They tended to focus on training and information dissemination. In general, the administrators saw themselves as the intermediary between the state and the social workers, the ones who were responsible for making sure that policies were implemented properly and deadlines were met.

<u>How Information Gets Out</u>

Administrators and social workers were asked to relate how they found out about changes in policy. The administrators most frequently mentioned quarterly training and email. Apparently, when big changes in policy occur, the state office schedules "quarterly" training which supervisors and county directors attend to get face-to-face information about the changes. When the policy changes are small, the preferred mode of communication appears to be email, followed by a hard copy of the changes. Other

methods of information transmission include word of mouth, the newspaper, or the county director. A county director reported that, ordinarily, "the legislative changes are put in a formal memo to the staff from a division administrator. There are situations where word comes down that the legislature is likely to vote on that would have a significant positive or negative impact. Then I'll call a meeting." A field liaison suggested that "the front line supervisor is the key to the whole process. They need to check cases to make sure that policy is being followed and communicate policy to the workers." DHS has also been implementing focus groups, according to two respondents, in which workers are invited to discuss proposed policy changes. Finally, the training frequently occurs prior to the Governor signing the policy. This is done so that the county offices will be ready to implement the policy changes immediately.

The social workers echoed the administrators' replies. Information is generally obtained through training conducted by the supervisors, or through email, followed by hard copies of the proposed policy. One social worker was in the enviable position of serving on several boards so that he found out about policy earlier than other workers. In general, however, the procedure appeared to be a very top-down approach.

The administrators were also asked how they disseminated the information to the social workers. The answers to this question duplicated the answers to the previous one. In general, the respondents suggested that they receive training and then train their workers at the county level. One county director said, "I take that information and process it in my own mind, determine who needs what and then feed it to my supervisors. Then I accept feedback up the chain of command." Another method of training used by the counties is SATTRN, the satellite training system based out of Norman. Many

supervisors mentioned using SATTRN, but one suggested that it was not as good for policy training as it was for general paperwork procedures training.

An additional point that arose in many of these interviews was the feelings about the changes that are occurring with welfare reform. Many of the respondents, in all of the subgroups, indicated approval of the changes that were occurring with welfare reform. Several indicated that it was "about time." At the same time, many of the administrators and social workers lamented the quickness with which they were expected to learn and implement the changes and the fact that with so many changes it was often difficult to keep up. These two comments went hand in hand. While wanting the changes, many respondents also wanted time to absorb them and not get conflicting information from week to week.

Implementation Decisions

The final question related to the actual information flow was asked primarily of social workers, although four administrators were also asked this question. Respondents were asked to identify who decides how policies are implemented. Social workers overwhelmingly pointed to the DHS state office. One respondent, however, distinguished between county specific policies and general state policies. He suggested that if a policy affected a county, then the county director would decide how to implement it, otherwise the state offices would. The administrators suggested that the decisions rested with the state, except for one who said that the supervisors determined policy implementation.

Contact

The final question related to this research question asked respondents how much contact they had with either DHS administrators or social workers (for the legislators) or with legislators (for the administrators and social workers). The impetus for this question was an interest in the amount of input that social workers and administrators have into the policy development process. The presence of input into the process would indicate a feedback connection between policy-makers and those who work with the policies on a daily basis. A high degree of input could indicate that the policy-makers are more in tune with the needs of welfare recipients than prior research with social service workers (Maril, 1999, forthcoming) would suggest.

Legislators: The legislators most frequently referred to contact relating to constituent calls. This meant that the legislator would call someone in DHS about a particular problem facing a constituent. Although many of the legislators indicated that they had "quite a bit" of contact with DHS, the majority of that contact seemed to be related to the above mentioned constituent calls or with state office employees. For example, one representative said, "I get numerous calls, the biggest number has related to DHS taking children away from their mothers. I get everything from cutoff of food stamps to constituents trying to get services delivered more rapidly." This same representative sees himself as part of the support team for social workers. Only four of the legislators indicated any substantive contact with the county offices. One senator suggested that she knew her county employees personally. Another had friends that were social workers. A third legislator reported having other legislators tell him what an active district he has. A fourth indicated that he had quite a bit of contact much of it, but not all,

related to constituent issues. This same legislator suggested that he used the constituent calls as part of his policy-making. It is important to note that the county offices of this legislator supported his claims, they mentioned, independently, that they see a great deal of him. Finally, one legislator, when responding to the need for contact, said, "We are an insensitive bureaucracy. It's too easy to get caught up in your problems and forget that sometimes people don't fit our categories."

Administrators: The administrators offered mixed responses to this same question. The majority indicated little contact with their legislators and when it occurred it was generally constituent-related. However, one respondent suggested that he received more than he wanted, particularly with regards to constituent calls. Other involvement occurred at state meetings or at legislative committee meetings. In addition, three administrators mentioned their contact with members of the Human Services Commission. Two administrators indicated that they had regular contact with their legislators with one of those respondents saying, "We're really lucky in this area. I probably talk to a local legislator about once every two weeks." Finally, one administrator added that they (workers in her division) had never been encouraged to get involved. "It used to be that you didn't offer an opinion on state time."

Human Services Commission: The Commission members all mentioned contact with legislators. While they were all personal friends with legislators, only two Commission respondents indicated that they contacted legislators as a lobbyist for DHS and this occurred only at the Director's request. These same two members mentioned contact with DHS employees in their area, but did not elaborate on the frequency of the contact.

<u>Social Workers</u>: Overall, the social workers indicated little, if any contact with legislators. Contact that occurred generally happened at meetings, regarding constituent calls (although those seemed to go through administrators more often than not) or through committee work. Three respondents mentioned that they encouraged clients to call their legislators and four respondents supported the administrator discussed above by saying that they do not contact legislators on state time. Another social worker suggested that she did not have much face-to-face contact, but she never hesitated to write or call legislators about upcoming bills.

One social worker expressed the wish that legislators would come and work with her "not just a week, but about six weeks. I think they'd have a whole different slant. I don't think they're aware of the attitudes that are out there, the work ethic and the obstacles that are out there. I don't think they realize the extent of alcohol and drug abuse."

Lack of time was the most frequently mentioned *reason* for the lack of contact on the part of the social workers. One social worker reported no contact with legislators, but acknowledged that "For the most part…those who do have contact are listening to us in the field…and they're talking to the legislators and I think they have a good (grasp) of what's going on." She further went on to say that sometimes the policies came back from the state office differently than anticipated and that they are interpreted differently by every county director.

The overall impression of the researcher with regards to this question is that contact between the participants is infrequent and when it occurs it is usually related to the fact that DHS employees were state employees or to constituents. Respondents from

all subgroups mentioned time as a factor in the lack of contact and given the observations made during the interviews, it is no surprise that contact is generally minimal.

There is, however, a system in place that allows social workers and administrators to have input in policy decisions. During one interview, it was discovered that the Legislative Liaison for DHS sends out a request to the counties for desired changes. Ideally, this is the opportunity for DHS employees to voice opinions and offer suggestions. This input is then summarized and used to propose legislation to lawmakers. How often social workers and administrators take advantage of this opportunity is unknown although several respondents mentioned getting proposed policy and having the option to comment. Each time a respondent mentioned this, though, he or she followed the comment with a disclaimer about not having enough time.

<u>An Assessment of Research Question #2</u>

What are the roles of the various actors in this system according to their own perceptions?

This was generally the first question asked of each respondent (although not every respondent answered it). Their answers are presented according to the subgroup to which they belong.

<u>Legislators</u>: Of the 15 legislators who responded six of them specifically mentioned policy-making as their role or as part of their role. Two of the respondents were more focussed on the funding of DHS programs. For example, one Senator suggested that his role was to "make certain that the money we spend are efficiently delivered to both the recipients of the services and the providers." He also suggested that his secondary role was "to figure out how we can assist the people who need the welfare

services assist themselves so they will no longer need the services." Other respondents were more focussed on specific roles pertaining to goals for welfare. One Representative suggested that he was a "watchdog" for the agency (DHS). A Senator felt that her role was "to make sure that everybody - the private sector and the government sector realize that they each have a responsibility and their own role to play in welfare reform. We need to do anything to push that." Other legislators were more interested in changing the system or helping a specific group of people. For example, one Representative wanted to "change the direction of welfare" and get everyone to the same starting line, not the same finish line, while a Senator saw himself as someone who could "make a tremendous impact on children in the system." Finally, one Representative saw himself as someone who "carries the agency's (DHS) water." Only one legislator interviewed seemed to want to end welfare. The others expressed that they felt it was needed, but required change. The lone dissenter felt that his role was to "defend the state and roll it back."

Administrators: Fourteen of the 16 administrators responded to this question. Not surprisingly, their responses were more related to the actual mechanics of human services than the legislators. The supervisors were more likely to feel that their roles involved training (although not all felt this way - one said that her job was to promote case management), whereas the county directors tended to suggest that their roles involved staff support, resource management, proper policy implementation, and county public relations. Other responses included getting clients into the workforce (from a senior administrator in a small county), ensuring accuracy and timeliness (from a senior supervisor), and acting as a go-between (from a field liaison).

Human Services Commission: The Human Services Commission is in a unique position. As discussed earlier, they are part of the executive branch of government, but they are also the governing body of DHS. The Commission member respondents felt that their roles involved oversight. One member went so far as to say that the Commission should be "supportive of the staff and the Director" and "recognize the expertise of the staff and barring some real serious problems of incompetence, we should always do what the staff recommends."

Social Workers: Social workers, the field link between policy and those on welfare, responded as expected. Specifically, with the exception of one respondent, all of the social workers discussed their roles in terms of helping their clients. They talked about helping clients reach self-sufficiency. One social worker replied that her "whole push is to get people jobs. If they (clients) don't cooperate, then I expect to change that." Another talked about getting clients education, while another social worker said that she was "kind of like a mentor and a coach." The one social worker that did not follow this trend simply stated that her role was "to implement policy in as fair a way as I possibly can and be polite and fair to clients in as stable a way as possible."

An Assessment of Research Question #3

What are the participants' overall views of welfare?

This research question addresses the background information of the respondents. Questions 2 through 5 from the in-depth interviews.

Opinion of Welfare

Legislators: It was expected that the legislators would have a much lower opinion of welfare than would the administrators and social workers. Overall, however,

legislators viewed welfare as a necessity, a temporary thing, but a necessity nonetheless. Only one legislator, a representative, indicated that welfare programs should be eliminated, because in his view, "the welfare state has failed." Ten of the 12 legislators recognized the problems (abuses, disincentives, stigma, and lack of work requirements) associated with welfare, but still regarded it as a necessary thing. Two legislators, a senator and a representative, suggested that most people did not understand what welfare in Oklahoma really was. From a representative, "The truth is that you more accurately describe welfare as Medicaid because that is the biggest chunk. While most people don't think of that as welfare, that is where most of the money goes." A senator said, "I don't consider Medicaid welfare. I consider welfare an investment in society when it's properly spent and properly used which is about ninety percent of the time." Another senator concurred adding, "I think welfare is a very important and valuable service for people when they need it." This same senator suggested that the problems with welfare centered around the incentives to stay on the program (Medicaid, Food Stamps, and cash assistance).

In addition to the expressed belief that welfare is a necessary, but temporary program, legislators also focused on specific groups of people that need help. For one senator, children and the elderly were the main targets, for another, the sick and disabled. The latter senator also expressed a desire for more education and training programs, saying, "people want to contribute, want to be self-supporting. Everybody has a role to play and a contribution to make." He also suggested that we "are talking about a culture of poverty that we've created." In a different vein, a representative said, "I believe that not everyone was born on an equal playing field. Education is needed to level it out."

Finally, one senator echoed the rhetoric of the day saying that we need a "hand-up not a hand-out" and "opportunities not guarantees." His focus differed from the others though in that he felt that the infrastructure needed to be fixed (roads, buildings, etc.). He also looked to education and apprenticeships as vital to success, recognizing that the cost might be high over the short-term, but in the long-term "moving people to opportunity is the way to go."

With regards to everyone wanting to work, this sentiment arose again and again throughout the interviews. In responses to many questions, respondents stated that they believed that people wanted to work and be productive, but that they got stuck in welfare.

Administrators: Change seemed to be the dominant theme in the administrators' responses to this question. They focused on the changes that are occurring and most administrators expressed approval. When an administrator disapproved of welfare, it was related to either a specific aspect of the program (Model County) or the high caseloads. The latter was a common complaint throughout the interviews. Apparently there was a movement to making some county workers generic, which increased their caseloads. This was combined with a statewide decrease in clerical staff further exacerbating the problems and combining to give some workers caseloads of over 100 clients.

The praise of welfare reform related to the increased responsibility placed on the recipients. One administrator suggested that it was improving recipients' self-esteem. Another liked the new tools, like Flex Funds, that were available to help clients. Finally, an Integrated Family Services specialist spoke highly of the community partnerships that were occurring with welfare reform.

Criticisms leveled at the programs included not enough attention to children's needs, the political nature of welfare reform, and the potential for problems with daycare. A county director also expressed concern about the movement toward privatization and a training supervisor suggested "as a means of social reform (welfare) is pretty awful." Concerns also focused on the potential problems with the hard core cases, those clients who will be the most difficult to place in work situations. One county director acknowledged these problems but added "not everyone can help themselves at any given time, but some people we need to nail to the wall. Everyone can be turned around."

Human Services Commission: Members of the Commission agreed that welfare reform was necessary, one going so far as to say that it was "way overdue." They also all acknowledged that there are likely to be further problems in the future. One member pointed to daycare and Medicaid, another pointed to the hard core clients. The third suggested that welfare reform was not done altruistically, but to reduce crime and provide a "lower workforce."

Social Workers: While many of the social workers appeared to like welfare reform, their responses focused more on specific issues within it. One worker suggested that "the new system allows us to be creative and put families in a position to take control and be in a better position." Another social worker felt that "with the ETE (education, training, and employment) aspect being so emphasized, we may actually have to be out on the job with our clients." She also mentioned problems with transportation (being in a rural county) and the problem clients faced trying to find a SoonerCare doctor. Other social workers suggested that welfare needed some minor adjustments. "The way it is set up it's not set up to keep families together." A social worker from a more central rural

county said, "I see it certainly as a thrust for self-sufficiency that needed to occur. You need to get away from generations growing up on welfare. We may need to start with K through 12. We're looking at people with few to no skills."

Many of the social workers also agreed that welfare should be temporary, but stressed that some people were never going to get off of welfare. "The Lord said we're always going to have the poor with us. Since we don't have as many charitable churches—we do have some—somebody has to help them (a social worker in a rural county in the northwest part of the state)." A social worker on the other side of the state concurred saying, "I think it's definitely needed. I think there's a lot of times when no one has control over his or her circumstances and anyone can be wiped out. But I don't like to see it long-term." A social worker in an urban center pointed out "I think where we spend the most money is in medical, daycare and food stamps. When she goes to work and we close the case, we are only closing $238 or so. This is a misrepresentation to say that the rolls are down, because all we've done is shift her from one area to another. We are still providing services. The ideal is that we can get her in a stable job with benefits eventually."

The Future of Welfare:

Legislators: In general, legislators appear to feel that the future is bright for welfare in Oklahoma. Most felt that we are moving in the right direction. A representative said, "I'm comfortable that we say we're moving from welfare to work." He also recognized that other issues must be addressed saying, "If we say we're moving people from welfare to work, we'll have to recognize child care needs, health care needs, and transportation needs." Three other legislators addressed these same issues with one

senator adding "training, birth control, education, child support, and poor schools."

Another senator felt that the state was where it was supposed to be, "job training." He added, "Realistically, some people are not capable of being trained, but most are. You've got that cycle from generation to generation that needs to be broken and that's where job training comes in." A representative indicated that he was happy with the situation saying, "We've had almost a 180-degree shift in the direction of what the agency is. Instead of being reactive, we're being proactive—what are *you* going to do now, how are *you* going to get off this?"

Three legislators recognized the economy as one of the reasons for the success in reducing caseloads. One senator said, "I dream of a good public assistance program. For people who aren't ready to go into work, there should be reasonable cash assistance, Food Stamps, Medicaid, including training and education. It would correlate with what happens in the market and would also correspond and work directly hand in hand with the private sector who'd identify fields and be willing to train. These individuals would continue to get Medicaid, housing and nutrition services. And when that person was ready and that readiness was determined by the time limit, not the system that says people are never ready (they would go off welfare)." A representative said, "I hope to see a success. We're just starting it…with the economy doing well…we're continuing with more job training. Good things are in place now, but we won't know until more time has passed. If we have an economic downturn, we could be in trouble again because there might not be jobs out there." Finally, a senator suggested that what we needed to do was get everyone working and that "with full employment, we could do that." He saw welfare as being something that should be used as a "fall back for hard times."

Other responses included references to the Governor and the impact of welfare reform on children. Legislators suggested that the direction of welfare reform in Oklahoma depended on the Governor. One legislator was afraid that the welfare population would shift to Corrections, while another was afraid that the Governor would fight increases in spending for welfare programs and this would hurt poor children. A third legislator focused his attention on the specific programs under welfare reform.

> "What I envision in welfare reform is some stability in these women's lives. For example, health care for one year after they get off (TANF). We've got to have health care, daycare, transportation and training. Make the social workers closer to a job coach. Schools have got to get serious about these girls. We may have to look at alternative schools and daycare in schools (referring to teen mothers). A related issue is the early brain development of kids. On average, a white-collar worker says 3000 words to their children a day. A blue-collar worker says 2000 words to their children a day and a welfare parent says 800 words to their children per day. So we know that early childhood training is essential. We seriously need to upgrade our standards for these children. That's an educational matter, not just a welfare one...You want to talk about getting people off welfare. You'll have to spend a whole lot of money."

Administrators: The majority of administrators hoped that the future of welfare reform involved changes to more and better programs, more clients working leading to greater self-sufficiency, more emphasis on case management and a more preventative focus in the programs. A field liaison said, "We're seeing some really exciting changes in social services. Accountability is not just on clients, but also for us—outcomes are important. I'm trying to stress to our workers that this is the first time the worker can do a client a disservice by not doing anything—by just sending checks and Food Stamps. Every time they meet with a client, they need to make them aware, to remind them about the 60 months." A supervisor reported, "I think we're headed in a positive direction right now. I think I may be working myself out of a job or at least this job. Hopefully, there will be fewer people on the welfare rolls." She also points out, however, that if there is

not a move away from minimum wage jobs to jobs with benefits then they (DHS) will still be needed. Many administrators focused on the need for a continued emphasis on training. For example, a senior supervisor in a rural county said, "We have to stay nose to nose with our clients. To me it is a lack of resources in a county when they can work the system." Other issues addressed by administrators included making Flex Funds even more flexible and changing Food Stamps to include work requirements and training.

Privatization was a concern for some of the administrators. A county director said, "At DHS, we're about to enter into an agreement about contracts with private agencies to do TANF case management. We think we can do the best job, but the Governor doesn't." She went on to suggest that private case management would be a profit-making enterprise and intimated that this did not seem right. A training supervisor saw the programs going to a focus on the bottom line, but was not convinced that DHS would be privatized.

Overcoming barriers was a theme for some of the administrators. A senior supervisor felt, "We need to be available for people in the short-term and help them overcome barriers…We have several programs that focus on life skills." An area assistant referred to substance abuse, a topic that came up throughout the interviews in a variety of questions. He also talked about giving children skills and working on their self-esteem.

Social Workers: Most of the social workers focused on tightening up or improving existing programs. One social worker even said, "I think our government is afraid of denying someone who really needs it so they allow a lot of loopholes." Other workers focused on daycare for disabled children, medical care for two-income families

and discretionary money for short-term education and training. A social worker in a rural area saw a need for more long-term programs and said, "Hopefully, it will be more like Wisconsin. If you are going to draw benefits, then you have to work for it. After five years, you can continue to get Food Stamps, medical and daycare." A worker in a small rural office wanted the country to be behind what we want welfare to be. "We need to spend money now to get them off. The attitude that we've taught is 'I exist, you owe me.' " Another worker desired more community responsibility and suggested that retired people act as job coaches or mentors. "The community sometimes sees welfare clients as like having convicts in the neighborhood. But it's *our* problem."

Concerns about the future of welfare included a fear of privatization and the inability of clients to succeed. One social worker said, "I do think our job as social workers is making everyone as responsible as they can be. One of my concerns, what I see is that they're talking about contracting out everything to private companies. I think we'll see a lot of caring and concern for people go out the window…I don't think you'll see the private companies whose bottom line is profit show any concern for the people." She went on to say, "I'm pretty hardcore about people who could do better, but I think we have some people who are working at top effort, but are not making it. They don't qualify for SSI, but they just barely are managing it. I worry about those people." Finally, one worker feared that the future held the end of the agency.

Desired Changes in Oklahoma's Welfare System

Legislators: Six of the 13 legislators who addressed this question focused on specific programs. One senator wanted to count education toward the federal participation requirement and restore the 5% cut recently approved by the Commission.

"Then I would probably try to create an environment where social workers can be social workers...We need to hire more social workers and decrease the caseloads." A representative wanted to make Medicaid more user-friendly and allow for follow-ups in TANF. Another senator wanted to see "a phase-in money amount where we don't ever suddenly cut someone off...They're actually worse off (after getting a job) because they have to pay medical, food, and daycare. They find themselves in worse shape." A representative from a rural area wanted money for daycare, transportation and family resource centers. "Our responsibility in government is to give people the necessary tools (education) to succeed if they want to." Another representative wanted to crack down on drug users suggesting that if clients can't pass the drug screening, then Votech and other training is a waste of time.

Other legislators specifically desired decreased caseloads. These were legislators with personal ties to social workers. Another issue that emerged again was public-private partnerships. There was one in operation at the time of the study, Index in Tulsa, and many legislators mentioned the importance of such partnerships throughout the study. Public-private partnerships are programs that are partially funded with public grant money and sponsored and run by private agencies. This issue was hotly debated at a meeting at the state capitol. Apparently, many people felt that the way that one public-private partnership was set up and controlled was unsavory at best. Despite opposition about control of such programs, public-private partnerships, Index in particular, provide job and life skills training to welfare recipients combined with the strong possibility of employment after the training is completed. They offer the state a lower cost way of training individuals and offer welfare recipients the hope of employment.

Another senator desired increased cooperation between the academic and legislative communities regarding policy development. Another public-private partnership was the one-stop centers. They were being piloted in at least two counties and were mentioned by one representative.

Other changes requested by legislators did not exactly relate to each other. For example, one legislator requested a specific person as the new Director of DHS. He also said, "On our federal legislation, I think for the time being if we'd set up the system like now we'd have spent half as much money and ruined half as many lives. People have wasted their lives under a defunct system." One senator wanted the states to have more say in welfare reform, and another senator focused on the high divorce rate, number of out of wedlock births and difficulties in child support enforcement. Finally, a senator suggested that the focus should be to "enable these people to take care of themselves and take care of their children. I think the government has a role in that, maybe like churches in the past. We've all got to be concerned...We've got a mentality now with our Governor that if you cut the benefits enough you'll force people off. I think we've almost gotten mean over the deal. You've got to be very careful, the way they're going to do this, be tough enough so that they don't want to be on welfare."

Administrators: Administrators tended to want changes in programs. Specifically, four of the 16 administrators wanted more flexibility with regards to implementation of the programs. A county director said, "we'll see more (hopefully) money available with more local decisions about where the money goes, for example community resources." A senior supervisor from a rural county said, "I think it is hard to put (my town) in the same policy as Oklahoma City. We need more flexibility. For

example, when welfare reform hit, we pulled every client in (my area) in and told them what welfare reform meant. Oklahoma City couldn't do that. There needs to be some of that (flexibility) county to county." Another county director wanted to change the percentage of people that could be exempted from work. "Or, leave it there but leave some loophole for those that can't do it."

Another focus of administrators was the family and prevention. One county director suggested that Oklahoma did not focus on traditional families, but pointed out that a recent decrease in the daycare co-payment would help families tremendously. In November, the Governor signed a policy allowing for decreases in the amount of money that families on assistance pay for daycare. It also increased the amount of money that a family could earn and still get daycare assistance. Another county director wanted to start teaching survival at the earliest levels. "We've realized that we'll have to work with the mainline education system to work with children coming up in those communities...they'll become familiar with what survival will mean in those areas."

Other changes in welfare included an emphasis on technological education and on education to work (instead of just welfare to work). A senior supervisor expressed concern about the possibility of a two-year limit rather than the current five-year lifetime limit. The federal government had left the ultimate decision of limits up to the states and neighboring states were going below the five-year limit. Several respondents mentioned hearing rumors that Oklahoma was considering a two-year lifetime limit. "Two years is not enough. It takes six to nine months to upgrade to a GED. You take the time you need." This same supervisor was also concerned about privatization. "I'm really concerned when they start breaking down and doing things for profit. I still think that

there's a role for government that keeps things fair and equitable." Only one administrator felt that there had been enough changes.

The Commission: Commission members were fairly aggressive in their desired changes. One focused on adoption and wanted to terminate parental rights more quickly. The other was adamant about increasing TANF recipients' skill and getting them on the upward track.

Social Workers: Social workers varied in the changes that they wanted. Only one felt the government and DHS had made enough changes. Two social workers wanted more community-agency partnerships. One social worker said, "What I wish was that the community and the agency would work together. As a society we are only as strong as our weakest member." A family support specialist suggested, "We are in an era of partnerships. We have to be willing to work together to solve problems. We have to be." Another worker enumerated two specific changes that she wanted. "Number one, I'd like to see enough workers here to let us do our job. Number two, I'd like to make the client responsible for doing their part." She also has a problem with the one-year training limit. For example, "we don't count college, but why not if it'll help them get a job to finance the last few years?"

Another worker also mentioned the education component, but expressed more of an interest in vocational rehabilitation. She also pointed out that "a lot of the changes that we've been griping about are coming down." Other workers expressed interest in specific programs like more assistance for the elderly, eliminating abuse in Food Stamps, and increasing the availability of daycare. In the words of one job developer, "If the predication of welfare reform is to put this person to work, the work skills have to make it

possible for the person to support their family. They're (DHS) going to have to keep up daycare. They need to keep the grant in place when they start to work full-time— wardrobe, deposit, lunches, gas—until they get a paycheck."

Most Effective Programs

Legislators: Among the legislators, there was no clear preference for any program other than those identified with children, child support enforcement, Healthy Families Oklahoma, Parents as Teachers, Sooner Start. Other programs that were mentioned were rent subsidies, the new Food Stamps program (Electronic Benefits System), transportation and commodities. A couple of legislators could not think of any programs. Two mentioned the ones that they considered to be the worst (Food Stamps and Mass Transit) and one did not really like any of them saying, "They may have some (that are effective), but I don't think they'd work as well as giving to the community." Finally, two legislators suggested that all of the programs were good, things that could not be done without.

Administrators: The programs most frequently mentioned by administrators were medical and daycare. TANF was also mentioned but always with the reservation of "now." Two administrators mentioned the new electronic benefits program for Food Stamps, but a county director called the program an "administrative nightmare." Integrated Family Services, WEP, Model County, Flex Funds and child welfare were also mentioned by administrators. Transportation and Food Stamps were the only programs mentioned in a negative way.

Social Workers: Two respondents suggested that all of the programs were effective with one suggesting that they all have to work together. One of the respondents

who liked all of the programs did mention transportation as a problem. The other social workers mentioned TANF, medical (two times), daycare (also twice mentioned), Aid to the Blind and Disabled, training programs at the Votechs, and the work programs. There was no consensus on the effectiveness of programs, just individual responses.

<u>An Assessment of Research Question #4</u>

Are all of the actors committed to the collective goal of DHS?

The fourth research question addressed the respondents' commitment to the collective goal of the welfare reform process, reducing the welfare rolls and getting welfare recipients to work. It was addressed by asking respondents how they defined success with regards to welfare reform.

<u>Legislators:</u> Only one person, a representative, suggested that numbers, as in the decrease in welfare rolls, were the way to define success in welfare reform. Eight legislators acknowledged the importance of numbers but indicated that success was more than just numbers. One representative said, "We see headlines and lawmakers point to the decreases in rolls. I want there to be success that actually helps people make the transition, gives them the tools. They need to become self-sufficient, not just window dressing, but help someone get a job." A senator concurred saying, "Today, we're going to measure success by decreases in caseloads. Hopefully, we measure it not just by that but also by successful placements."

Other legislators did not refer to numbers at all. A senator said, "I think there are lots of different ways to do it. On the longest term, I'd like to see children of these homes have opportunities for education and development...The second thing I want to see is education and the development of opportunities for these mothers." Another

senator simply said, "One child at a time. Maybe I can say one person at a time, one person at a time with an improved quality of life. Stop." More specifically, a third senator responded, "Success is where someone reports a two- or three-year old that is filthy and needs help. And someone goes out there and there's an immediate change." Additionally, two representatives felt that, on paper, Oklahoma has already achieved success, but that success was more than just "limiting caseloads." "We (need to) see a decline in people qualifying for services, a decline in teen pregnancies and low-birth weight babies." "I think part of the success will be people who should have never been on assistance, never going on assistance." Finally, a senator summed up this trend in responses by saying, "When a person is able to be self-sufficient. When individuals who received cash assistance no longer have to receive cash assistance and are employed. When a person feels that now I can change my life."

Administrators: Only three administrators mentioned numbers as part of their definition of success and only one limited herself to that qualifier. The remaining administrators spoke about such definitions as supporting the families, moving people to self-sufficiency, and helping people to get jobs so that they can support their families. These responses were similar in content if not in form to the legislators' responses.

A training supervisor suggested that success would come "when we have no more social ills." She later qualified that by saying, "I don't necessarily think we have been successful by getting someone off welfare and into a job. We'll be more successful when it gets established in that family to get off welfare and they've stayed that way for generations." A supervisor suggested that it was the "baby steps" that were successes, and a field liaison felt that success was "a woman getting a job and being able to care for

her family and meet their needs." For another supervisor, success in TANF was "getting off the system, being self-sufficient, finding a job, being able to support yourself...being able to eliminate barriers." A county director in an urban area focused on changing the attitudes of the clients. "If we can show them a success, then they're on the right track." Another county director emphasized the number of "stuck placements." "I guess the greatest success that can be measured is that we work ourselves out of a job." A senior supervisor agreed that success involves self-sufficiency but stressed, "Self-sufficiency may be an issue or maybe it's just basic needs and medical. We accept that if it makes them happy. You don't push your values off on them." Another county director emphasized, "You can't gauge welfare reform just by looking at the numbers...Probably success is where we can get a family to where they want to be not where we want them to be." This was echoed by an area assistant who said, "Success in welfare is when someone is able to support his or her family according to his or her life plan without the assistance of government intervention."

Community and community perceptions were important to two administrators. One supervisor said, "Overall, we're looking out for each other. We may have lost the initial idea of the community helping each other and put it on the agency, but we've been successful overall." A county director suggested that the result of welfare reform "has to be that we bring families, children, individuals into the mainstream of what society cares to call normalcy in a financial, social and emotional way...The mainline of society is that we don't want everyone to be different from us. We have to put the poor...on common ground with everyone else."

Human Services Commission: The Commission members ran the gamut of the previous answers in their responses. One member felt that success was unattainable because it meant no one living in poverty or in an abusive relationship. Another member suggested that success in welfare was when it could be used only as a safety net. Finally, the third member mentioned numbers but added a better-educated, better-trained population who could make better provisions for their children. Regarding children, the third member also felt that success meant making a dent in child welfare cases.

Social Workers: The definitions offered by the social workers all centered on empowerment. Six of the social workers referred to both the self-esteem and attitudes of their clients and the need for self-sufficiency. One social worker talked about her past successes and said, "I think success is when a client may not have felt that he could do anything or may to have been able to do anything can get the skills to get the job and they can get off...When they can support their family and not go back on welfare." Another social worker suggested that success was "somebody being able to be self-sufficient and feeling good about themselves and doing it."

Other social workers focused on clients meeting their potential. "The real success is when they reach their goal, not necessarily just when we get them off welfare. They get off, they get an education and a job, and they don't have to come back." Another social worker seemed to feel that success was defined by the particular client's abilities. "A person that absolutely meets their full potential, whatever that is. If they can work 20 hours per week, then (success means) they are working 20 hours per week." Finally, a social worker in a pilot program said, "We know we have success if we are able to

empower the people we serve to become their fullest potential in life...These people need a lot of nurturing from society to gain training, education, and get a job."

<center>An Assessment of Hypothesis #1</center>

All of the respondents should be more likely to attribute individualistic causes to poverty.

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the respondents have a consensus of values. The hypothesis is addressed through the use of Section D of the questionnaire (Feagin, 1975) and the assumption is addressed in hypothesis #3 using Feagin's second scale, Attitudes toward Welfare, Section E of the questionnaire (see Appendix D).

Before analyzing the data, it was necessary to determine if the scale identified the same reasons in the current study as Feagin (1975) determined. To that end, a principle components factor analysis was performed on the data with varimax rotation in order to obtain an orthogonal set of factors (see Table 5). This factor analysis was chosen over a maximum likelihood factor analysis because of the small sample size (N=36) and the assumption of an independently identically distributed sample. The results of the factor analysis confirmed Feagin's scale with one exception. Factor one represents the attitude that poverty is caused by structural factors. Factor two refers to individualistic causes of poverty and factor three represents fatalistic beliefs in the causes of poverty. The variable that was the exception to Feagin, 'being taken advantage of,' question 38 in the survey, was determined by Feagin (1975) to indicate a structural cause of poverty. In this study, this variable emerged under a different factor, fatalism.

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Table 5
Principle Components Rotated Factor Analysis: Loadings on the Attitudes Toward Poverty Scale

| Items | | Factors | |
	Structural	Individual	Fatalistic
29. Lack of thrift	-0.01	0.87	-0.01
30. Lack of effort	-0.22	0.70	-0.01
31. Lack of talent	-0.00	-0.01	0.67
32. Loose morals	-0.27	0.72	-0.33
33. Sickness, disability	0.22	-0.23	0.62
34. Low wages	0.69	-0.01	0.19
35. No good schools	0.79	-0.23	-0.01
36. Prejudice & discrimination	0.73	-0.22	0.24
37. Not enough jobs	0.88	0.15	0.11
38. Being taken advantage of	0.19	-0.16	0.63
39. Bad luck	0.15	0.28	0.71
Percentage of total variance accounted for	31.47	16.96	11.77

Table 6 presents the breakdown of responses to the questions asked in Section D of the survey. The responses are grouped according to the types of attitudes that they indicate—individualistic, structural, and fatalistic. Contrary to the expectations of the hypothesis, looking solely at the breakdown of responses, the data suggest that respondents were more likely to indicate beliefs that poverty was caused by structural and fatalistic factors than by individualistic causes. From one fourth to two-thirds of the respondents cited structuralistic causes of poverty as at least important. The range was narrower for individualistic causes (25% to 30.6%) and much wider for fatalistic causes (8.4% to 69.7%). Specifically, low wages, poor schools and prejudice were the most important structural factors. Question 37, lack of available jobs, was not considered as important by the respondents. With regards to fatalistic factors, bad luck and being taken advantage of did not emerge as important to the respondents. These items were even less important than the individualistic causes of poverty. Lack of talent and disability were seen as more important causes. In fact, sickness and disability emerged as the most important single cause of poverty in the scale.

Table 6
Percentage Agreeing with the Importance of Reasons for Poverty

Reasons (Question #)	Percentage Replying				
	Not Important 1	2	3	4	Very Important 5
Structural					
Low wages (34)	2.8%	11.1%	19.4%	44.4%	22.2%
No good schools (35)	11.6	25.0	27.8	22.2	13.9
Prejudice & discrimination (36)	8.3	16.7	36.1	36.1	2.8
Not enough jobs (37)	8.3	25.0	41.7	16.7	8.3
Individual					
Lack of thrift (29)	13.9	19.4	36.1	25.0	5.6
Lack of effort (30)	0	30.6	47.2	19.4	2.8
Loose morals (32)	27.8	25.0	22.2	19.4	5.6
Fatalistic					
Lack of talent (31)	5.6	30.6	22.2	33.3	8.3
Sickness, disability (33)	2.8	8.3	19.4	41.7	27.8
Being taken advantage of (38)	22.2	34.3	28.6	8.6	5.7
Bad luck (39)	36.1	27.8	25.0	2.8	5.6

Table 7 shows the demographic sources of support for these explanations of poverty. Regarding occupation, legislators and administrators were more likely to assign structural causes to poverty, but social workers were more likely to assign individualistic causes to poverty. This goes completely against the initial expectations as suggested by Feagin (1975). With regards to education, respondents with some college or a graduate degree were more likely to assign structural causes to poverty while respondents with only a bachelors degree were more likely to cite individualistic causes of poverty. Finally, among the legislators and one member of the executive branch, Republicans were evenly split among the causes of poverty and Democrats were slightly more likely to attribute structural causes to poverty.

Table 7
Percentage Whose Answers Rank in the Top Third (High) on Welfare Factors by Demographic Characteristics

	Percent High on Individualistic Factors	Percent High on Structural Factors	Percent High on Fatalistic Factors
Occupation			
Legislators (N=13)*	25%	33%	8.3%
Administrators (N=13)**	15.4	38.5	23.1
Social Workers (N=10)	30	10	10
Education Level			
Some College (N=4)	0	75	25
Bachelors Degree (N=19)	31.6	15.8	10.5
Graduate Degree (N=13)	23.1	30.8	15.4
Political Affiliation			
Republican (N=4)	20	20	20
Democrat (N=9)	22.2	44.4	11.1

* Includes a representative of the Executive Branch
**Includes Commission members

An Assessment of Hypothesis #2

Legislators will be less likely to support funding for social programs than administrators and social workers.

This hypothesis was assessed through the use of Section B of the questionnaire (see Appendix D). The section asks respondents to indicate whether they think that government support should be increased, decreased or remain the same for government programs. Responses were then coded increased (1), decreased (-1) and stay the same (0). Looking at the mean responses across categories, it appears that social workers and administrators are slightly more likely to support funding for programs than legislators with a few exceptions. Social workers were less likely to support increased government funding for TANF, Social Security and Employment training than legislators and administrators were less likely to support increased funding for Food Stamps. An

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ANOVA was calculated for the individual variables by occupation and for the aggregated support variable and no significant differences were detected.

In order to provide a check of sorts on the above findings, respondents were asked to indicate their level of knowledge of the various programs. For each programs respondents were asked whether they knew from 'very little' (1) to 'a great deal' (5). Table 8 shows the mean responses for each program and the breakdown by occupation. Overall, the respondents indicated at least some knowledge about the programs. Not surprisingly, administrators and social workers indicated greater knowledge than legislators did, with the exception of federal aid to education. This latter program is not something that DHS employees are likely to work with on a regular basis if at all, but it was included to diversify the programs.

Table 8
Mean Responses for Support for Welfare Programs by Occupation

Variable	Overall Support	Legislators	Admin-istrators	Social Workers
Federal Aid to Education	0.44	0.42	0.54	0.50
Public Housing	0.19	-0.08	0.15	0.50
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	0.20	0.27	0.31	0.10
Family Support Services	0.54	0.55	0.46	0.80
Food Stamps	0.09	0.20	0.03	0.20
Medicaid	0.57	0.42	0.67	0.70
Child Welfare	0.63	0.42	0.83	0.70
Social Security	0.26	0.33	0.46	-0.11
Minimum Wage	0.58	0.50	0.69	0.60
Employment Training	0.89	0.83	1.0	0.80
Overall Support	0.45	0.43	0.54	0.47

Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated for the programs and for the occupational subgroups and four of the programs emerged as significant. When looking at the variables and their relationship to occupation TANF ($r=0.424$), Family Support Services ($r=0.411$), Food Stamps ($r=0.437$) and employment training programs ($r=0.512$)

showed significance at the 0.05 level. An ANOVA was calculated to confirm differences between the mean responses of the populations and three of the above variables emerged as significant [Family Support Services ($F=4.064$), Food Stamps ($F=3.524$) and employment training programs ($F=5.322$)]. In addition, an ANOVA was calculated for the aggregated knowledge variable and it also emerged as significant at the 0.05 level ($F=3.406$). This suggests that, for this scale, there is a relationship between occupation and knowledge. How surprising this is remains to be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 9
Mean Responses for Knowledge of Welfare Programs by Occupation

Variable	Overall Knowledge	Legislators	Admin-istrators	Social Workers
Federal Aid to Education	3.09	3.25	2.85	3.20
Public Housing	3.14	3.17	3.00	3.30
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	4.40	3.83	4.62	4.80
Family Support Services	4.34	3.75	4.62	4.70
Food Stamps	4.20	3.67	4.31	4.70
Medicaid	3.89	3.58	3.92	4.20
Child Welfare	3.94	3.83	3.92	4.10
Social Security	3.14	3.08	3.08	3.30
Minimum Wage	4.00	3.75	4.25	4.00
Employment Training	4.11	3.50	4.31	4.60
Overall Knowledge	3.86	3.54	3.99	4.09

An Assessment of Hypothesis #3

Legislators are more likely to hold traditional, critical views of welfare than the other groups of respondents (administrators, social workers).

Section E of the survey addressed the assumption that the respondents had a consensus on values. The variables were coded so that the higher the mean, the more the respondent identified with traditional values critical of welfare (i.e. welfare is not a good thing). In other words, questions 39, 40, 41, and 45 were re-coded so that strong

agreement to the variables would indicate disapproval of welfare. Disapproval of

welfare, according to Feagin (1975) indicates a belief in traditional welfare-critical

values.

Table 10 presents the mean responses to the Attitudes toward Welfare scale.

Based on the individual mean responses (ranging from 1.89 to 3.31) and on the mean for

the aggregated variable (2.76), there is little support for the idea that the respondents hold

to traditional, welfare-critical values.

Table 10
Mean Responses to the Attitudes Toward Welfare Scale by Occupation

Variable	Overall Mean	Legislators	Admin-istrators	Social Workers
39. There are too many people receiving welfare who should be working	3.23 (36)	3.25	2.05	3.70
40. Many people getting welfare are not honest about their need	2.85	2.83	2.62	3.22
41. Many women getting welfare money are having illegitimate babies to increase the money they get.	1.97	2.33	1.77	1.80
42. Generally speaking, we are spending too little money on welfare programs in this state.	3.26	3.58	2.69	3.60
43. Most people on welfare who can work try to find jobs so they can support themselves.	2.89	2.83	2.54	3.40
44. One of the main troubles with welfare is that it doesn't give people enough to get along.	2.97	3.00	2.62	3.40
45. A lot of people are moving to this state from other states just to get welfare money here.	1.89	2.00	1.77	1.90
Aggregated Attitudes variable	2.74	2.83	2.41	3.08

There is a relationship, however, between the aggregated attitudes toward welfare

variable and the factors defined in the Attitudes toward Poverty scale. Table 11 presents

the gamma correlation coefficients of the aggregated attitudes toward welfare variable

and the three factors identified in the attitudes toward poverty scale. Gamma was chosen

because of the ordinal nature of the data. The results support the idea that there is a slight

positive relationship between holding traditional, welfare-critical values and attributing

individualistic causes to poverty (r=0.401). In addition, the data suggest that there is a

slight negative relationship between holding traditional, welfare-critical values and

attributing fatalistic causes to poverty (r=-0.285).

Table 11
Gamma Correlation Coefficients for the Aggregated Attitudes toward
Welfare Variable and the Reasons for Poverty

	Aggregated Attitudes toward Welfare	
	gamma	p
Individualistic	0.36	0.005
Structural	-0.21	0.137
Fatalistic	-0.263	0.036

Looking at the breakdown by occupation, ANOVAs were calculated for the

variables and the occupational subgroups and the three factors and the occupations. In

neither case did any significant differences emerge. Thus, although legislators were

expected to be more conservative than administrators or social workers, for this study, it

appears that the three subgroups do not hold traditional welfare-critical views of welfare.

The size of the sample, however, limits the strength of the findings.

An Assessment of Hypothesis #4

Legislators will be more likely to feel that welfare is a negative thing than

administrators and social workers.

This hypothesis was addressed with the use of a situational ethics exceptions scale

created by the researcher and based on Sykes and Matza's neutralization theory (1957).

As discussed in Chapter 5, the aim of the scale was to test the hypothesis that respondents

believe that welfare is a bad thing, generally, but that it is okay under certain

circumstances. To that end, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) with several statements. The ten situational statements were re-coded to reverse the previous order. Thus, the higher the number, the less the respondent feels that welfare is a negative thing either in general for the first statement or under certain conditions.

Table 12 offers the mean responses to each statement. First, overall, respondents are somewhat neutral on the idea that the current welfare system in Oklahoma is not a good thing. Looking at the specific responses presents another picture. Social workers are slightly less likely to support welfare under the situational conditions offered than either legislators or administrators except with regards to party support and general (everyone else) support. In addition, the lowest support for welfare comes in questions 50, 52 and 54 (party and general support and federal mandate). Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated for the variables and for occupational category. The only item that emerged as significant was question 53; welfare is okay if people would otherwise starve. An ANOVA was calculated for the aggregated welfare agreement variable and for each individual item, but none of the mean responses emerged as significantly different. Thus, for this sample, the occupational subgroups appear to be statistically similar in their views.

Table 12
Mean Responses to the Situational Ethics Exceptions Scale

Variable	Overall Mean	Legislators	Admin-istrators	Social Workers
In Oklahoma, the current welfare system is not a good system for providing for the poor.	3.67	3.25	3.92	3.90
46. Welfare is okay if it hold individuals responsible for helping themselves.	4.09	4.18	4.31	3.90
47. Welfare is okay if it promotes self-sufficiency by encouraging education and job acquisition.	4.23	4.36	4.62	3.90
48. Welfare is okay when it encourages families to stay together.	4.09	4.27	4.15	3.90
49. Welfare is okay in the sense that it keeps money flowing back into the economy (from all of the services that are connected with it).	2.92	2.67	3.07	2.90
50. Welfare is okay if the leadership of my party (Democrat or Republican) supports it.	2.03	2.17	1.85	2.20
51. Welfare is okay if it involves programs like Head Start.	3.53	3.42	3.77	3.30
52. Welfare is okay if it is mandated by the Federal government.	2.25	2.17	2.31	2.40
53. Welfare is okay if it feeds someone who might otherwise starve.	4.11	4.73	3.92	3.60
54. Welfare is okay if everyone else supports it.	2.42	2.08	2.77	2.50
55. Welfare is okay if it is necessary for human survival.	4.31	4.33	4.46	4.00

Responses range from 1-5 where 1=Strongly Agree and 5=Strongly Disagree

An Assessment of the Remaining Interview Questions

Three other questions were asked of some of the respondents. These questions were left until the end of the interview and addressed if time permitted. The questions involved transfer payments, the best things about working for DHS, and the biggest obstacles faced in the social workers' work.

Transfer Payments

One of the questions asked how the respondents felt about transfer payments in counties where jobs were difficult to find. Transfer payments are simply cash payments

without a work or education requirement attached to them. Overall, none of the respondents were in favor of transfer payments. The general attitude was that cash without responsibility was not a good thing. Every respondent, whether a legislator, administrator or social worker, offered some alternative to them. One representative suggested that transfer payments were not the responsibility of DHS, but the responsibility of private organizations. A senator felt that the state did not have the money for those sorts of things. DHS employees, administrators and social workers alike, recommended relocation, better training, and better connections in the community. Two respondents mentioned improving public-private partnerships. Only one legislator, a senator, suggested that attitudes might change and become more favorable toward transfer payments when the economy took a downturn.

Best about DHS

The six social workers that answered this question all agreed that working with the people was the best thing about working at DHS. They all referred to seeing successes and feeling like they helped change someone's life. In the words of one respondent, "With the work I'm doing now, to see a change in someone's life and see them grow and see their family get out of the cycle. You just feel like so much pride. You just feel so good seeing the difference in people. These are those things that really keep you going."

Obstacles

The major obstacles addressed by the social workers were staff shortages and paperwork. In almost every interview, social workers mentioned the amount of

paperwork and the absence of clerical support. One social worker felt that her job was "just pushing papers." Another felt that the Commission just did not understand. "They keep pointing out that TANF has decreased so where are the decreases in staff. Our TANF cases have decreased, but when we close them we get three separate cases of Food Stamps, day care, and Medicaid." Another issue that emerged was the lack of resources. This comment was specifically directed to the new Flex Funds program where counties would get a certain amount of money to help clients with such things as dental care, car repair, interview clothing, etc. At the time of the interview, the training had not occurred and the social worker was frustrated.

Summary of the Research Questions and Hypotheses

The initial findings for research question #1 indicated a linear process of policy-making. When combined with the results of the in-depth interviews, however, the presence of a feedback loop was discovered. At the same time, the presence of this potential for input on the part of the administrators and social workers does not guarantee that the input will occur. The interviews additionally discovered that there are numerous time constraints on the administrators and social workers that often prevent them from participating in policy decisions, even when given the opportunity. This says nothing about the genuineness of the feedback. The responses from social workers and administrators suggested that those that took the time to offer feedback on proposed policy changes were likely to offer genuine feedback. Because of the time that offering input takes, those social workers who indicated that they gave input seemed to feel strongly about whatever input they were offering. Thus, while the process may be limited, it is likely that what little feedback emerges from it is valid.

Research question #2 addressed the roles of the respondents in the policy-making process. In brief, the perceptions of the respondents generally corresponded with their actual occupations. The exceptions were those legislators who had either been poor themselves or had social workers as friends. These legislators were more likely to be more personally committed to welfare reform policy-making than the others.

Research question #3 addressed the respondents' overall views of welfare. In general, the respondents saw welfare as a necessary, but temporary set of programs—with the exception of one legislator. Respondents across occupational subcategories saw room for more changes and a greater need for an emphasis on children, education, and training. While both social workers and administrators mentioned concerns about the trend toward the privatization of welfare, respondents generally focused on the good aspects of the new changes, their fears about the hard-core cases that are being left on welfare rolls, and their desire to see people become independent and self-sufficient.

Respondents' commitment to the collective goal of welfare reform was addressed in research question #4. This commitment was defined by both the federal government (decline in welfare rolls) and by DHS goals and mission (self-sufficiency and independence) and was addressed by asking respondents to define success in welfare reform. Respondents typically mentioned both the federal and DHS definitions. They acknowledged that the decline in welfare rolls is the commonly held standard of success, but that this standard is limited because it does not address the level of self-sufficiency and independence that welfare recipients have achieved. Exceptions to this include the legislator who felt that success in welfare was eliminating the program completely and

relying on private sources, and the few administrators and social workers who focused solely on self-sufficiency and independence.

The hypotheses in the study were addressed through the questionnaire. The first hypothesis proposed that all of the respondents would attribute individualistic causes to poverty; however, the findings do not support this. Instead, it was discovered that the respondents are actually more likely to attribute structural causes to poverty than individualistic. Additionally, social workers were slightly more likely to focus on individual causes of poverty than were the other respondents. The second hypothesis suggested that legislators would be less likely to support funding for social programs. This hypothesis held true for this study with the exceptions of TANF, Social Security, employment training and Food Stamps. The third hypothesis proposed that legislators would be more likely to hold traditional, welfare-critical views of welfare than would administrators or social workers. The results of the questionnaire suggest that there is little support for the idea that the respondents hold traditional views of welfare. Finally, the fourth hypothesis suggested that legislators would be more likely to feel that welfare is negative than would administrators or social workers. In general, respondents are neutral on the idea that the current welfare system in Oklahoma is a negative phenomenon. In addition, the findings are unclear with regards to specific situational exceptions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study. Questions from the in-depth interviews and the survey were addressed as they pertained to the research questions and hypotheses. In addition, information gained from specific interviews was used to flesh

out the context within which welfare reform policy occurs. Finally, responses to

questions that did not directly relate to the research questions were presented as

additional information.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion and Conclusions

A Parsonian structural functionalist framework was chosen for the current study because the basic approach was one in which the roles of the individuals in the system were more important than the power of each position. One intent of the study was to determine the part that each group of participants (legislators, DHS administrators and social workers) played in the policy development and implementation process with regards to welfare reform in Oklahoma. There was little interest in inequality as it related to welfare and poverty, although this was expected to be a part of the process. Rather, the focus was on how the policy-making system worked and how the participants defined their roles within it, recognizing that the two often overlap. To this end, Parsons' basic ideas about system organization formed part of the backbone of the study. However, his ideas alone did not allow for the full exploration of the desired topic. Thus, insights from other theories were added to Parsons in order to allow for the inclusion of the discussions of values and the impact of institutional organization (historical institutionalism) and the participants' perceptions (negotiated order theory). Historical institutionalism actually formed the larger foundation of the study because it focuses on process and institutional development and because it allows for the inclusion of other ideas. Negotiated order was added to account for the impact of the interactions and interpretations of the participants on the policy-making process.

Historical Institutionalism

The current study found supporting evidence for three postulations of historical institutionalism. First, historical institutionalism suggested that the organization of the institution is the primary force behind the interactions and actions within the system. The evidence of this can be seen in the way that the participants' responses to questions involving the policy process appear to follow their positions within that process. For example, most legislators saw their responsibilities to DHS employees in terms of the latter's position as state employees and the formers' position as lawmaker. Administrators gave consistent answers about where they get policy information and how they disseminate it to their staff. Finally, social workers reinforced administrative responses and also consistently focused on the clients in their responses—a likely result of their position in the hierarchy.

Second, historical institutionalists look at the differential access that some participants have in the policy-making process (Hall & Taylor, 1995). This can be seen in the amount of input that social workers and administrators are given in the process. The interviews indicated that there are feedback loops in which administrators and social workers can participate, but respondents continually referred to the amount of time that their jobs took and how little time they had for anything else.

One of the things that was not identified in the mechanics of the policy-making process was the information flow—as in how policy information gets to the social workers. Here again, the process is formalized. Information gets passed on through quarterly training, email communications and hard copies. In addition, information may be given to the county director who then disseminates it to supervisors who train their

workers. Finally, focus groups had been conducted prior to implementation to get feedback on proposed changes. Despite this latter event, overall, the approach has been very top down, not surprising given that the policies are generated at the top. The focus groups indicate a feedback loop that has the potential to involve social workers in the process, but a caveat should be mentioned. These focus groups necessarily take time away from the social worker or administrator's regular duties leaving more work when the employee returns. Given the numerous complaints made about the amount of work the social workers face as it is, this can only suggest that participation in the feedback loop comes at a high price, definitely a less than ideal situation.

Finally, Hall and Taylor (1995) argued that historical institutionalists see the policy-making process as one in which the past informs but does not determine present policy. Evidence of the verity of this argument can be seen in the many references to Lloyd E. Rader. The picture presented in the findings suggests that the history of DHS, part of the structural context, still emerges in the negotiation contexts of many of the participants in the policy-making process. Respondents at all levels suggested that DHS was still feeling the effects of the late Director Rader. This manifested itself, according to one respondent, in polar views among the legislators. Some legislators, it was suggested, tended to leave DHS alone with the expectation that the agency knew what was best for the people it served. Other legislators took a more active role in oversight and felt that DHS had been too powerful in the past and still needed legislative checks and balances. As mentioned in Chapter Six, one legislator acknowledged that having a DHS 'tag' sent up a red flag. Different actors have different interpretations of DHS and

its role and power and these interpretations enter the policy-making process even when they are not explicit.

Parsons' Contributions

Parsons (1966) offered the following contributions to the study. First, his AGIL framework provided the emphasis on the structure and purpose of the policy-making process. Second, Parsons argued that actors within the system must be committed to the collective goals of the system for the system to function properly. While not directly a contribution to the study, it did provide a point of exploration for the research. Finally, Parsons assumed that the actors had been adequately socialized into the values of the system and thus were all agreed on those values. The second two contributions are discussed together as they are closely related.

Applying Parsons' AGIL Framework

The role perceptions of the respondents are an important part of the policy-making process because they indicate the usefulness or realness of the formal structure. On a structural level, the organizational chart presented in Chapter Four outlined one part of the formal roles involved in the policy-making process and Parsons offered another view of the roles in the process. Specifically, as discussed in Chapter Two, legislators were identified as part of the Integrative subsystem and DHS was considered part of the Adaptive subsystem.

Parsons' AGIL framework can be applied to the policy-making process in a fuller way. For example, the legislature still takes on the function of integration. The state offices of DHS coordinate the adaptation function in their organizational capacity. The Human Services Commission represents the pattern-maintenance function because their

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job, more than any other part of the process is to uphold the values of the system and the commitment of participants to the collective goals. In a sense, they actually set the goals at least at the state level. Finally, the goal-attainment function is performed by the social workers. This is a bit lower level than Parsons perhaps intended but, as more than one respondent indicated, the field (the social workers' level) is where "the rubber meets the road."

Commitment to the Collective Goal and Consensus of Values

Research question 4 and hypothesis 3 address this topic. The former (#4) asks if all actors are committed to the collective goal of welfare reform and the latter (#3) questions the value consensus of the respondents. The collective goal was defined using P.L. 104-193 and the DHS mission and goal statements. First, according to P.L. 104-193, the collective goal is to change welfare from a program of entitlement to one requiring work (Fact Sheet, 1996). President Clinton added that the goal was to get people off welfare and into work (Clinton, 1996, speech). Second, DHS states that one of its goals is to help people "become independent, employed, productive citizens (DHS goals). In the agency's mission statement, DHS states that it intends to "provide quality services to enable people to lead healthier, more secure, independent, and productive lives" (DHS mission).

One way to measure respondents' commitment to those goals is to look at how they define success. According to the federal definition of the goal, success would be defined primarily in terms of numbers (declines in welfare rolls). The DHS addition to this allows for the inclusion of a broader range of possible answers.

While more legislators than administrators and social workers acknowledged the federal component of the goal (decline in welfare rolls), only one legislator stopped with numbers. Overall, the respondents were interested in more than just decreasing welfare rolls. Most, including all of the social workers, focused on the "secure, independent, and productive" aspects of success. Respondents wanted to see welfare clients get jobs but they also wanted to see overall changes that would lead to staying off of welfare for the long term. Social workers were more focused on the individual than were the other respondents, but almost all of the respondents indicated similar measures of success. A first review of the data did not suggest this finding. Further consideration suggested that while the respondents seemed to be on different pages with regards to the success of welfare reform, the majority of them want the same thing - self-sufficient, responsible people who will eventually not go back on welfare.

The client-centered focus of the social worker hints at a theoretical issue that perhaps offers insight into why there are problems with welfare reform. Perhaps it is because the focus of the collective goals—the welfare recipients—are not fully integrated into the larger social system. So, what we have is conflict within the process. In Chapter Two, the polity was determined to include the executive, legislative, and bureaucratic branches of government. This system does not include the welfare recipients. Yet, the success of the collective goal might rest upon their active and committed participation.

Another issue might be that, while participants generally supported the collective goal of welfare reform, they were in less agreement about the appropriate means of achieving those goals. For example, while nearly everyone agreed that jobs and self-sufficiency were key components of success in welfare reform, not everyone agree on

how to help clients achieve these things. Specifically, the Commission approved a five percent cut in cash benefits in 1997 and legislators tended to emphasize training programs. While training programs were important to social workers, basic life skills training, daycare and issues of personal hygiene and appearance were also deemed crucial to success. There was concern among respondents from DHS that the time limits combined with a narrow focus on jobs at the federal and state levels would encounter problems when applied to individuals rather than aggregate groups.

Thus, while there appears to be a consensus on the goals of welfare reform, there is a lack of consensus on the means. This could explain the discrepancy between the findings of the previous summer when social workers indicated that legislators did not understand the process and the findings of the current study that suggested that everyone is actually on the same page. In each case, it is possible that the issue is more about the methods by which success in welfare reform is to be achieved and less about the actual goal that is to be obtained.

While Luhmann (as discussed in Turner, 1991), discussed in detail below, addresses the idea that consensus of values is unnecessary for the system, none of the neofunctionalists address the issue of consensus regarding the collective goals. While it may be that a lack of consensus on the goals intuitively suggests chaos and disorder, the dearth of discussion on this issue leaves a gap in the research where consensus on the means should be. The question raised in this study becomes: What happens when everyone agrees on the goals of the system but disagrees on the means? While this study does not answer this charge, it does raise the possibility for discord. Perhaps, extrapolating from Merton's strain theory, the strain between the goals and the means

could lead to inefficiency and roadblocks in the process. Based on the policy-making process discovered in this study, the recommendation would be to work on the feedback loops for social worker input into the process as this is where the clearest disagreement on the means lies.

Another aspect of this relates to the bindingness of the decisions made in the process. One aspect of Parsons' ideas, discussed in Chapter 2, was that those individuals making decisions had to have some assurance that those decisions would be followed. The issue of lack of consensus with regards to the means highlights a potential problem. If decision-makers understand that those who implement their decisions disagree with the decision-makers' methods they have little assurance, other than the coercive power of the structure, that they will be obeyed. Luhmann (as discussed in Turner, 1991), however, has suggested that a consensus of values is unnecessary if the coercive structure of the system is strong enough. This may also apply to consensus about the means by which to attain the collective goals. If the structure is constraining enough, consensus on the means of achieving the goal may be as unnecessary as consensus about the values dominating the organization. If that is in fact the case, then any lack of consensus regarding the means of achieving success in welfare reform will have little effect.

Hypothesis 3 addresses the level of consensus of values among the respondents through Section E of the questionnaire (see Appendix D). Overall, respondents did not favor traditional, critical values regarding welfare contrary to expectations. Yet, the differences were not significant among the responses, which would indicate that the respondents, to some extent, share similar values. Though this suggests that Parsons'

assumption of a consensus of values has been met, it is important to make a few related comments.

First, two items (39 and 43) both refer to work (see Appendix D, Section E). The former states that "there are many people receiving welfare who should be working" and the latter suggests that "most people on welfare who can work try to find jobs so that they can support themselves." These two items had the highest mean scores in the scale. Though the statements are opposites, they were reversed so that the numbers meant the same thing. Specifically, respondents seemed to feel that there *are* too many people on welfare who should be working and that people on welfare who could find work do *not* attempt to do so.

Though the emphasis on work in the in-depth interviews supports this finding, as more than one respondent pointed out, the economy is doing well and jobs are available throughout much of the state. The attitudes might be different were the state facing an economic decline. These two items are part of the traditional, negative views of welfare even though overall the respondents lean away from these views.

Another interesting finding in this section is that social workers tended both to be more likely to attribute individualistic causes to poverty and to hold traditional views of welfare. Neither of these findings was statistically significant, but the small sample size may have limited the tests. As discussed in the previous chapter, these findings were put to a social worker who confirmed them, based on her experience. It is unclear whether the attitudes that the social workers expressed during the study were focused on an individualistic level because of their occupation or their beliefs or some combination of the two. Frequent references were made to changing clients' attitudes, teaching them

basic skills and getting them to a point where they could be responsible and self-sufficient. In addition, cynicism was apparent in the social worker interviews more than in any of the other interviews. Though they spoke of change and praised the efforts in welfare reform, it was clear that the day-to-day business of trying to help people in a system that keeps throwing wrenches in the gears (Model County in their perceptions, decreases in clerical support, and the barrage of changes) affected their outlook. While the impact of the job on their attitudes cannot be assessed within the confines of this study, it is a factor to consider in future research.

Relevant Criticisms of Parsons

There are two criticisms of Parsons' work that are relevant to the current study. First, Parsons is often criticized for his assumption of a consensus of values. While this consensus appears to hold, it was unexpected and thus deserves to be addressed. Second, Turner (1990) has suggested that Parsons has had a consistently macro focus since he moved beyond his earlier work on the unit act.

With regards to the assumed consensus of values, Luhmann (as discussed in Turner, 1991), in his discussion of organization systems—one of his three types of social systems—has suggested that consensus is not critical to the survival of the system. Rules that govern the system may be sufficient to overcome disagreement amongst actors. In fact, organizations that obtain only situational commitments from actors may be stronger and more flexible, thus adapting to change more easily. What this suggests is that politicians, administrators, and social workers may not have to agree on the overarching values and norms of the system. The presence of the structure of decision-making and implementing may be sufficient to ensure the continuation, if not success, of the policies.

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Luhmann's ideas are discussed because, even though the questionnaire results indicate that there is a slight consensus of values, the overall impression from the in-depth interviews suggests that the picture is not that simple. For example, while there was a general consensus among many of the respondents that our society could not let children starve, there was also a feeling that parents (adults) needed to take responsibility for their lives and shouldn't receive government assistance unless they are mentally or physically incapacitated. Interestingly, it is a lack of consensus found in most of the respondents. In other words, it was not something that one group of respondents agreed on and another group disagreed. Rather, many of the respondents seemed to have a similar conflict in their views of welfare. On the one hand, most agree that we must always support the physically and mentally disabled and children. On the other hand, parents should be responsible, get jobs and be good role models.

Herein lies some of the problem with welfare reform as indicated by respondents. The goal is to reduce numbers and help people become self-sufficient. Yet, most respondents acknowledged that there is a portion of the population that might always need a system like welfare. The collective goal espoused by the federal government was to move people from welfare to work. To this end, they placed restrictions on the numbers of people that states could exempt from work and training requirements (20 percent of the state's welfare population). This was something that many administrative and social worker respondents complained about. There was a fear that eventually the rolls would be pared down to such a great extent that fewer and fewer of the people who really needed to be exempted -- the sick and disabled -- would be able to be exempted. While this says little about value consensus among the targeted respondents of this study,

it may indicate a conflict between the values and intentions of the federal policy-makers and the people who are closer to the implementation. It is for this reason that Luhmann's caveat that a consensus of values does not have to exist was brought into the discussion.

Related to the macro-focus criticism, it must be stressed here that the entire study is a reaction to this criticism. This study confirms the need to move beyond a macro focus and look at the perceptions of the participants in the policy-making process. This movement allows for a deeper understanding of the process and of the people who enact it.

Neofunctionalism

As discussed in Chapter Two, the optimistic view of society promoted by Parsons is tempered in neofunctionalism. Specifically, Alexander and Colomy (1990) have replaced Parsons' optimism with a more critical view that takes into account the possibility that not everything in society works for the benefit of the whole. In the current study, respondents expressed a great deal of optimism about the future of welfare and about the current reforms. Yet, their comments were tempered by a recognition of several potential problems. First, several comments were made about the "hard-core" cases and how difficult they would be to place in work positions. Second, legislators made references to the strength of the current economy in conjunction with comments about the possible problems that would be faced when the economy took a downturn. Finally, some social workers, while praising welfare reform efforts, made comments about the difficulties that they faced in helping people who had been out of work for a long time or who faced serious self-esteem or appearance issues that inhibited their ability to get good jobs.

Saiedi (1988) criticized Parsons' deterministic view of actors who are socialized into a consensus of values for being overly deterministic. Saiedi suggested that, while normative structures do constrain actors, these structures also allow for different interpretations and actions that are not necessarily functional for the entire system. While this was not observed directly, comments from the social workers can give us a clue as to the validity of Saiedi's postulation. During the interviews, the social workers seemed intent on helping the clients in any way possible. Some even suggested that they spend their own money to help them when they can. More so than the administrators, the social workers seem to feel that their loyalties lie with the client more than with DHS. While unproven in this study, it opens the possibility for actions that may not be functional for DHS. On the other hand, if the primary goal of DHS is to help people become responsible and independent, then the actions of the social workers would not actually harm the agency if said hypothetical actions accomplished that goal.

Negotiated Order

Negotiated order theory assumes that the rules, policies and divisions of labor within an organization provide the background within which the participants interact and conduct their daily business lives (Maines, 1982). The organization of the policy-making process, discussed above, provides the structure within which the participants interact, but they provide the meanings of those interactions and ultimately determine what the policies will be. Thus, negotiated order theory was a useful addition to the current study because it allows for the discussion of the negotiation context and for the possibility of the interpretations of the participants to impact the process. In addition, negotiated order

theory views change as the result of renegotiations within the structure by the participants.

Renegotiations are evident in the continual policy changes that social workers and administrators referred to and that came about because of federal welfare reform. Several social workers commented on the difficulties that they faced in learning all of the new changes. They felt that they were continually being trained on new policy, some of which contradicted earlier training. Evidence of negotiations within the structure is seen in the flexibility given to the counties with regards to some of the programs, particularly Flex Funds. A county director talked about having to develop a plan for the county with regards to welfare reform programs and Flex Funds were to be distributed at the discretion of the individual counties (following certain state guidelines).

These renegotiations could be seen in Parsons' theory as the "means" of his *unit act* (Holmwood, 1996). In Parsons' development of the concept of the *unit act*, he was not referring to any concrete action, but rather to the potential for action. The concept of the *unit act* implies an actor, an end result, and a situation within which the actor potentially acts (Holmwood, 1996). The problem is that Parsons stopped his development of this concept before he reached what Strauss (1978) calls the negotiation context. The potential for negotiated order theory is present in Parsons' theory, he recognized the importance of both subjective and structural influences on action; however, he failed to carry it far enough. Thus, negotiated order theory provides a complement to Parsons' theory.

The Negotiation Context

The environment in which policy development and implementation takes place has been presented in Chapter Six. This environment makes up what Strauss (1978) calls the two parts of the structure within which negotiations take place, the structural and negotiation contexts. The structural context is the organization of DHS, its history and the policy-making process. The negotiation context is what the participants bring into their interactions from that structure. The focus in this discussion will be on certain aspects of the negotiation context.

One aspect of the negotiation context is the perceived move in DHS toward a management style in which those on top lean more heavily on the workers in the field (so described by DHS social workers and administrators). Quality Oklahoma was mentioned only a few times, but several administrators and social workers talked about communication, getting feedback from the front line and the feeling that those at the top (state offices) were listening to the social workers that were actually implementing the policies. In one group interview of social workers, one of the respondents suggested that the health of the agency could be seen in the amount of personal leave and sick days that were taken. It was a given that when you were absent you came back to twice as much work, but the respondent pointed out that people frequently took time off. Her comments were met with nods and vocal agreements and indications of burnout and cynicism. Interestingly, the one administrator from the state offices that was interviewed did not feel that people in the counties had much power and influence in policy development, yet this was the same person who pointed out one way that they could give input. This input refers to the requests for feedback and suggestions for changes that go out to the counties

before policy suggestions are given to the state legislature. As mentioned in the findings, social workers acknowledged that these requests occurred, but quickly added that they usually did not have time to respond to them. Again, it is important to mention that it is likely that the input that is offered is genuine. The sheer fact that little time is available for feedback implies that those social workers who take the time to offer input do so because they feel strongly about the proposed policy. Another aspect of this feedback relates to the organizational culture of DHS. Four social workers suggested that DHS did not encourage interaction with legislators (a.k.a. lobbying), but the feedback opportunities suggest that DHS is interested in getting the point of view of those workers in the field. In addition, the interactions that appear to be appropriate between the groups of respondents are limited to legislators and DHS state office employees, state employees and county administrators, and finally, administrators and social workers. The culture of the organization appears to have a definite hierarchy of interactions. Thus, one of the reasons that social workers rarely offer input may relate to the unspoken rule that policy-input at the state level is considered negative.

A final aspect of the negotiation context that emerged during the interviews is the perceptions of respondents regarding the Human Services Commission. Structurally, the Commission is a powerful force in the workings of DHS. The nine-member panel determines what policies get passed on to the governor for approval and who the director of the agency is. It is also a powerful force in the perceptions of the respondents to the study. Respondents frequently referred to the Commission in the interviews. Sometimes the comments related to visits by Commission members or the perception that certain members were on DHS' side. Other times, references were made to the growing

influence of the governor on the Commission and the feeling that the Commission was turning into a tool of the executive branch. These latter perceptions perhaps foreshadow a less amicable relationship between the Commission and DHS. Realistically, as a Commission member pointed out, it is an arm of the executive branch and the governor should be able to have some say in it. However, as the governing body of a large state agency whose target population is historically underrepresented in the political arena (Burton, 1992), the Commission is also obligated to serve the best interests of said agency. If, in fact, tensions do arise between DHS and the Commission, one fallout might be a lack of communication from the workers of DHS, which could hinder the Commission's awareness of the agency's needs. This scenario is an extreme one and its suggestion is hampered by the small sample for the study. However, respondents who mentioned problems with the control by the executive branch of the Commission did so forcefully and with rancor. These views must be contrasted, though, with the general goodwill expressed toward the Commission members in general and the exiting chair in particular.

So, what does all of this mean for the negotiation context? What we see here is a conflict-filled history that emerges in the perceptions of respondents and an organization that faces problems common to many organizations. Workers are often cynical, sometimes idealistic and frequently hopeful of the changes that are occurring with welfare reform. Perhaps most surprising to the researcher was the fact that every respondent indicated, either directly or indirectly, that they were both aware of and knowledgeable about the population for whom these policies were being developed. Surprising because the respondents indicated that they were engaging in the policy

development process partly out of a desire to help this underrepresented group, even the legislators who faced hundreds of bills in any given session.

Policy Implementation and the Structural Context

The mechanics of the policy-making process provide the basis for the structural context. Especially important in this context is the power that DHS has to promulgate pre-emptive rules. This power was given to DHS, in part, so that the agency could quickly address federal mandates and avoid sanctions, which could cost the state money. This potentially gives DHS a great deal of power with regards to policies, provided that the governor supports the policies, because pre-emptive rules avoid both legislative and public comment and they are permanent. In reality, pre-emptive rules are used infrequently by DHS.

A comment on the methodology of uncovering the policy-making process deserves mention here. The addition of the three extra interviews substantiates the decision to use in-depth interviews. Rather than rely on a flow chart and secondary data (e.g. the Administrative Procedures Act), the decision was made to talk to people, get their perceptions, explore their knowledge of the processes. The networks that were tapped through the respondents provided for several things: 1) they facilitated scheduling interviews and establishing rapport with the respondents; 2) they provided richer description than possible in a survey or flat, secondary sources; and 3) unexpected information often emerged in the course of the loosely structured interview.

<u>Perceptions of the Process</u>

The perceptions of the participants involved in the policy-making process were studied because they constitute the insight into how the process is acted out. Above and beyond the actual process are the actors who maintain it with their interactions. Their perceptions, then, are important to a fuller understanding of the mechanics of policy-making.

Legislators were asked about their responsibilities to DHS administrators and social workers and DHS administrators were asked about their perceived responsibilities toward social workers. Both groups of respondents tended to meet this question with puzzled looks preceding their responses. What became apparent was that both groups indicated responsibilities dictated by their position in the process. The two exceptions to this were legislators who took more than a professional interest in the topic. Both the general responses and the exceptions suggest two things. One, the question could have been left out of the interviews and, two, unless you have personal experiences to influence you (be they experiences with poverty or friends in DHS) the suggestions of Luhmann that value-consensus is not necessary if the organization is adequately structured appear to hold in this study.

Another factor suggested by the focus groups discussed earlier and reinforced by a separate question in the in-depth interviews was the impact that social workers have in the implementation decisions ("Who decides how these policies are implemented? - Appendix D). The general attitude reinforced the top-down image of DHS that emerged in the interviews. With two exceptions, the state offices were named as the decision-makers in policy implementation. However, one respondent differentiated between state

and county level policies and her comments were echoed by other DHS respondents in different parts of the interviews. Other respondents suggested that counties were being given increased flexibility in the ways that they applied programs and policies in their areas. These claims, combined with the focus groups and the comments about Quality Now from the earlier discussion, present a picture of an agency that is trying to implement a less top-down approach to policy development and implementation. Yet, despite these attempts, complaints were common across interviews and it appears that DHS has further to go before the changes are perceived in a positive light.

Another indicator of a feedback loop in the policy-making process, albeit an informal one, is the presence of contact between legislators and DHS administrators and social workers. The in-depth interviews asked about the amount of contact between the respondents but did not specify what type of communication and what emerged was an overwhelming emphasis on contact occurring because of constituents/clients. The overall impression of the researcher with regards to this question is that contact between the participants is infrequent and when it occurs it is usually related to the Oklahoma Public Employees Association or to constituents. Respondents from all subgroups mentioned time as a factor in the lack of contact and given the observations made during the interviews, it is no surprise that contact is generally minimal (refer back to Chapter Five for the observations on DHS and legislative activities).

Essentially, the potential for a feedback loop is there but it is used only infrequently. It is also possible that more legislators use constituent calls as a basis for policy-making decisions than indicated in the interviews. For example, one legislator who mentioned receiving calls from constituents who were in danger of losing their

children or benefits was also one of the legislators with the most negative opinion of welfare and who expressed the desire to do away with public assistance. While it is likely that the beliefs came before the calls, the problems faced by her constituents certainly do not offer contradictory evidence to effect change.

Role Perceptions

On a more intermediate level, the perceptions of the respondents regarding their specific roles offer insight into how the structure is potentially enacted. This was the rationale for research question 2, which this section addresses. In general, the respondents' perceptions of their roles corresponded with their position in the structure or hierarchy. Administrators, Commission members and social workers expressed perceptions that corresponded with their positions in the structure. For example, administrators reported training, staff support, and social worker oversight. Administrators from smaller county offices, however, were more likely to see their roles as a blend of administrator and social worker. This is not surprising when you consider that this is exactly what they do. Similarly, Commission members perceived their roles as ones involving oversight and social workers defined their roles in terms of the work they do with clients.

The one group that presented a somewhat confounding picture was the legislators. Six of the fifteen respondents referred to policy-making. One legislator talked about monetary oversight. These were the expected responses. The unexpected responses included the legislator who thought he was a "watchdog" for the agency, the legislator who referred to himself as the water-carrier of the agency, and the continual references to children. The latter is only surprising in view of the researcher's singular focus on TANF

(Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and related programs. Given the prominence of child welfare issues in both the legislature and the media (i.e. the Ryan Luke Bill - a prominent state bill about child abuse), this finding is not surprising at all. Adding the impact of committee assignments and affiliations, the legislators' responses corresponded highly with their positions in the structural hierarchy. The confounding aspect of this is that, given the dearth of political representation for the poor (Burton, 1992) and the comment of one respondent who suggested that the director of DHS was the sole lobbyist for the poor, what is seen here is a small lobby of sorts. Granted the legislative lobby is concerned primarily about the children, but there appears to be a group of legislators who consider DHS and/or welfare reform to be part of their legislative missions.

This discussion provides evidence of the usefulness of a mesostructural level of analysis. The policy-making process is a rather sterile phenomenon when viewed solely from the perspective of the steps that must be taken to produce policy. However, when viewed within the context of the perceptions of the participants, the process takes on a depth that could not be achieved from a purely structural analysis.

<div align="center">Relating the Findings to the Empirical Literature</div>

Chapter Three reviewed the relevant literature on the causes of poverty, support for social programs, values and policy implementation. The findings of the current study offer insight into each of these areas. Each is discussed in turn.

Causes of Poverty

First, with regards to the research on the causes of poverty, the majority of the literature found that people are more likely to consider personal traits as the primary drivers behind poverty than structural factors. The current study evidenced more of a

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focus on structural factors than on individual ones. In the in-depth interviews, legislators were more likely to focus on structural issues like programs that stressed work and responsibility, but many felt that self-sufficiency was the key for welfare recipients, with the exception of groups like children, the elderly and the sick and disabled. Administrators were mixed between structural and individual factors and social workers tended to focus on structural issues although they also talked about individual factors.

Overall, the hypothesis that respondents, especially legislators, would attribute individualistic causes to poverty was not supported (hypothesis 1). The respondents as a whole tended to view structural factors and the fatalistic item 'sickness and disability' as more important reasons for poverty than individual items like lack of thrift or effort. However, when broken down by occupation, social workers were more likely to attribute individualistic causes to poverty above structural or fatalistic. While surprising and completely unexpected, these findings are supported by the responses to the in-depth interviews. Thus, although there was a lack of statistical significance, information from the in-depth interviews suggests that this finding is more than just a fluke. Social workers were more likely to talk about clients' lack of understanding of the idea of getting up and going to work or about having to change clients' attitudes. Administrators and legislators also made comments like that, but not with the frequency of social workers.

There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, these findings may be an anomaly and therefore untrue for most social workers. Considering this possibility, a social worker with a long history in a state welfare agency (albeit in another state) was contacted. This social worker suggested that, in her experience, social workers do in fact

tend to focus on individual issues like attitudes and habits more than on structural factors. This, in turn, begs the question whether the nature of the social worker's job has something to do with this focus. This is a possibility, but one that would require further research.

The second possible explanation follows the pattern of legislative responses. Legislators tended to offer answers to the questions in the interviews that dealt in generalities more than in specifics and thus, they might have focused more on the structural characteristics. Again, this may have more to do with their occupation than with their personal beliefs.

A final explanation, at least with regards to the legislators, relates to political affiliation. The study ended up targeting twice as many Democrats as Republicans. This may have skewed the results somewhat. The responses to the in-depth interviews showed a mix of views; some legislators mentioned things like the culture of poverty and the attitudes of the poor (arguably individualistic), while others talked about the programs themselves (e.g. education) or the economy (structural explanations).

Support for Programs

With regards to support for social programs, respondents reported similar attitudes. Not surprisingly, given the emphasis in the in-depth interviews, employment training emerged as a program for which all respondents supported increased funding. Public housing, Food Stamps, TANF, and social security were the programs for which respondents either desired to maintain or decrease current funding. While at first, this may seem surprising, it is important to highlight an error that was overlooked in the scale. The instructions tell respondents to answer with *state* funding in mind unless otherwise

indicated. The programs mentioned above are all funded primarily with federal dollars, a fact that escaped the researcher until the study was well under way. This error likely confounds the results somewhat. However, the presence of confirmatory evidence with regards to employment training and child welfare suggests that there is still some validity to the responses. The reference to child welfare is especially true for administrators. As mentioned earlier, the Commission members are considered part of this group for analytical purposes and the three interviewed members and the country directors all made several references to child welfare. Social workers and legislators also talked about children, as discussed in Chapter Six, but to a slightly lesser degree.

Related to support for funding is knowledge of the programs. Overall, respondents know at least something about the programs, but looking at mean responses; administrators and social workers appear to know more (with the exception of Federal Aid to Education). This scale was included in the questionnaire to find out if respondents' answers to the funding support scale were based on knowledge of the programs. What emerged was a general knowledge of the various programs, with the differences by occupation (legislator, administrator, and social worker) being statistically significant. This is not surprising considering that the social workers deal with many of the programs on a daily basis whereas legislators, as discussed in Chapter Four, face so many different issues that it is difficult to become highly knowledgeable on any of them.

Values

The respondents were not asked specifically about values except in Section E of the questionnaire, which was discussed earlier in the theoretical discussion. However, it deserves further discussion here. Section E of the questionnaire assessed the

respondents' position with regards to traditional critical values with regards to welfare. While the findings suggest that respondents do not hold these values, evidence from the in-depth interviews suggests that the respondents' values revolve around work, family stability, responsibility and independence. These are not so far from the values determined by Feagin (1975) to be central to the belief system in the U.S.

Policy Implementation

Reference was made to the suggestion of Copeland and Wexler (1995) that attention be paid to social workers in the policy-making process. This suggestion was taken to heart and social workers were included in the respondent sample. Had the study only focused on legislators or on legislators and administrators then the impression of the process would have been different. The administrators reported the efforts of DHS to develop a management approach that relied more on the field workers, but it was the social workers that pointed out the difficulties in participating in such attempts. Without the input of the social workers, the time constraints that they face would not have emerged. Thus, the current study offers evidence to support the suggestion of Copeland and Wexler.

Lester et al. (1987) pointed out the disagreement on the appropriate subject matter of policy research. They suggested that everything from the initial policy statement to the final outcome of the process has been considered appropriate for research. This study differs in that it did not look at outcomes, but rather at the process itself and at the perceptions of those involved in the process. An ideal study would follow the lead of Glazier and Hall and look at both the perceptions of the participants and the process from initial statement to outcome.

Other Relevant Findings

In addition to the findings relating to the theoretical base of the study and the empirical literature, there were interesting findings that emerged during the research process that address the remaining research questions.

<u>Overview of Welfare and Background Understandings</u>

Participants in the policy-making process do not enter the process with unformed minds. Instead, participants appear to bring in pre-formed views and opinions that potentially influence their interactions in the process. Thus, to get a fuller picture of the process we needed to examine not only the structure, but also the perceptions of the participants, those who enact that structure. Hence, the inclusion of research question 3 which addressed the participants' overall views of welfare. The entire bulk of the findings relating to this research question do not need to be discussed as they were addressed in the empirical section as were two of the hypotheses. Rather, the more interesting elements of the respondents' comments are addressed below.

<u>Future of Welfare</u>: With regards to the future of welfare, legislators tended to take higher level, more abstract views of the issues. They felt that welfare reform was on the right track, and that the state needed continued emphasis on education and training. Legislators also foresaw a system that met needs rather than imposed extra-individual requirements and one that took the state of the economy into account. While only two legislators explicitly referred to the political nature of welfare in response to this question, the politics involved in welfare reform were raised throughout the interviews.

Not surprisingly, administrators and social workers were more client-centered. Both focused on programs and self-sufficiency, but they also expressed fears about

privatization, particularly as the latter would affect their clients. Some social workers

and one administrator also expressed concerns about clients who were trying hard and

still not making it. Although joking references were made to working themselves out of a

job, most social workers evidenced more concern for their clients' work opportunities

than for their own. An interesting exception to the positive, client-centered responses is

the fact that a few social workers made references to the number of loopholes still present

in the welfare system, which they suggested needed to be tightened.

Differences in respondent perceptions

Another interesting finding that emerged in the course of the interviews was the

differences in the perceptions of the policy-making process and of DHS in general. For

example, the social workers who had been with DHS the longest seemed to be, at one and

the same time, the most cynical and yet the most likely to answer with the agency's

mission statement. These were the social workers that mentioned being polite and fair

and thought that the state offices really listened to the workers. These same social

workers seemed to feel that they had little input into the process, but accepted it. Newer

social workers were more likely to think that they had input, or at least they mentioned

the types of input, especially the focus groups that DHS had been conducting, more often

than the social workers who had been with DHS longer. Not surprisingly, the

administrators were much more committed to the belief that DHS was on the right track

and was improving. Administrators were also more likely to point out that the people in

the state offices had been social workers and county administrators before advancing.

This last was suggested as proof that the state offices were likely to be listening to the

counties.

Similar Views and Attitudes

Although legislators frequently spoke about more macro-level issues with regards to welfare reform and DHS respondents talked about specifics, most respondents seemed to be talking about the same things. This was surprising because legislators were not expected to have the same understandings and concerns as administrators and social workers. For one, legislators are not "where the rubber meets the road," thus they cannot be expected to have the same understandings as respondents in the field. For another, legislators in their official functions must concern themselves with multiple issues, whereas administrators and social workers are allowed a more singular focus. The one exception to this is the Commission. Commission members were included as part of the administrator interviews, yet members do not devote their sole attention to welfare programs and reform. All of the members have full time jobs in typically unrelated fields. Yet, even though the level of discussion is different, the concerns appear similar. This is not to suggest that every legislator has the same understanding of the issues and shares the same concerns, but in this study, the majority of the respondents did. The more obvious limitations to this line of thought will be discussed later in this chapter.

Situational Ethics Exceptions Scale

Respondents to the Situational Ethics Exceptions Scale do not, in general, seem to feel that welfare is a negative thing. Rather, respondents as a whole tend to be rather neutral on the subject. Respondents were most favorable to welfare when it involved issues of responsibility, self-sufficiency, family stability, and starvation. All of these are supported by responses in the in-depth interview portion of the study. Respondents across occupational subgroups, but especially DHS employees and Commission

members, wanted to see increased responsibility placed on the individual. Self-sufficiency was also a major concern for respondents, especially social workers, and one of the praises of the new welfare reform. Keeping families together, while not a prime topic during the interviews did emerge enough to deserve mention here. Finally, many respondents, even while complaining about welfare reform, suggested that something like welfare would have to exist because people "won't let children starve."

Interestingly, despite the slight support for welfare evidenced in this scale, the evidence presented elsewhere favors the opposite conclusion. Media coverage touts declines in welfare rolls and successes in getting people off of welfare and into jobs. Respondents in the in-depth interviews talked about welfare being necessary but that the goal should be to get people trained and working and off of public assistance. Few were willing to come out and say that welfare was "bad," but references to inefficiency and fraud and the need to change it even further suggest that welfare as a whole is not seen in a positive light. It needs to be mentioned, however, that the education, training, and employment (ETE) programs, the Flex Funds program, the life skills courses taught in various counties and the public-community partnerships being developed in some counties *are* all seen in a positive light. These are the things that respondents praised and that they feel should be continued and expanded. These are the result of the welfare reform movement and may have mitigated the view expressed in the interviews that welfare is slightly negative.

In addition, there was a general consensus among many of the respondents that our society could not let children starve but there was also a feeling that parents (adults) needed to take responsibility for their lives and shouldn't receive government assistance

unless they are mentally or physically incapacitated. Interestingly, it is a lack of consensus found in most of the respondents. In other words, it was not something that one group of respondents agreed on and another group disagreed. Rather, many of the respondents seemed to have a similar conflict in their views of welfare. On the one hand, most agree that we must always support the physically and mentally disabled and children. On the other hand, a parent should be responsible, get a job and be a good role model. Herein lies some of the problem with welfare reform as indicated by respondents. The goal is to reduce numbers and help people become self-sufficient. Yet, most respondents acknowledged that there is a portion of the population that might always need a system like welfare. Given this conflict, the collective goal of reducing the numbers and assisting people toward self-sufficiency and responsibility might have to be modified to account for those individuals that are acknowledged as long-term, even lifetime, recipients of public assistance.

Methodological Considerations

It is important to discuss the issues of generalizability, validity and reliability of the data now that the research process has been completed. These concerns were initially discussed in Chapter 5, but bear further mention now.

The reliability of the data is of concern because of the changing nature of welfare reform. With the passage of PL 104-193, state laws and DHS procedures have undergone significant revisions. According to respondents within DHS, what was once quarterly training has become almost monthly training. These changes are discussed here because they impact the reliability of the responses. Respondents, especially DHS respondents, are constantly faced with changes in the methods of human service delivery. When these

changes are effective, attitudes toward welfare reform are likely to be positive.

Conversely, when these changes create further paperwork and/or hardship in the lives of

clients, attitudes toward welfare reform are likely to be more negative. Thus, this data

must be viewed as a snapshot of the attitudes of respondents within the timeframe of the

research (August – December, 1997).

In addition to the reliability of the data, the validity of the data must now be

addressed with the hindsight of a completed research project. While the researcher had

some concerns about interviewing the elite segment of this population, no problems other

than time constraints were encountered. Overall, the respondents were relaxed and

unguarded. From the legislators to the social workers, respondents were open in their

criticisms and in their praise. Respondents would even go so far as to name specific

people when voicing criticism. Legislative respondents were particularly willing to share

their views, even while admitting that their views might be unpopular. One legislative

respondent was later seen giving a public address in which views similar to those offered

in the interview were expressed to an audience. In another unintentional check on

validity, the DHS employees verified the information given by two legislators. Overall,

the validity of the responses appears to be high.

The final area of concern is the generalizability of the data in this study. The

issue is not whether the results are generalizable to other states, but whether the responses

can be generalized to other legislators, administrators, and social workers within the state

of Oklahoma. It is less important to be able to generalize to other states because of the

variety of programs that other states are using to deal with welfare reform. Attitudes and

the policy-making process are likely to differ considerably from state to state. Instead,

what is important is whether the sample represents the views of the populations of legislators, administrators, and social workers. The information obtained from the legislators is most suspect. The nature of the job of a state legislator means that most attention is paid to bills that appear before committees to which the particular legislator is appointed. Bills that appear before other committees and which the legislator sees for the first time at the vote are less likely to engage the thoughts and concerns of the lawmaker, beyond the general concern expressed for any bill. Thus, the specific sample of legislators may in fact be more informed and more in tune with the requirements of DHS and of welfare reform than the average legislator. For the administrator and social worker samples, however, these concerns are not applicable. References made to conversations with other DHS employees and the variety of DHS respondents that were interviewed suggest that the sample is fairly representative. Thus, the generalizability of the administrator and social worker responses is quite good. The primary concern in this study is with the legislative responses and that is not surprising given the purposive nature of the sample.

Conclusions

This exploratory study opened the doors on several potentially enlightening research agendas. First, interviews with respondents at all levels offered insight into the Human Services Commission. References to the Commission during Rader's time and to specific Commission members suggested that there is more to this entity than the current study was able to uncover. It would be an interesting and worthwhile project to study the history and changing face of the Human Services Commission from its inception to its current status. The position of the Human Services Commission as both an arm of the

executive branch and the "manager" of DHS provides an interesting potential conflict that warrants further discovery.

Another issue that emerged relates to the former director of DHS, Lloyd E. Rader. References were made both to his generosity and his power and respondents seemed split over whether he was a good leader or an overbearing dictator. Regardless of the attitude, it was clear during the interviews that his legacy lives on. Rader influences the workings of DHS and the way that people deal with and react to the agency even though he left the agency in the 1980s. A worthy research endeavor would involve analyzing the history of Lloyd E. Rader and the influence that he had and continues to have on public assistance in Oklahoma. His papers are in a library at the University of Central Oklahoma, but it is the researcher's understanding that some of the documents are unavailable to the public as yet. This only further heightens the mystery and reinforces the need for further research.

For a less exploratory study that expands on the current work, the researcher recommends using Glazier and Hall's research of the career ladder concept in Missouri. The structure of these studies, outlined in Hall (1995) provides a fuller application of mesodomain analysis, which the current project began but did not fully realize. Their assessment of policy as "a transformation of intentions where content, practices, relationships, and consequences are generated within the dynamics" (399) fits the current study well. That this research was found after the current project was nearly finished accounts for the fact that it was not used. However, its value cannot be ignored and the use of negotiated order and mesodomain analysis as conducted by Glazier and Hall

(1996) merits further attention and could be easily modified to fit the current welfare reform situation.

Finally, a potential respondent group, clients, was ignored in the current study. Welfare recipients are an important part of the process. As was discussed earlier, they are part of the constituency of the organization that is DHS and the legislature, but they are frequently overlooked. Interviewing welfare recipients was beyond the scope of the current research, but analysis of their role in the policy-making process and their commitment to the collective goal of the organization (or potential lack thereof) deserves analysis.

The most surprising and interesting finding of the study was that the participants have similar views regarding the success and future of welfare reform. It was expected that legislators, given the nature of their jobs, would have little real knowledge about the issues surrounding welfare reform and even less of a sense of who the reforms are supposed to help. Instead, the legislators that agreed to be interviewed showed a surprising sensitivity to the process and a general awareness of the problems and needs of the system. While it is likely that the purposive nature of the sample and the fact that it was limited primarily to people dealing with these issues affected the results, it was still an unexpected finding. Social workers commented that they felt that legislators did not understand the implications of the policies that they supported, but the findings suggest that they do.

While not intending to downplay the sensitivity of the politicians to welfare recipients and human service programs, it is important to interject a concern. True, the study found that the respondents were on the 'same page' with regards to success in

welfare reform, the collective goal of the system. However, it became clear during the interviews that perhaps the respondents were not in consensus on the means of achieving success in welfare reform. Further thought upon this issue suggests that perhaps commitment to the collective goal is not sufficient to ensure an efficiently working system. It may not be important at all. Rather, what may be more important is that the participants agree on the way that welfare reform should be achieved. Bureaucracies, however, are slow to change and the old system was to hand down the means of human service delivery from the top of DHS. While there has been a clear move to involve the social workers in the decision-making process, it has been less successful than initially desired. Thus, although the current study did not ask about the means of achieving success in welfare reform, it emerged as an important issue.

This issue contributes to the final assessment of the usefulness of Parsons for the study. It became clearer as the study progressed that relying on negotiated order theory with a mesostructural frame of analysis would have been sufficient to carry the theoretical base of this research. Parsons' assumptions on the consensus of values, commitment to the collective goal and constraint of the organizational structure proved unnecessary. The first two assumptions were unnecessary because they provided little insight into the workings of the policy-making process. The last assumption proved unnecessary because it was contained with negotiated order theory. Thus, further analysis would leave Parsons behind and focus on negotiated order theory and mesostructural analysis.

Another key finding emerged from the research on the policy-making process. One of the rationales for including in-depth interviews in the study was to get at an

understanding of how the participants viewed the process and to find out if these views matched the actual mechanics of the process. While the mechanics of the process can be summarized in the eight steps presented in Chapter Six, it became clear that two things could be added to that process. The first involves the attempt of the state offices of DHS to involve workers in the field in the policy-making process. This has taken the form of feedback requests and focus groups. These opportunities validate respondent comments about attempts to make DHS a more bottom-up agency. On the other hand, this must be limited by comments from social workers who indicate that they have no time to participate in these input opportunities. Thus, while the opportunities to have input in the policy-making process are presented, the demands of the job do not allow workers the time to offer any real feedback. While Parsons might suggest that the system will change eventually to allow workers the necessary time, neofunctionalists might point to this as an indication of a basic inequality in the system that leads to interactions that are not functional for the agency.

Overall, the study proposed to discover the policy-making process involved in welfare reform in Oklahoma and the perceptions of the participants involved. The study was also interested in the attitudes of those participants toward poverty and welfare and whether they felt that welfare was a negative program. Finally, the study attempted to determine if the participants in the process were viewing the issues in a similar manner— in a Parsonian sense, were they all committed to the collective goals of welfare reform? All of this was done within an exploratory research framework involving multiple theories and methods. While the end analysis is that Parsons was unnecessary and rather

cumbersome, the result is still a study that addresses the issues with a depth that would

not have been possible had a single theory or a single methodology been employed.

This study might serve as a reassurance of sorts for those involved in welfare

reform policy in Oklahoma, but it should also be taken as an indicator of areas that need

work. If DHS is truly committed to developing feedback loops with regards to policy—

and as one legislator said "those in the field know best what is needed"—it needs to take

steps to provide time for input without penalizing the workers for leaving their jobs. In

other words, input needs to be considered a part of the job and not just a sideline issue.

Finally, the findings of the study suggest contributions to Parsons' work.

Parsons' ideas regarding the constraining nature of structure are played out in the current

study as evidenced by the fact that the perceptions of the respondents with regards to

welfare reform and their assessments of their responsibilities correspond to their positions

within the policy-making process. Parsons, however, does not fully account for the

impact that the interpretations of the participants could have on the structure or policy-

making process. It is here that negotiated order can fill a void left by Parsons' theory.

These interpretations can go beyond the constraints of the structure and play out in ways

that are not necessarily functional for the system.

In addition, the study addressed the issue of value-consensus. Luhmann (as cited

in Turner, 1991) suggested that this was not necessary, and even though the findings of

the current study support Parsons, it would be naïve to think that *all* of the participants in

the policy-making process share the same set of values. What comes into play is the

hierarchy of the process and the positions of the participants within that hierarchy. Yet,

this also is too deterministic. We cannot avoid the potential influence of the participants

themselves. Thus, the most valid method of analyzing policy-making must include both

the structure and the perceptions or definitions of the participants as they enact that

structure.

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APPENDIX A

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENST

CONSENT FORM

I, _____ (name of respondent) agree to participate in the following proceedure:

1. In-depth interview, the length of which will be determined by myself, but which generally takes 45 minutes to one hour.

2. A survey of 53 questions which takes about 20 minutes to complete and will be mailed in after the interview.

This interview and survey are being done as part of a dissertation entitled: "Welfare Reform: An Analysis of the Implementation of Welfare Policy in Oklahoma." The purpose of this study is to better understand the process by which policy is developed by state legislators and transmitted and implemented by the Department of Human Services. This knowledge will help legislators, administrators, and social workers both better understand the process and highlight aspects that may need improvement.

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time. Any information I give is completely confidential. I understand that by providing this information for research I am in no way putting myself at any risk.

I may contact Dr. Richard Dodder, who is Elizabeth Howard Eells' dissertation advisor, at 405-744-6105, should I wish further information about this research. I may also contact Gay Clarkson, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, OK 74078: Telephone: 405-744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting that the subject sign it.

Signed: _____

    Elizabeth Howard Eells

APPENDIX B

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In-depth interview questions for state legislators

1. What do you see as the role of legislators in the welfare system?
2. What is your opinion of welfare?
3. Where do you want welfare or similar programs to be in the future, particularly in Oklahoma?
4. What changes would you like to see in our welfare system?
5. Which programs do you feel are most effective, or have the potential to be most effective?
6. How do you feel about transfer payments in counties where the availability of jobs is low?
7. How would you measure success in welfare?
8. How much contact have you had or do you have with DHS administrators and social workers?
9. What do you consider to be your responsibility with regards to DHS administrators and social workers?
10. Are there any questions or comments you would like to make?

In-depth interview questions for administrators

1. What do you see as your role in the welfare (human services) system?
2. What is your opinion of welfare?
3. Where do you want welfare or similar programs to be in the future, particularly in Oklahoma?
4. What changes would you like to see in our welfare system?
5. From your perspective, which programs do you feel are most effective, or have the potential to be most effective?
6. How do you feel about transfer payments in counties where the availability of jobs is low?
7. How would you measure success in welfare?
8. How much contact have you had or do you have with legislators?
9. How do you find out about the changes in welfare policy that the legislators make?
10. What is your responsibility with regards to this information?
11. How do you get this information to the social workers under you?
12. Do you have any questions or comments?

In-depth interview questions for social workers

1. What do you see as your role in the welfare (human services) system?
2. What is your opinion of welfare?
3. Where do you want welfare or similar programs to be in the future, particularly in Oklahoma?
4. What changes would you like to see in our welfare system?
5. From your perspective, which programs do you feel are most effective, or have the potential to be most effective?
6. How do you feel about transfer payments in counties where the availability of jobs is low?
7. How would you measure success in welfare?
8. How much contact have you had or do you have with legislators?
9. How do you find out about the changes in welfare policy that the legislators make?
10. Who decides how these policies are implemented?
11. What do you consider to be the biggest obstacles you face in your work?
    What do you consider to be the best things about DHS? probe: the situation in which you work?
12. Do you have any questions or comments?

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

Elizabeth Howard Eells
Oklahoma State University
Department of Sociology
(405) 744-6105
ehoward@okstate.edu
Dear (Respondent),

I am a doctoral candidate at Oklahoma State University in the Department of Sociology. I am conducting a survey as part of my dissertation designed to gain an understanding of individuals' orientations to the implementation of poverty and welfare policy. As a voluntary participant, you are asked to respond to the enclosed survey. The questionnaire takes about 20 minutes to complete, and your responses are confidential. In other words, they will not be connected to you in any way in the discussion of the results. Once a computer database is complete, you cannot be identified and the original surveys will be destroyed.

Again, participation is voluntary and your honest response to questionnaire items is appreciated. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at Oklahoma State University. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Richard A. Dodder, at (405) 744-6105. Please return the following survey in the enclosed stamped envelope.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Howard Eells

APPENDIX D

COPIES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE - LEGISLATOR AND DHS VERSIONS

(LEGISLATOR VERSION)
Welfare and Poverty Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to fill this out. Please complete this survey, fold and return in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by November 25, 1997 to Elizabeth Howard Eells, Department of Sociology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078. All responses will be kept confidential.

Section A. Vital Statistics

The following information will be used for purposes of comparison. Please circle your answer.

1. I am: 1 Female   2 Male

2. My race/ethnicity is:
   1 American Indian   4 Asian
   2 African American/Black   5 White
   3 Hispanic   6 Other (please specify)
   _____

3. Religious affiliation:
   1 Catholic   4 Atheist   7 Methodist
   2 Jewish   5 Baptist   8 Presbyterian
   3 Muslim   6 Episcopal   9 Lutheran
   01 Mormon   02 Other (please specify)
   02 Christian   _____

4. Highest level of education: 1 High School   4 Bachelor's degree
   2 Some college   5 Graduate degree
   3 Associate's degree/   6 Other (please specify)
      technical certificate   _____

5. Current marital status: 1 Single, never married   4 Divorced
   2 Married   5 Widowed
   3 Separated

6. I am a member of the: 1 House   2 Senate

7. Length of service (in years):   House _____
   Senate _____

8. Party Affiliation: 1 Republican   2 Democrat
   3 Independent   4 Other: _____

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SECTION B.
Please place a check mark next to your chosen answer.
Do you think government support for the following should be increased, decreased, or remain the same? (refers to state government support unless otherwise indicated)

6. Federal Aid to Education   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

7. Public Housing   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

8. Temporary Assistance to Needy   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same
    Families (TANF)

9. Family Support Services   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

10. Food Stamps   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

11. Medicaid   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

12. Child Welfare Department   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

13. Social Security Benefits   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

14. Minimum Wage   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

15. Employment Training Programs   ___ increase   ___ decrease   ___ stay the same

SECTION C.
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'completely unfamiliar' and 5 being 'know a great deal about', how familiar would you say you are with the following programs?

	Know very little				Know a great deal
16. Federal Aid to Education	1	2	3	4	5
17. Public Housing	1	2	3	4	5
18. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	1	2	3	4	5
19. Family Support Services	1	2	3	4	5
20. Food Stamps	1	2	3	4	5
21. Medicaid	1	2	3	4	5
22. Child Welfare Department	1	2	3	4	5
23. Social Security Benefits	1	2	3	4	5
24. Minimum Wage	1	2	3	4	5
25. Employment Training Programs (or similar programs)	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION D.

The following questions relate to your perceptions of the reasons for poverty. Please choose the response that most closely identifies your attitudes (1 = not important to 5 = very important).

	Not important			Very important	
26. Lack of thrift and proper money management by poor people.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Lack of effort by the poor themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Lack of ability and talent among poor people.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Loose morals and drunkenness.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Sickness and physical handicaps.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Low wages in some businesses and industries.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Failure of society to provide good schools for many Americans.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Prejudice and discrimination against minorities.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Failure of private industry to provide enough jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Being taken advantage of by rich people.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Just bad luck.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E.

The following questions relate to your perceptions of welfare. Please indicate how strongly you feel about each statement. (SD = strongly disagree, SA = strongly agree)

	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
37. There are too many people receiving welfare who should be working.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Many people getting welfare are not honest about their need.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Many women getting welfare money are having illegitimate babies to increase the many they get.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Generally speaking, we are spending too little money On welfare programs in this state.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Most people on welfare who can work try to find jobs so they can support themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
42. One of the main troubles with welfare is that it doesn't give people enough to get along.	1	2	3	4	5
43. A lot of people are moving to this state from other states just to get welfare money here.	1	2	3	4	5

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SECTION F

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements by circling the number associated with your response.

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
In Oklahoma, the current welfare system is not a good system for providing for the poor.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Welfare is okay if it holds individuals responsible for helping themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Welfare is okay if it promotes self-sufficiency by encouraging education and job acquisition.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Welfare is okay when it encourages families to stay together.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Welfare is okay in the sense that it keeps money flowing back into the economy (from all of the services that are connected to it).	1	2	3	4	5
48. Welfare is okay s the leadership of my party (Democrat or Republican) supports it.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Welfare is okay if it involves programs like Head Start.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Welfare is okay if it is mandated by the Federal government.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Welfare is okay if it feeds someone who might otherwise starve.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Welfare is okay if everyone else supports it.	1	2	3	4	5
53. Welfare is okay if it is necessary for human survival.	1	2	3	4	5

THIS CONCLUDES THE QUESTIONNAIRE.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION. FEEL FREE TO WRITE ANY COMMENTS BELOW THAT YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT QUESTIONS YOU WERE ASKED. AGAIN, THANK YOU!!!

(DHS VERSION-changes only on the first page)
Welfare and Poverty Questionnaire
Thank you for taking the time to fill this out. Please complete this survey, fold and return in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by November 25, 1997 to Elizabeth Howard Eells, Department of Sociology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078. All responses will be kept confidential.

<u>**Section A. Vital Statistics**</u>

The following information will be used for purposes of comparison. Please circle your answer.

6. I am: 1   Female   2   Male

7. My race/ethnicity is:
1	American Indian	4	Asian
2	African American/Black	5	White
3	Hispanic	6	Other (please specify)

                                                       _____

8. Religious affiliation:
1	Catholic	4	Atheist	7	Methodist
2	Jewish	5	Baptist	8	Presbyterian
3	Muslim	6	Episcopal	9	Lutheran
01	Mormon	02	Other (please specify)		
02	Christian				

                                    _____

9. Highest level of education:
1	High School	4	Bachelor's degree
2	Some college	5	Graduate degree
3	Associate's degree/ technical certificate	6	Other (please specify)

                                    _____

10. Current marital status:
1	Single, never married	4	Divorced
2	Married	5	Widowed
3	Separated		

11. Length of employment at DHS (in years): _____

VITA 2

Elizabeth Anne Howard Eells

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: WELFARE REFORM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WELFARE POLICY IN OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Northeast High School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in May 1987; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri in May 1991; received Master of Science degree in Sociology from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 1994; completing requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 1999.

Professional Experience: Graduate Research Assistant for the Developmental Disabilities Quality Assurance Project at Oklahoma State University from August 1992 to December 1994. Taught Introductory Sociology at Oklahoma State University in spring 1995 and from fall 1996 to fall 1997. Graduate Research Assistant for the Oklahoma Poverty Grant in the summer of 1996. Graduate Teaching Assistant at Oklahoma State University from fall 1995 to spring 1996. Graduate Assistant for the American Indian Science, Technology and Engineering Consortium and for the OPSS program in the summer of 1997. Teaching Introductory Sociology at Glendale Community College in Glendale, Arizona since spring 1998.

Professional Memberships: American Sociological Association, Midwest Sociological Society.

APPENDIX E

IRB FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 10-27-97   IRB#: AS-98-020

Proposal Title: IMPLEMENTATION OF WELFARE POLICY IN OKLAHOMA

Principal Investigator(s): Richard Dodder, Elizabeth Howard Eells

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt
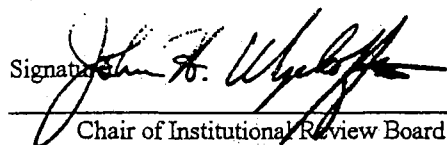
Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT
NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE
APPROVAL PERIOD.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature _____   Date: October 30, 1997
         Chair of Institutional Review Board
cc: Elizabeth Howard Eells

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