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**CHILD WELFARE AND DEVOLVING FEDERALISM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE  
EFFECTS OF FEDERAL FUNDING SCHEMES ON SELECTED CHILD  
WELFARE OUTCOMES IN MICHIGAN**

by

**Timothy J. Kangas**

**A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
School of Public Affairs and Administration**

**ADVISOR: DR PETER KOBRAK**

**Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
June 2004**

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE  
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

Date May 20, 2004

WE HEREBY APPROVE THE DISSERTATION SUBMITTED BY

Timothy Jon Kangas

ENTITLED Child Welfare and Devolving Federalism: An Analysis of the Effects of  
Federal Funding Schemes on Selected Child Welfare Outcomes in  
Michigan

AS PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF Doctor of Philosophy

School of Public Affairs and Administration

(Department)



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Dean of The Graduate College

Date June 2004

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	1
Significance of the Research .....	3
Timeliness .....	3
Scope of the Problem .....	5
Policy Dimensions .....	5
Michigan's Child Welfare System .....	10
Research Question .....	14
Purpose of the Study .....	18
Research Design .....	18
Variables .....	19
Data Collection Method .....	20
Time Frame .....	20
Decision Criteria .....	20
Benefits of Research .....	21

## Table of Contents—Continued

### CHAPTER

II.	HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF CHILD WELFARE .....	22
	The Earliest Child Welfare Laws .....	23
	From Laws to Ideals .....	25
	Foundations of the American System .....	26
	Centralized Child Welfare .....	27
	Summary .....	31
III.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	32
	Federalism .....	34
	Devolving Federalism .....	40
	Grant Typology .....	45
	Child Welfare and Devolving Federalism in Michigan .....	50
	Summary .....	56
IV.	METHODOLOGY .....	59
	Possible Intervening Variables .....	66
	Type of Research .....	72
	Hypotheses .....	75
	Variables .....	76
	Levels of Data .....	77
	Operational Definitions .....	78

## Table of Contents—Continued

### CHAPTER

Assumptions .....	81
Limitations.....	86
Procedures .....	87
Data Analysis Methods .....	89
Decision Criteria.....	93
V. DATA ANALYSIS .....	95
Descriptive Analysis .....	98
Foster Care Placements .....	98
CPS Referrals.....	102
CPS Substantiations .....	105
CPS Resubstantiations.....	107
Descriptive Data by County Grouping.....	110
Descriptive Statistics Summary.....	114
Child Welfare Outcomes—Correlations .....	115
Findings—Child Welfare Outcomes Correlations.....	122
Analytical Test Results (ANOVA)—Child Welfare Outcomes.....	123
Child Welfare Outcomes—Assumed Variance.....	124
Foster Care Placements .....	124
CPS Referrals.....	125
CPS Substantiations .....	126

## Table of Contents—Continued

### CHAPTER

CPS Resubstantiations.....	126
Findings—Child Welfare Outcomes Assumed Variance.....	127
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	129
Summary .....	129
Conclusions .....	132
Recommendations.....	144
Suggestions for Future Research .....	147
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	152

## LIST OF TABLES

5.1.	Descriptive Analysis of Foster Care Placements.....	99
5.2.	Descriptive Analysis of CPS Referrals .....	103
5.3.	CPS Descriptive Statistics.....	106
5.4.	Descriptive Analysis of CPS Resubstantiations .....	108
5.5.	Foster Care Placement Correlations .....	116
5.6.	CPS Referrals Correlations .....	117
5.7.	CPS Substantiations Correlations.....	117
5.8.	CPS Resubstantiations Correlation.....	118
5.9.	Correlations for Wealth, County Size, and Outcomes.....	119
5.10.	Correlations for Relative Wealth and Foster Care Placements .....	120
5.11.	Correlations for Relative Wealth and CPS Referrals.....	121
5.12.	Correlation for Relative Wealth and CPS Substantiations.....	122
5.13.	Correlation for Relative Wealth and CPS Resubstantiations .....	122
5.14.	ANOVA for the Number of Foster Care Placements .....	125
5.15.	ANOVA for the Number of CPS Referrals.....	126
5.16.	ANOVA for the Number of CPS Substantiations .....	127
5.17.	ANOVA for the Number of CPS Resubstantiations.....	127
6.1.	Child Welfare Outcomes Measures of Central Tendency.....	133
6.2.	Summary of Child Welfare Outcome Hypotheses Testing.....	138

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1. Michigan's Child Welfare System.....	12
3.1. The Many Dimensions of Intergovernmental Grants.....	48
4.1. Child Welfare and Federalism, 1990–Present .....	61
4.2. Example of Positively Skewed Distribution.....	91
4.3. Example of Negatively Skewed Distribution .....	92
5.1. Foster Care Placements by County Size, FY 1992–FY 2002.....	101
5.2. CPS Referrals by County Size, FY 1992–FY 2002 .....	104
5.3. Descriptive Analysis of CPS Substantiations, FY 1992–FY 2002 .....	106
5.4. CPS Resubstantiations by County Size, FY 1992–FY 2002 .....	109
5.5. Child Welfare Outcomes for Large Counties, FY 1992–2002 .....	111
5.6. Child Welfare Outcomes for Medium Counties, FY 1992–FY 2002 .....	112
5.7. Child Welfare Outcomes for Small Counties, FY 1992–FY 2002 .....	113

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

Child welfare is more than a policy area or a practice. It is about life, and too often about death. Roche (2000) describes this poignantly when he writes of an autopsy photo that shows a little boy who looks relieved to be dead. Little Terrell Peterson's eyes are closed, and a hospital tube protrudes from his broken nose. Terrell has deep cuts above his right ear, dark linear scars on his forehead, and the bruises on his back are a succession of yellows, greens, and blues. He has unhealed third-degree burns on the bottoms of his tiny feet. He was tied to a railing with panty hose and belts by the woman who had become his foster grandmother. Terrell was 6 years old, he weighed only 29 pounds, and he had so many injuries that the medical examiner gave up counting them (Roche, 2000).

Terrell Peterson is just one example of the scope of the social problems related to child abuse and neglect. Young and Gardner (1998) point out that between 1985 and 1995, the foster care population in the U.S. grew by 79%. This was more than double the 39% rate by which the children in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) population were growing. More telling is that while in 1995 there were 9.4 million children on the AFDC roles, and 494,000 children in foster care, the total cost of the two programs was \$13.74 billion and \$3.13 billion, respectively



(Young & Gardener, 1998, p. 1). Even a cursory examination suggests that the cost of providing foster care services is roughly 11 times that of providing for the income maintenance of children in poverty. Even if one is able to put aside the human element, it is disconcerting to recognize that a program that cost billions of dollars is growing at twice the rate of underlying maintenance, while costing 11 times as much. In essence, what is being presented is a look at a subset of policy issues with a price tag running into tens of billions of dollars, and spiraling out of control in terms of both the human and financial costs.

To address this social problem will require a systematic examination of the topic area in question. In order to accomplish this examination, the relationship between several elements must be explored. Of primary interest is if federalism, as expressed by different funding schemes, is an effective means for achieving improved child welfare outcomes. In order to answer this basic question, it is essential to have an understanding of the size of the problem, what constitutes the child welfare system, and how the child welfare system evolved. It is also necessary to understand how different types of federalism can be expressed through varying types of funding schemes. In the end, the intent is to understand how effective the use of different models of federalism is at improving child welfare outcomes.

The process for conducting this exploration will include looking at the significance of the research, examining Michigan's child welfare system, identifying the principal research question, explaining the research procedures and research design, identifying variables, data collection methods and time frames, providing the

decision criteria, and explaining the benefits of the research. In Chapter II the historical origins of the child welfare system will be explored. Chapter III will be a review of the literature available on the topic. Chapter IV will detail the methodological procedures used in this study. Chapter V will provide an analysis of the data, and Chapter VI will provide conclusions and recommendations.

### Significance of the Research

The question of significance will be examined by exploring timeliness, the scope of the problem, and policy dimensions of child welfare in the State of Michigan. The issue of timelines involves laying a basic context of governmental involvement in addressing social welfare issues. This will include providing an historical foundation, as well as an assessment of contemporary thought on addressing child welfare issues. The scope of the problem will address providing a basic understanding of incident rates for child abuse and neglect both nationally and Michigan. The section on policy dimensions will examine the difficulty in framing and creating change on issues surrounding child welfare.

### Timeliness

How timely is the issue? Even the most callous would have difficulty denying that an issue enveloped in the senseless torture and murder of children has not ripened during a time of such *enlightenment*. Thanks to all of our advances in science and medicine, the arts, and in literature, one would not think it unreasonable to consider

our society to be enlightened. This is especially true when one reflects back to the days of the New Deal, and also the Great Society programs of the 1960s, when it became a part of government's business to assure the welfare of the people. These programs suggest that an ethos developed with regard to how government treats those who were vulnerable in society. Further evidence for this proposition can be found in examining the multitude of safety net programs that have continued to be a major focus of policy makers. Therefore, logic would dictate that if we were enlightened, it should be demonstrated to some degree through government's ability to create social change and protect those who are most vulnerable in society.

Over the decades that followed the advent of Roosevelt's New Deal, governmental approaches to improving social welfare have typically involved broad-based policy incursions initiated at the federal level. Clearly, there is merit in the federal government addressing some issues with a strong hand, as evidenced by the creation of programs such as Social Security. Other programs, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), were hybrids and existed through the cooperation of both the federal and state levels of government. Both Social Security and the CCC program were intended to assist vulnerable members of society, but utilized approaches in which the nexus of control was located within different levels of government.

### Scope of the Problem

In 1999, there were in excess of two million complaints of child abuse made in the United States, and over 1,100 children died from abuse or neglect. As a result of those complaints, over 500,000 children were removed from their homes and placed in foster care (Child Welfare League of America, 2001). Those numbers hit a little closer to home when one looks at what occurred in Michigan during the 2000 Fiscal Year. In the state of Michigan, the Michigan Family Independence Agency (MFIA) received 128,982 complaints of child abuse or neglect (MFIA, 2002, Child & Family Services). While the sheer number of complaints of child maltreatment may seem staggering, the results were even more horrifying. By the end of 1999, after Children's Protective Services (CPS) finished investigating the complaints that it received, there were in excess of 19,000 children placed into the foster care system due to either abuse or neglect (MFIA, 2002, p. 225).

### Policy Dimensions

Despite the magnitude of the problem in the child welfare field, creating change is difficult. The problem occurs, as Ingram and Schneider (1993) suggest, because children, as members of a dependent population, are not capable of routinely generating sufficient interest in their issues to achieve more positive outcomes. This occurs as a result of their inability to exercise influence within the policy arena. Quite simply children are incapable of voting, or forming organized and well-funded lobbying efforts directed at influencing policy decisions. Furthermore, they are

fundamentally incapable of organizing grassroots efforts or interest groups; as such, they are without any of the primary means typically utilized to affect policy outcomes within the political arena. In essence, in order to effect change they must rely on the grace of others (Ingram & Schneider, 1993).

Notwithstanding the inherent challenges that exist for those intent on advancing children's issues, there is hope. In considering the issue further, while still maintaining the understanding that children are members of a dependent population, it is important to note that children are also viewed positively (Ingram & Schneider, 1993). Although this does not equate to political power, it does provide nontraditional avenues to effect policy change.

Parton (1985) suggests that there are some significant issues that will arise and need to be recognized in attempting to focus attention and create change in the field of child welfare. These areas have played a role in gaining recognition in the past, and they include the concepts of moral enterprise, bureaucratic imperatives, and symbolic action (Parton, 1985, p. 8). However, he points out that in order to focus attention, there is a need to develop a conceptualization of the issue at hand, and as Parton indicates: "The way a problem is conceptualized has direct implications for what is seen as the best way of dealing with it" (Parton, 1985, p. 8). To support his position he references two case studies performed on effecting social change by Gusfield and Wiener (1981).

The major thrust of conceptualizing a problem, according to Gusfield and Wiener (1981), is based on the concepts of ownership and responsibility. They

suggest that ownership is about one's ability to exert influence in the creation of the public definition of a problem. In the case of the child welfare system in Michigan, the concept of ownership is demonstrated through the influence of several different entities. Some of those key players are private social welfare agencies, the Child Welfare League, social services boards, doctors, social workers, federal administrators at the Department of Health and Human Services, and oversight agencies like the Office of Children's Ombudsman. These organizations are perceived to have expertise in the area of child welfare, and therefore play roles in defining the problems of the child welfare system in Michigan. Parton (1985) suggests that this is derived from the notion that not everyone has the same basic ability to influence how problems are defined. Those who can are generally recognized as possessing the knowledge base to effectively craft solutions to the unique problems of a given policy area, which is then equated to ownership. Parton further suggests that "The owners of a problem are seen to have credibility, and command public attention, trust, and influence" (Parton, 1985, p. 8).

The concept of political responsibility is more restrictive. In Michigan, the Family Independence Agency is considered to be the organization with primary responsibility for eradicating child abuse and neglect. Therefore, it receives the brunt of the blame when things go poorly, even though initial responsibility lies with those who perpetrate child abuse and neglect. This blame shifting occurs when issues become public, and there is a need to find fault while simultaneously ignoring or diverting attention away from ownership and the underlying complex systemic issues.

The process of garnering attention for policy concerns regarding child welfare has been a double-edged sword. It is so partly because of the distinctions between the concepts of ownership and political responsibility. The concepts suggest a dichotomy represented on the one side by those who are capable of exerting influence, and on the other side by those who are held accountable. For example, after the Mary Ellen case in 1874, the next major movement with regard to publicizing child abuse and neglect failed to occur until the work of Dr. Henry Kempe in 1962. His research on child abuse and neglect brought immediate attention to the plight of abused and neglected children, and created what Scott (1995) referred to as the second wave of the child rescue movement. Clearly any time public attention is brought to bear, it raises the prominence of an issue on the agenda-setting cycle. As Nelson (1994) suggests, the media attention created as a result of Kempe's work was equally as important as the research itself.

Dr. Kempe's work illustrates how two-sided public attention can be in effecting change. Clearly his work helped lead to an awareness of battered child syndrome. The media notoriety generated as a result of his research made it possible to formulate policy that addressed the issues of child abuse and neglect. However, that type of attention is often short-lived, and atypical of reality. As Tomison (2001) observes, "The media has been essential to the growth in society's awareness of child abuse, not so much from specific community education campaigns as through the news and features reporting on specific cases, particularly the more sensational or gruesome cases . . ." (Tomison, 2001, p. 8).

In Michigan, cases such as that of “Baby Blue,” or the “Car Wash Baby,” offer a more immediate example. “Baby Blue” was a newborn that was left in a box at a car wash in Lansing. As a result of the “Baby Blue” case, the Michigan Legislature passed the Newborn and Safe Delivery Act. This was done in part because of perceived failures by Children’s Protective Services. Consequently, a major piece of legislation was passed to address a situation that was sensationalized in the media, but rarely occurs.

The problem with issues that arise based on sensationalism is that policies are then created in a haphazard or reactionary manner. The focus then becomes addressing isolated incidences rather than generating systematic approaches designed to produce methodologically sound preventative strategies. This manifests itself in what Tomison (2001) describes as a recurring theme in the child welfare arena: “the regular oscillation between, and re-visiting of, child protection and service models or approaches designed to prevent the occurrence of child abuse or neglect, often caused by public outcry at perceived failures in protecting children” (Tomison, 2001, p. 6).

Gusfield (1985) suggests that there are two key areas of responsibility in developing child welfare policy, casual responsibility and political responsibility, which oversimplifies the equation under devolving federalism. Causal responsibility refers to the factors and events that lead up to, “What should be done?” and the “Who should do it?” part of the equation. In essence, this mirrors what Nelson (1994) and Tomison (2001) set forth in their work. The underlying assumption is, as Parton suggests, that “some person or office is responsible for controlling, preventing or



eradicating the problem” (Parton, 1985, p. 9). In Michigan, that political responsibility is the province of the Michigan Family Independence Agency. Parton goes on to observe that the trouble is that ownership and political responsibility do not necessarily reside with the same person, or even in the same branch of government. This concept of being held responsible, but not possessing the ability to effect the changes necessary to address the issues that they are being held accountable for, can be extended to layers of government as well as to agencies. Of interest here is how the concept applies to the State of Michigan, and how the Michigan Family Independence Agency, the agency that holds the political responsibility for child welfare, handles that responsibility.

### Michigan’s Child Welfare System

The child welfare system is a complex organism; it lives at virtually every level of government within the United States. The sheer complexity of this system is multiplied exponentially by the number of players involved throughout the system, and each system can vary in structure and hierarchy by state, county, and in some cases by community. The underlying commonality shared by these actors and systems is the omnipresent federal government. Of further interest are the locations of the locus of control, or as Gusfield (1985) posits, the key areas of responsibility. That is to say, that location of ownership and responsibility can change depending on the political paradigm being incorporated at any given time. In the case of devolving federalism, responsibility is shifted from the federal government to state and local

units of government. The concept of ownership is then shifted more from the state to the county and local community levels. An example of the form that this shift took in Michigan can be seen in examining the creation of multipurpose Human Services Collaborative Bodies.

The focus of this study is Michigan. It is therefore necessary to understand what the child welfare system in Michigan looks like, and to have a rudimentary understanding of how it operates. Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the structure of the child welfare system in Michigan. It is based in part on Lovell's work on complex federalism (Lovell, 1996, p. 2).

The primary responsibility for issues surrounding child abuse and neglect falls to the Michigan Family Independence Agency (MFIA). The MFIA is delegated this responsibility as a result of Public Act 238, or the Child Protection Law. Act 238 sets forth requirements for those involved in issues of child welfare. It states that

the reporting of child abuse and neglect by certain persons; to permit the reporting of child abuse and neglect by all persons; authorize limited detainment in protective custody; to authorize medical examinations; to prescribe the powers and duties of the state department of social services to prevent child abuse and neglect; to prescribe certain powers and duties of local law enforcement agencies; to safeguard and appoint legal counsel; to provide for the abrogation of privileged communications' to provide civil and criminal immunity for certain persons; to provide for rules of evidence in certain cases; to provide for confidentiality of certain records; to provide for the expungement of certain records; to prescribe penalties; and to repeal certain parts of acts. (Michigan Public Act 238, 1975)

In addition to providing the basic framework for how the State of Michigan will administer its child welfare system, it provides definitions for what exactly constitutes child abuse and neglect. The Child Protection Law, or CPL, defines child

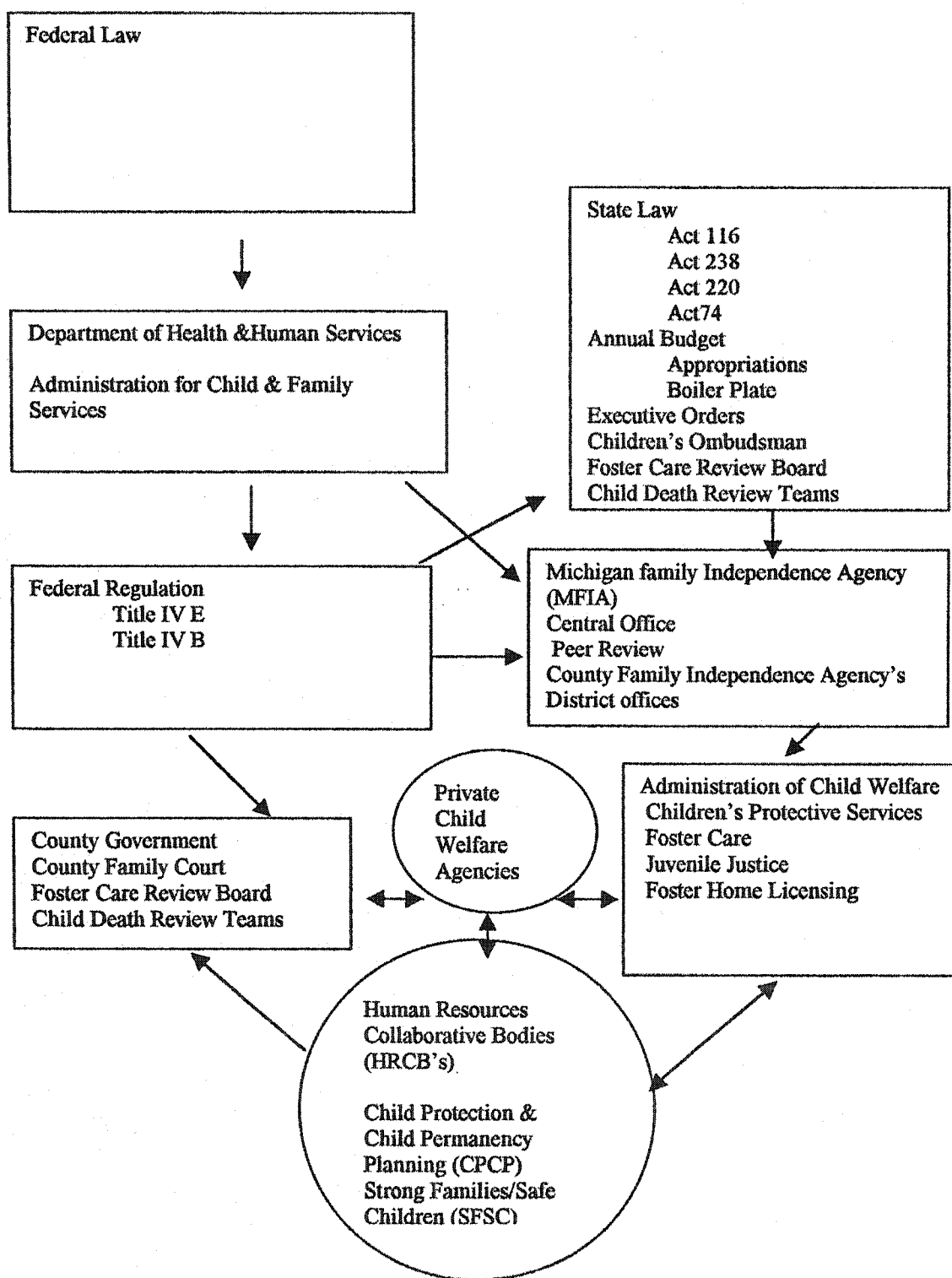


Figure 1.1. Michigan's Child Welfare System.

abuse as: "harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher or teacher's aide that occurs through nonaccidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse; sexual exploitation; or maltreatment" (Michigan Public Act 238, 1975, as amended 2002, p. 2). The CPL also defines child neglect as:

Child neglect means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:

- (i) Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or medical care.
- (ii) Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk. (Michigan Public Act 238, 1975, as amended 2002, p. 2)

These two definitions provide the basis for the Family Independence Agency to determine whether or not child abuse or neglect has occurred. These definitions are incorporated into agency policy, and are intended to be used consistently in all counties within the State of Michigan. The Child Protection Law also spells out who is responsible for receiving complaints of child abuse and neglect (the MFIA), and how they are to be processed. The law also includes uniform requirements for the reporting of suspected abuse or neglect, as well as for the coordination of investigators from the Family Independence Agency with local law enforcement agencies in certain defined investigative situations.

In essence, the Child Protection Law centralizes the issue of child abuse and neglect, thereby providing the state with plenary power over local jurisdictions in matters involving the maltreatment of children. While there are provisions within the policy that allow for and encourage input into the process through the creation of local protocols, the basic elements of what constitutes child maltreatment are uniformly held through state law making.

### Research Question

The intent here is to develop an underlying understanding of the child welfare system and federalism. In so doing, it is essential to explore the concept of block grants. An examination of the rationale for using block grants, as well as a review of studies that assess the outcomes of such grants in terms of achieving their stated goals, is vital to understanding devolving federalism and its connection with child welfare in Michigan. The research question therefore becomes: "Is devolving federalism an effective paradigm for improving child welfare outcomes?"

Before proceeding, it is essential to gain a basic understanding of the elements of this research question. First, the concept of devolving federalism is essentially a theoretical construct used to explain power-sharing schemes between different levels of government. By prefacing federalism with the term *devolving*, it is implied that the power-sharing scheme being examined is one in which authority is granted through a descending hierarchy, with the genesis of power flowing from the top down. In the case of United States, this implies that power begins at the national or federal level,

and is then delegated to the state and local levels as deemed appropriate by the federal government. Several factors can enter into the decision to delegate power, but which factors are critical in leading to the decisions to delegate authority vary on a case-by-case basis. For example, the deciding factors to delegate oversight for issues such as air quality enforcement may differ from the decision to delegate the authority to provide welfare programs. The end result is that there are no hard and fast rules as to when and what the federal government will or will not relinquish control over.

There has been a voluminous amount of work done in the substantive area of child welfare, child welfare outcomes, federalism, and block grants, but little attention has been paid to how these concepts are interrelated. Equally important is the minimal amount of study done on quantitatively analyzing the devolving federalism approach to child welfare. Nor is there a significant amount of work directed at exploring whether the political approaches utilized to effect social changes are indeed accomplishing what they set forth to do. As Shaver suggests, "Applying outcome measures to social services can be a dicey proposition" (*PA Times*, 2001, p. 1).

There is a general reluctance to define success in terms of declining caseload sizes. This reluctance is embraced by social welfare experts partly because they hold, depending on the measure, that it may not accurately reflect the well-being of any given child. This argument poses some immediate problems for those intent on studying social welfare outcomes. Specifically, how can one define the success or failure of any given policy without quantifying its outcomes? It is a questionable proposition for social welfare scholars to define problems, craft potential solutions,

and implement programs without defining measurable objectives, as well as clearly defined and measurable outcomes. The practice of using anecdotal data in conjunction with quantitative measures to allege crisis in the child welfare field without allowing for a quantitative analysis of outcomes is specious.

To a limited degree the ice is beginning to crack with regard to social welfare experts' reluctance to rely on quantitative data to determine success. For example, in 2000, the State of Illinois won an Innovations in American Government award from Harvard University. The award was for developing performance-based contracting within its foster care system. Illinois reduced its foster care caseload from 46,000 to 29,000 between 1997 and 2000. In addition to the number of foster care cases, the state also evaluated changes in the mean number of months it took to achieve permanency, and also the mean change in workers caseload sizes. Illinois' intent was to achieve measurable changes in child welfare outcomes. In order to determine whether changes occurred within its child welfare system, it started with a baseline, initiated a change, and measured outcomes utilizing quantitative data representing the years subsequent to the introduction of a dependent variable (performance-based contracting). This nationally recognized study opened the door and legitimized a quasi-experimental approach, analyzing secondary data to determine impacts on child welfare outcomes.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is what exactly constitutes child welfare? For the purposes of this research, child welfare is defined in terms of child abuse and neglect. This may appear a highly restrictive definition. Granted, other

indicators offer significant information on the well-being of children. The issue of children in poverty, the lack of access to quality health care, nutrition, and education are all critical to the well-being of children or child welfare. However, the federal government is attempting to use a devolving federalism paradigm to impact child abuse and neglect outcomes, as well as accompanying foster care placements. Therefore, rather than debate which indicators of child welfare are more significant, these determinants were selected since they were targeted through specific federal policy formation with regard to Title IV B and Title IV E monies.

What actually constitutes child abuse and neglect varies from state to state. While this lack of consistency makes comparing outcomes across states problematic, it does not present a limitation for the purposes of this research. In Michigan, child abuse and neglect are defined in Public Act 238. As a result, the same definitions of child abuse and neglect are uniform throughout all 83 counties in Michigan.

Although the definition of child abuse and neglect is uniform across that state, this does not imply that it is applied uniformly. The issue of varying community standards must be recognized. What is identified as child abuse and neglect in one community will not necessarily be found to be child abuse or neglect in another. Variances can also exist amongst workers. What one worker views as being child abuse or neglect may not be viewed the same by another worker. This seeming contradiction may appear to be a limitation of this study, and will be further addressed in the methodological section of this paper. Nonetheless, the same fundamental laws with regard to child abuse and neglect exist throughout the State of Michigan.



Furthermore, safeguards are built into the system to assure that the agency is complying with the spirit and the letter of the law on a statewide basis.

### Purpose of the Study

The child welfare system in the United States is responsible for evaluating in excess of two million complaints of child abuse and neglect each year. As previously noted, in 1999, over 1,100 children died in the United States as a result of abuse or neglect, with another 500,000 ending up in foster care. This dissertation will analyze how the federal government attempts to effect change in Michigan's child welfare system through the use of devolving federalism, as expressed by the issuance of block grants. Success will be measured by observing change in key child welfare indicators that were identified when these grants were issued. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to measure the impact future federal funding schemes may have on child welfare outcomes in Michigan.

### Research Design

The extent of change in four key child welfare outcomes will be traced over an 11-year time period. This comparison will determine whether or not child welfare outcome indicators present a statistically significant variation across two distinct time periods. The first period, 1992–1996, immediately preceded the initiation of child welfare block grants. The second period, 1996–2001, is the 5-year time period that followed the implementation of child welfare block grants.

The research question is: *Has devolving federalism, as expressed through the issuance of block grants, had a significant impact on child welfare outcomes in Michigan?*

The research design will be a quasi-experimental, longitudinal study. There will be four primary hypotheses. Each hypothesis will state that the initiation of block grants has resulted in a statistically significant variation for one of the four child welfare outcomes. Additional analysis will be conducted which will also require the collection of readily available secondary data. Specifically, the research design will require selecting a random sample of Michigan counties to determine, first, if there is a correlation between a county's size and its ability to achieve statistically significant change in child welfare outcomes, and second, if there is a correlation between a county's relative wealth and variation in child welfare outcomes.

### Variables

The independent variables will be the presence or absence of child welfare block grants. The first period is from 1992–1996, and the second period is from 1996–2001. Other independent variables will include the population size of counties, the relative per family wealth of counties.

The dependent variables that represent the child welfare outcomes being studied are the number of Children's Protective Services (CPS) referrals, the number of CPS substantiations, the number of repeat CPS substantiations, and the number of foster care placements. A CPS referral is defined as a complaint of child abuse or

neglect received by the Michigan Family Independence Agency. A CPS substantiation is defined as a CPS referral that was accepted for investigation, and then after the investigation was completed, it was determined by the investigator by a preponderance of the evidence that the allegations were true. These dependent variables will be included to determine whether or not child welfare outcomes have exhibited a statistically significant variation since the implementation of block grants.

#### Data Collection Method

All data collected on child welfare outcomes are publicly available, and were obtained from the Michigan Family Independence Agency. Population data are readily available secondary data, and were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau. Family income data were also available from the U.S. Census Bureau.

#### Time Frame

The publicly available secondary data on child welfare outcomes and population needed for this research were collected over a designated 6-month time period. This time span allowed sufficient time to collect the secondary data from the Family Independence Agency, as well as the secondary data from multipurpose collaborative bodies in randomly selected Michigan counties.

#### Decision Criteria

Both descriptive and analytical statistics were used to interpret the collected interval level data. The descriptive statistics include the central tendencies of mean,

median, and mode, along with kurtosis and skewness. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) is the analytical statistic used to determine whether or not child welfare outcomes have exhibited a statistically significant variation since the implementation of block grants. The .05 level of statistical significance was used to determine whether the null hypotheses were accepted or rejected. Additional analysis explored whether there was a correlation between county size and child welfare outcomes, between county wealth and child welfare outcomes.

### Benefits of Research

This study assessed whether there is a statistically significant relationship between funding schemes, population, and county wealth. The purpose of this assessment was to determine the strengths and weaknesses of funding mechanisms as they relate to program choices, and possibly thereby provide future strategies that will result in more positive child welfare program outcomes.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF CHILD WELFARE

In order for this research to have meaning, several elements must be present. Those elements must then serve to help draw together and form a coherent progression of ideas. One of those necessary elements is the historical origin of child welfare. There are two key reasons to explore the origins of the child welfare system. The first reason is to demonstrate that a concrete connection between government and child welfare exists. Specifically, it is necessary to provide the foundation from which the current child welfare system originates. This will be done through an historical analysis that focuses on references that reflect concrete legal connections between government and child welfare.

The second reason for exploring the origins of the child welfare system is to depict the evolution of governmental intervention into the child welfare system. The rationale for exploring the historical evolution of governmental intervention is to provide a conceptual framework for how the current child welfare system was formed. This will also assist in providing a basis for making recommendations about future governmental interventions into the child welfare arena. In order to depict the development of the child welfare system, key historical events involving major shifts in governmental intervention into child welfare policy will be presented.

## The Earliest Child Welfare Laws

The first known laws to be codified in writing were those of Hammurabi. Hammurabi's Code dates back to approximately 2500 BC, which may seem an odd place to begin a discourse on child welfare and devolving federalism. Hammurabi's code, however, while primarily concerned with civil law, was also the first example of a centralized government confirming and defining specific rights for children (King, 1915, p. 9).

The first of Hammurabi's laws deals with acts of sexual abuse, and Law #130 states that

If a man violate the child wife of another man, who has never known a man, and still lives in her father's house, and he sleep with her and be surprised, the man shall be put to death, but the wife is blameless. (King, 1915, p. 7)

This established the first known criminal penalty for sexually abusing a child. Law #130 provides the first known recognition by a government that children are vulnerable, and that there is an inherent need to provide protection for them under the law. Other laws, such as Law #157, also deal with the question of incest: "If anyone be guilty of incest with his mother after his father, both shall be burned" (King, 1915, p. 9). In addition to issues of sexual abuse, the concept of neglect was also confronted in Law #168 which states that

If a man wish to put his son out of his house, and declare before the judge "I want to put my son out," then the judge shall examine into his reasons. If the son be guilty of no great fault for which he can rightly be put out, the father shall not put him out. (King, 1915, p. 9)

The relationship between child welfare and central forms of government continued to go through several permutations over the next several thousand years. However, it was the foundation set forth by Hammurabi that really set the precedent and established children's issues as a legitimate concern for government to address.

Another civilization that addressed child welfare through nationally centralized law making was Roman Law in 450 BC, which defined familial relations in terms of *Patria postesta*. *Patria postesta* was derived from Latin, and means the unlimited right of the father. However, it should be noted that these "unlimited" rights were restricted in the sense that a father could not sell a child or put a child to death.

In examining the Egyptian code of 800 BC, which followed the tenets set forth by Hammurabi, it is clear they continued to carry forth the concept of children in terms of being proprietary interests. As Crosson-Tower (2002) suggests, throughout early history children were seen primarily as the property of their family. Given that the primary head of household was the father, the child had to rely on him for his or her very existence. Historically this related to more than just a determination of the type and quality of care provided. It could also involve a decision as to whether or not a child lived or died (Crosson-Tower, 2002, p. 1). Under Egyptian Law, that proprietary relationship did not end until the father died. In subsequent Greek laws a father was prohibited from unilaterally taking the life of a child, but these laws did not prohibit such action unconditionally, which extended the precedent of parental authority limited by law.

Clearly neither the Egyptian code nor the Greek laws freed children from parental control under the law. In the roughly 3,000 years that transpired between the inception of Hammurabi's Code through the Visigothic Kingdom in 476 AD, little progress was made with regard to children's rights. Although some of the underlying concepts set forth by Hammurabi were advanced with regard to neglect and sexual abuse, there was no change with regard to the status of children in society. Children remained little more than property. Their status failed to advance until the Visigothic Kingdom.

#### From Laws to Ideals

The Visigothic Kingdom, 476–711 AD, stressed the duties of parents rather than just the arbitrary exercise of parental power. This code was based on Christian ideals rather than the dynasties founded on archaic religions in the 4th through 7th centuries AD. Now for the first time, the use of *reasonable physical discipline* was mentioned relating to children.

The path to enlightenment that began with Hammurabi and continued through the Visigothic era did not move forward in a linear fashion. While it appears that children's rights continued to progress following the Visigothic Kingdom, they did not. Instead of children's rights evolving on the basis of an increased awareness of their equality as human beings, early English Law reversed course.

Early English law, which was influenced by the Romans, allowed for the return of infanticide. Infanticide is a practice of killing a newborn; it is primarily



directed at female infants. Other elements of English Law allowed for the sale of children, and expanded parent's rights to full control over their children.

While that step may appear backward for child welfare, this period also saw the creation of Guardian ad-litem, or the melding of child welfare laws with legal representation for children in the court system. Guardian ad-litem are court-appointed attorneys whose sole responsibility is to advocate for the best interest of the child. They are generally court appointed, although during this time period there was no guarantee of such an appointment.

The English system also evolved to include the concept of *parens patriae*. Parens patriae, derived from Latin, defines the relationship between a child and his or her parents as a trust. It provided for the crown's intervention in cases where it was felt that the parents of a given child were not faithfully discharging their duties as parents.

### Foundations of the American System

The foundation of the American child welfare system was thus established in English Law. This is evident from the Stubborn Child Act. The Stubborn Child Act was passed in 1628 in Massachusetts, and allowed a parent to put a child to death if he or she was stubborn or rebellious, and if it was determined that the child was old enough to understand the parent but refused to do so.

Another landmark case involved a minor child named Mary Ellen in 1874. She was an 8-year-old child who had been indentured to a family in New York City, and

was frequently beaten to the point that neighbors felt it necessary to attempt to have the local authorities intervene. However, there were no laws or statutes that prohibited the senseless beating of children. The only recourse was uniquely fashioned by Mrs. Wheeler, a volunteer church caseworker, who brought the case to the attention of Henry Birgh, head of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Mr. Birgh brought the case to court under the auspices of cruelty to animals, and the court sentenced the caretaker to one year in jail. Case law and statutes are parallel here in English Law, in that they both suggest a weak centralized approach to child welfare issues. However, it was the statutes that created the impetus for change and a new direction in how children's rights were viewed.

Henry Birgh, in 1875, went on to form the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Partly as a result of the formation of Birgh's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, orphan trains began transporting children across the country to rural areas. This was the first organization in the United States, at any level of government, which was formed solely for the purpose of protecting children from abusive parents.

#### Centralized Child Welfare

The first centralized approach to child welfare in the United States occurred in 1912, when the United States Children's Bureau was created. Its purpose was to establish a national standard for the welfare of children. As a result of the formation of a centralized child welfare policy office in Washington D.C., shadow organizations

at the state level were created so that policy decisions could be implemented more uniformly across the country. In addition to the state agencies, private organizations also sprang up across the country. Both the state agencies and private organizations received federal funding. In the case of Michigan, this occurred with the passing of Michigan Public Act 220 in 1935 and Public Act 280 in 1939.

Public Act 220 created the Michigan Children's Institute. This act, among other things, required that the Department of Social Services provide care to minor children whose parents' rights had been terminated. Public Act 220, or the Social Welfare Act, set out specific expectations that the state would be responsible for mandating uniform protection for the children of Michigan. The Social Welfare Act required the Department of Social Services to develop procedures to ensure that complaints of abuse or neglect referred by county probate courts be investigated. Public Act 280 was credited with establishing the foster care system in Michigan by requiring the Department of Social Services to provide supervision and placement for children ordered out of their home by the probate courts.

In the 1970s there were two other landmark pieces of legislation in Michigan that were directed at strengthening the state's role in providing child welfare service. They were Michigan Public Act 116 and Michigan Public Act 238. Public Act 116, or the Child Care Organization Licensing Act, set strict guidelines for the placement of children out of their own homes. It set guidelines for the licensing of foster homes, and set uniform standards for social work practices with regard to the case management of foster care children. Michigan Public Act 238, the Child Protection

Law, provided for the protection of abused and neglected children. Specified individuals were now required by law to report cases of suspected child abuse.

The current child welfare system in Michigan is comprised of five distinctive spheres or program areas: children's protective services, foster care, adoption, juvenile justice, and prevention. The primary responsibility for administering these program areas falls to the Michigan Family Independence Agency (MFIA). However, the MFIA does not act unilaterally; instead, it is the conductor of a symphony of devolving federalism which begins with the national government, and ends in the 83 counties which comprise Michigan.

In the case of Michigan, federal dollars are funneled to counties which are required to form Human Resource Collaborative Bodies (HRCBs). These bodies examine local needs and develop local programs to address those identified needs. Initial funding for these boards is determined by examining key performance indicators to establish a baseline. Future funding is then tied to that baseline, and the county's ability to positively influence those key performance indicators is determined through the programming choices that it makes. An additional element is then added, namely, pay for performance by the FIA county directors. This is directly linked to the same key indicators. However, county directors are *equal* shareholders within the HRCBs (Caldwell, 1996). It is this additional element of local control which signified the appearance of devolving federalism within the child welfare field.

In Michigan, devolving federalism in the child welfare system currently takes shape through Child Safety and Permanency Planning from Performance Agreements

for in-home Funding/Planning (CPCP). CPCP agreements are in principle funded through federal block grants as a result of P.L. 103-66, the Strong Families /Safe Children Federal Family Preservation and Family Support Act (SFSC). The SFSC Act was passed in 1994, and is the act that resulted in the creation of the multipurpose Human Services Coordinating bodies (HRCBs).

The original intent of these programs was to funnel federal money through the State to the county level. The money was to be used in a discretionary manner to enter into child welfare contracts designed to reduce the number of children in foster care, reduce the length of stay in foster care, and reduce the number of protective services substantiations (Strope, 1995). Funding levels were originally designed to be performance based with hold harmless clauses that froze funding at the initial level regardless of changes made by a county in terms of the defined outcome factors. In particular, the shift to the CPCP structure included a 3-year hold harmless clause regardless of performance figures. Essentially, the first 3 years were to act as a trial period during which the initial funding level would be fixed as a predetermined point. This was done in part to allow counties the opportunity to make programming choices and begin providing their services. However, if the amount of *discretionary* money was enhanced in future years, the priority for allocating the additional funds would be to the counties which were below their share by the formula (Caldwell, 1996).

The baseline for performance and subsequent funding levels was to be established using CIS (client information system) information, which reflects a

county's performance in Children's Protective Services (CPS), and the Foster Care program. Subcategories within CPS delineate the number of complaints accepted, substantiation rate, and repeat substantiation; within foster care, the key figures reflect the number of children in care, and the length of stay in care, with the number of children in care being the major focal point (Strope, 1995).

### Summary

Dating back over 4,500 years, government has recognized the need to intervene on behalf of children. The earliest excursions that government made into trying to formulate social welfare policy came in the form of written laws, as is evidenced by Hammurabi's Code. These early interventions were based on an identified need to provide basic protections to a vulnerable population. This relationship between government and the people, and the role government played in child welfare failed to evolve significantly for almost 2,000 years. While the view and roles that government would play vacillated over time, the trends established during the Visigothic Kingdom suggested a shift away from that of basic governmental protection to one of promoting ideals associated with quality of care. Over time, government's role continued to increase while simultaneously beginning to divest centralized control into smaller units of government and to private entities. Evidence of this shift is demonstrated by the creation and funding of HRCBs in Michigan.

## CHAPTER III

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In reviewing the literature it is important to recognize that little attention has been paid to government's role in child welfare. With that in mind, in order to provide a foundation for this research, it then becomes necessary to weave the key themes together. Those key themes include federalism, devolving federalism, grant typology, and an examination of child welfare and devolving federalism in Michigan.

This literature review will begin by examining the underlying nature of power sharing, as a proscribed means of how government goes about attempting to achieve its ends. The two key concepts that will be explored are federalism and devolving federalism. The rationale for selecting them is based on observations made by the principal researcher. Both federalism and devolving federalism have been utilized in Michigan during the time frame of interest for this study, namely from 1992 to 2001.

The literature available on the topic of federalism is extensive. It will be examined here only to the degree necessary to provide a general understanding of how it relates to the child welfare system. In order to achieve this outcome, a basic understanding of the history of the child welfare system, i.e., an understanding of earlier governmental excursions into the child welfare policy arena, has already been provided in the previous chapter. The rationale for doing so was to explore the historical connection between governmental systems and child welfare. In that vein, it

is important to recognize that from an historical perspective governments dating back to the time of the earliest written record have intervened on behalf of children. This demonstrates that government has had a role in protecting the welfare of children in society. Although that role has varied significantly over time, it is a cornerstone put in place partly in order to assist in the examination of the effects of child welfare and devolving federalism.

The different types of grants used during the period were closely related to the concepts of federalism and devolving federalism. What is of interest here is the relationship between these two federalism paradigms and the differing types of grants used to achieve results that reflected the underlying tenets of each paradigm. Support for this premise comes from O'Brien (1996), who states that "clearly, funding shapes available services, so changing funding is a powerful tool that can be used to change services" (O'Brien, 1996, p. 6). It is in this section that funding schemes will be explored in terms of their association with federalism and devolving federalism.

The last major topic to be examined will be child welfare and devolving federalism in Michigan. It is in this section that connections will be drawn between federalism, devolving federalism, the grant typology, and what has occurred in the child welfare system in Michigan from 1992–2001.

Child welfare is a broad area, encompassing many divergent policy issues. For the purposes of this study, the subset of child welfare issues that will be examined pertain to children's protective services and foster care. These two program areas have been chosen as they are inexplicable linked, and together they illuminate the



policy environment. At the most basic level, for example, an action by children's protective services must precede a foster care commitment and subsequent placement. Public Act 238 authorizes what the Family Independence Agency may do with regard to child abuse and neglect complaints. It also provides the statutory basis for the agency to conduct investigations based on civil code.

Public Act 116 provides the statutory basis for the state to license local county offices, private agencies, and residential facilities to provide foster care services. Public Act 116, along with Public Act 238, provides the legal basis for a state centric child welfare system. This is to suggest that at a minimum, the state provides uniform statutory requirements for local units of government. However, states are not the only player in the child welfare system. In Michigan, all three layers of government play an integral part in creating and maintaining the child welfare system. What is of interest is how the roles of the key actors, the federal government, state government, and local units of government, have developed. The other key issues that need to be explored are the power dynamics among the three layers of government, and what effect those dynamics have on child welfare outcomes in Michigan.

### Federalism

Keller (1988) suggests that the basic structure of government can be understood by examining the concept of federalism. He describes federalism simply as being the relationship between the states and the nation. However, the key to understanding the concept of federalism requires harkening back to the late 1700s

during a time when our forefathers argued over what form the basic structure of our government should take. This argument took shape in a debate between two opposing philosophical positions, the Federalist and the Anti-Federalists. At the center of the argument was the question of what is the nature of man. From this debate stems our government's current structure.

The founding fathers' influence is also seen in the current debate over differing approaches to federalism (Richardson, 1997). This can be evidenced in part by examining the struggle between conservative and liberal philosophies. The two modern ideologies carry on the struggle over where governmental power should rest. The conservative viewpoint holds true to the anti-federalist proposition that opts for local control. The rationale, however, is not necessarily based on a Lockean theory, but rather more on the Jeffersonian belief in better government emanating from smaller government. As Kelly (1996) suggests, conservative Republicans have begun playing on the very popular notion that the federal government is much too large. As an alternative, they suggest returning power to the states, which have traditionally been viewed as being more responsive to citizen needs, and have a long tradition of balanced budgets.

A modern day example of the anti-federalist approach can be found in Michigan, by examining the actions of its conservative governor for much of this period, John Engler. Engler was a strong proponent of local control, and demonstrated that commitment through vigorously lobbying the federal government for more local control over Michigan's welfare system. Conversely, the liberal

philosophy holds more closely to the federalist position and the belief in a strong centralized government. A note of caution, this is not meant to cast too fine a net over these two ideological philosophies. Given any particular issue, there can be crossover. Instead, the position set forth here is based on the need to provide a basic context through which to explore the rationales for contemporary power-sharing schemes. This will be accomplished by exploring the concepts of federalism and devolving federalism.

Federalism is a major element of this research. As such, a working definition is essential. Federalism can be seen as an assertion of governmental authority over a given populace by competing semi-autonomous layers of government. The division of powers between these levels is largely proscribed, though not entirely, by the national level of government. As Hamilton (1995) suggests, this occurs through “national legislative mandates and regulation, rival grants, and subsidies as tools for influencing the policy implementation behavior of state and local governments” (Hamilton, 1995, p. 1).

The premise of a model depicting federalism in terms of a strong national government, where control of policy and programming lies with the executive branch, originated with Leonard White (1939). White postulates the rationale for the acceptance of such a system is based on an underlying assumption that there is a desire to obtain minimal standards in certain programs that have been deemed to be in the public interest. Federalism, in its strictest sense, in a number of substantive areas originates with the federal or national government, with its dictates being passed

through intermediary levels of government until they are implemented at the service or field area.

Federalism is thus one of the defining characteristics in how much or how little authority in a particular issue area is exercised at the descending levels of government. As Derthick (1970) points out, when the federal government places issues on the agenda, it takes the first step in influencing state government. She goes on to suggest however, "Strictly speaking, of course, the federal government does not itself place the question on the agenda of state politics" (Derthick, 1970, p. 186). Rather, the federal actors draw attention to issues of concern, which are then translated through mutual constituent interests to counterparts at descending levels of the hierarchy. Miller (1958) suggests, "To a large extent states today operate not as practically autonomous units, but as administrative districts for centrally established policies (Miller, 1958, p. 364).

The conflict of ideas over the exact nature of federalism is a complex exercise made more difficult by the contradictions that frequently emerge between ideology and implementation. It is in this nebulous area that Agranoff and McGuire (2001) suggest that practitioners and scholars must learn to operate if they are to be effective. O'Toole and Riker (1993) suggest, "There are links among political, fiscal, and administrative aspects of the American intergovernmental pattern (p. 276). That is to say, while there are connections, there are also distinct differences between the political decision process that struggles with ideology on one hand, and on the other hand with how to allocate power and implement policies through the administrative

process. They goes on to say that the “complexity and misunderstanding are magnified when the administration of programs takes place in operations that span two or more government levels” (O’Toole & Riker, 1993, p. 275). Agranoff and McGuire point out that it is the study of the complexity and changing nature of these relationships between governmental bodies that is so crucial to practitioners and scholars. They suggest it is within this changing environment that the public administrator must learn to be able to operate to keep the system functioning.

Watts (1996) takes the issues furthest in suggesting that it is the evolving nature of federalism itself that has created social change in our society. While it is clear that philosophical changes to government’s role, such as Roosevelt’s New Deal and Johnson’s Great Society, have resulted in dramatic changes to life in the United States, it is not so clear that federalism alone is responsible. It may be a safer proposition to suggest that the evolution of federalism serves as an identifier of the evolving nature of political thought in the United States. As a result of that shift in ideology, new concepts of federalism have evolved so as to facilitate the development of appropriate political and administrative structures. This creates the impetus for changes introduced to minimize the inherent tension that exists between political and administrative structures.

In order to resolve the resulting tension that exists between levels of government, several approaches have surfaced. One approach is presented by Miller (1958), in which policy is dictated by the national government to the state and then local levels of government. Miller’s suggestion that states are in essence

administrative districts of the federal government is inconsistent with more current assessments of the power-sharing relationships among governmental bodies. More recent studies by such scholars as Wright, Walker, and O'Toole suggest that governmental units must act in a more cooperative fashion, sharing power in an effort to achieve mutual outcomes.

Another approach to power-sharing schemes is presented by Ingram (1977), who suggests that there exists an internal struggle more directed at policy than highly institutionalized structures. As a result, Ingram sets forth the premise that units of government are more apt to bargain in an attempt to reach a defined end. A proposition supported by Walker (1995) is that there has emerged a "web of constitutional, electoral, representative, programmatic, fiscal, administrative and judicial relationships" (Walker, 1995, pp. 20–21). Walker's sentiments are echoed by Chandler and Plano (1982), who suggest that federalism is a "structure of government that divides power between a central government and regional governments, with each having some independent authority" (p. 62).

The question in many ways remains as basic as it was over 200 years ago. Namely, at what level should the power reside in government? The federalists believed in a strong central government, while the anti-federalists believed in a strong, more autonomous state system. The current debate over federalism is whether control should be more decentralized from the federal government to states, and ultimately to local units of government. This is what Schram (1998) calls the devolving nature of federalism.

### Devolving Federalism

Devolving federalism constitutes another permutation of federalism; it accompanied the introduction of block grant funding for child welfare programming in Michigan. Block grant funding, as Pagano and Bowman (1995) suggest, is a means of decentralizing authority. What is distinctive with regard to the devolving federalism model is the presence of quasi-autonomous elements at different layers of government involved in the decision process. Having such quasi-autonomous layers of government essentially requires that authority be decentralized. While this definition may not hold favor with those scholars, who view federalism as a scheme of power sharing among autonomous units of government, it does find support from Deil Wright (1988) in his work on Intergovernmental Relations (IGR).

Wright's (1988) theory of intergovernmental relations is based on the belief that overlapping political theories surrounding federalism categorize governmental action too simply. Wright sets forth three models depicting intergovernmental relations aimed at exploring what he describes as bargaining behavior between different levels of government. The underlying premise is that governmental bodies are required to work together to achieve goals (Wright, 1988). Wright is clear on this issue, as he states, "The areas of autonomy or single jurisdiction independence and full discretion are comparatively small . . . with substantial areas of governmental operations including national, state, and local units (officials) simultaneously" (p. 38). While Wright does not necessarily imply that all actors hold equal power, there is little room for any one layer of government to act unilaterally. Clearly, units of

government can and do cooperate to achieve common goals, but that does not imply that the outcomes are achieved based on a mutually agreed upon course of action.

The question that then arises is why the shift from a strong national approach to one that is more representative of a state centric system? The rationale for moving towards a devolving federalism model for welfare policy is based on one primary argument set forth by Gallup-Black (1998). It is presumed, Gallup-Black suggests, that given the opportunity and the authority, states will prove to be more innovative in the creation of welfare solutions than the federal government. However, in order for this premise to hold true, two underlying assumptions must also hold true. Those assumptions are: "first, that states, being presumably closer to the matter, are better equipped than the federal government to craft viable solutions; and second, that state policy innovation is an inherent function of a properly working federal system" (Gallup-Black, 1998, p.1).

Devolving federalism involves the shifting of programmatic responsibility from the national to the state level. A partnership develops as a result of this shift, but as the fiduciary agent, the federal government maintains its role as senior partner. In addition to its role as fiscal comptroller, it enumerates federal mandates both through the legislative process and by administrative rule making. This tie-bars spending to federal law and administrative rule making at the national level.

Further support for selecting devolving federalism as an accurate explanation of current governmental behavior can be found in Mitchell's (1999) work on conditional federal spending. Mitchell suggests that "conditional federal funding



schemes similarly cause states to implement legislation, diminish political accountability, and concentrate sovereign power in such a manner that individuals are no longer protected by the diffusion of sovereign power” (Mitchell, 1999, p. 24). This is especially true when one considers that as recently as 1996, almost 26% of state expenditures were funded by federal grants (Mitchell, 1999). The importance of what Mitchell suggests is that there is cooperation, but it is based to some degree on financial inducements, on the feds’ desire to create uniform standards, and the states’ desire to divest responsibility. This proposal is congruent with Wright’s theory of governmental cooperation, in that he sees that different layers of government do work together to implement programs and policy. The difference is that Mitchell takes the issue a step further, and suggests that the cooperation is conditional. The conditions associated with cooperation in Mitchell’s view are tied to funding mechanisms that can shift elements of control to the state level.

The philosophical distinctions that surround differing views of federalism have not always been static. As Riker suggests (O’Toole & Riker, 1993), the meaning of federalism began to evolve with the advent of the New Deal, and has essentially varied along ideological lines based on major issues. For example, a liberal may be in favor of a strong federal government because it checks a strong statist system under which civil rights can be denied by individual states. Riker suggests that the sixties provide an example of this conflict, but he also points out that the liberal ideology is incongruent as it also views big government as unwieldy, and to some extent evil.

A new school of thought, put forward by Thompson and Elling (1999), suggests that what the United States is really looking at is a trend towards recentralization, or a gradual shift of power back to the states from local units of government. This occurs when states utilize administrative rule making to control federal block grants meant to be utilized at the local level. Thompson and Elling support the proposition of devolving federalism, but take it a step further. Their belief that there is also a gradual shift of power to the center is congruent with Wright's (1988) theory of IGR and the concept of bargaining behavior. Thompson and Elling incorporate what Wright suggests and what Mitchell (1999) suggests in his work on conditional federal spending. This entire body of literature thus supports the premise of a power shift towards a state centric system, or devolving federalism.

Wright (1988) rejects the notion of framing the question strictly in terms of "federalism." Instead, he opts for the concept of Inter-governmental Relations (IGR). In so doing, he recognizes that in most instances governments cannot act unilaterally; instead, he points out that policy formulation and implementation require two or more layers of government to facilitate implementation and enforcement. Wright also points out that "the power and influence available to any one jurisdiction (or official) is substantially limited. The limits produce an authority pattern best described as bargaining" (Wright, 1988, p. 38). The suggestion here is that agencies need to work cooperatively in order to achieve common goals. Consequently, the power that has traditionally been seen as vested in the national government becomes divested to the states and local units of government. While Wright does not see the changing

relationship as one based on a descending hierarchy, he does recognize that the power dynamics of government have continued to evolve.

Clearly, there is merit to a cooperative approach to program administration as Wright (1988) suggests. The question is, do theories of IGR sufficiently explain the current child welfare system in Michigan? Furthermore, does the theory of intergovernmental relations, as suggested by Wright, provide a theoretical basis for analyzing the changes that have been made in Michigan's child welfare system?

It is the study of the increased discretion at different levels of government that produces a virtual catacomb of theory surrounding differing types of federalism. Wright's theory of IGR explains how organizations interact at and between varying layers of government. However, it may not be sufficient to address the theoretical constructs that underlie sweeping changes in programmatic delivery systems. This is evidenced by the voluminous amount of work done in the areas of federalism and devolving federalism. Models of federalism range from the classic definition of federalism to picket fence federalism, bamboo fence federalism, rowboat federalism, and devolving federalism. How does Wright's work on intergovernmental relations relate to contemporary theories of federalism? Linkage can be found within the body of literature developed by O'Toole and Riker (1993), Thompson and Elling (1999), Mitchell (1999), Schram (1998), Pagano and Bowman (1995), Walker (1995), Chandler and Plano (1982), and Ingram (1977). Essentially, following White's (1939) identification and definition of the concept of federalism, what we find is an evolution of theory and practice in the fields of political science and public administration.

Theories of federalism are based in political science, while theories of intergovernmental relations emanate more from the practitioners of public administration. The tools of both are funding schemes.

### Grant Typology

Political struggle is, to a large extent, depicted in how government goes about allocating scarce resources. This can occur, as Moneyppenny (1960) suggests, through changing the scope and character of the grant system. Moneyppenny contends that “the federal system is always in danger and it is always rising anew from the ashes of its earlier existence” (Moneyppenny, 1960, p. 11). As such, government continues to evolve, and does so in order to fashion new approaches to address complex issues. However, as Ingram states, “The usual rationale for grants-in-aid to states assumes federal dominance of an essentially hierarchical process of handing downward both federal goals and the financial resources necessary to accomplish them” (Ingram, 1977, pp. 499–500). Young and Gardner (1998) suggest that the most powerful force in reshaping relationships between the national and state governments is the use of grants, also echoing this sentiment.

Moneyppenny’s (1960) suggestion that government’s evolution can be evidenced through its changing approaches to grant-in-aid programs is based in part on his identification of the American political system as pluralistic. This makes sense, he suggests, because when it comes to grants, each issuance of a grant is the product of intense pressure from a specific coalition or interest group. The influence of those

interest groups becomes evident in reviewing the statutes and the administrative practices which result from their efforts (Moneyppenny, 1960).

The rationale for changing the political paradigm towards block grants then becomes evident when one considers that taxpayers and their coalitions tend to prefer state control. In order to acknowledge this voter sentiment, it becomes necessary to transfer some measure of control over issues from the federal government to the states. To do so requires abdicating some of the plenary power of the purse held by the federal government.

The grant-in-aid system, however, does not undermine federalism; it is instead a refinement of its basic premises. The issuance of grants complements the pragmatic nature of pluralism, which Moneyppenny (1960) suggests has long been a characteristic of political reality in the United States. As such, changing funding mechanisms can be seen as a shift in political paradigms. While this suggests a change in power-sharing relationships, it does not sound the death knell of federalism. Rather it is a recognition that although there are advantages to a simpler, more direct system of federalism, the complexity of modern problems makes the utilization of a unilateral political process difficult and unwieldy at best. Support for this proposition comes from Moneyppenny. He suggests that the process of choosing to utilize federal aid schemes over other alternatives acts as an indicator. Other simpler measures are not necessarily a practical means for the attainment of political objectives (Moneyppenny, 1960).

Two basic types of grants are of interest to this study. The first is categorical grants; the second, block grants. The rationale for examining these two types of grants is that they are the types predominant in Michigan's child welfare system.

Categorical grants are the primary funding source utilized in paying for foster care/out-of-home placements, as well as for services aimed either at keeping children in their homes or at returning them home from foster care. These grants originate with the federal government, and come to the state as Title IV E/TANIF funding. By definition, these funds are considered to be categorical in nature because they can only be utilized for specific purposes and under highly restrictive conditions set by the federal government. Break (1980) suggests that there are essentially three characteristics used to categorize grants. They are how the funds are used, how funds are allocated to a recipient, and the degree of participation by the grantor. Figure 3.1 depicts those three general characteristics, as well as the specific defining elements for each of the characteristics.

The primary funding source for child welfare in Michigan is Title IV E/TANIF. These funds are the primary mechanism for paying for out-of-home placements. They are categorical or functional, within narrow program areas, allocated by formula, with administrative checks, and with grantee matching requirements with unlimited grantor funds (open-ended matching grant). While these funds have highly restrictive clauses for qualification, they are in essence an open-ended entitlement for states.

1. How funds are used by recipient
  - a. Unrestricted
  - b. General, with limited restrictions
  - c. Block, within broad program areas
  - d. Categorical or functional, within narrow program areas
2. How funds are allocated to recipient
  - a. Formula, unrestricted
  - b. Formula, subject to limited restrictions
  - c. Formula, with administrative checks
  - d. Competitive applications by grantees (project grants)
3. Degree of participation by grantor
  - a. None (beyond provision of grant funds)
  - b. Administrative oversight
  - c. Technical services; cooperative management
  - d. Grantee matching requirements up to limit of grantor funds (closed-end matching funds)
  3. Grantee matching requirements with unlimited grantor funds (open-ended matching funds)

Figure 3.1. The Many Dimensions of Intergovernmental Grants (Break, 1980, p. 2).

A secondary funding approach utilized in Michigan's child welfare system is the block grant. These funds are used by the state within broad program areas associated with the child welfare system. The funds are allocated by formula subject to limited restrictions, and are separate and distinct from the provision of grant funds. Block grants involve no participation by the grantor. Block grant funding in Michigan's child welfare system has not supplanted categorical monies; rather it is meant to supplement categorical expenditures that attempt to effect changes in programmatic outcomes by tying expenditures to categorical-related programs.

Block grant funding is designed to free up local units of government to implement changes based on what in their view is needed. This is consistent with Gallup-Black's argument (1998), when she points out that because local units of government are inherently closer to the problems, they are in a much better position to see what is needed. Logic then dictates that once a problem has been properly identified, a solution can be fashioned to alleviate it.

In the child welfare arena, solutions are often related to service provision. As O'Brien (1996) suggests, the available funding dictates to a large degree the type and amount of services that can be provided, and the key to changing services is funding. Therefore, we arrive at the need to provide block grants in order to bridge the gap between the recognition that local units of government are in a better position to decide what issues they need to address and the realization that the funding mechanism is a powerful weapon in changing services.

In Michigan, sweeping change occurred in conjunction with the creation of multipurpose collaborative bodies. As Gardner (1994) suggests, "Many states and local officials believe that the main effect of requiring new collaborative bodies for new crosscutting initiatives has been to proliferate coalitions that purport to be about systems change" (p. 20). He goes further in suggesting that not only is the formation of collaborative bodies about creating systems change, but it is also about creating an atmosphere where governmental funding schemes can be evaluated in terms of their ability to improve child welfare outcomes. The intent, therefore, is to create community coalitions that address issues locally, drawing upon an in-depth



understanding of local issues in fashioning solutions. Furthermore, this approach provides an entry point into new funding streams, while simultaneously creating the coalitions which are a prerequisite to assuring long-term funding in a pluralistic system. Gardner states that block grants

in a larger context of strategies to change service delivery at the community level, with a coequal emphasis on accountability for results, [are] a new more effective way to raise both the visibility and credibility of these issues in the nation debate about policy for children and families. (pp. 22-23)

### Child Welfare and Devolving Federalism in Michigan

Despite what may be considered dated suppositions about power-sharing schemes, Miller's depiction of governmental relations more accurately reflects Michigan's power-sharing scheme in the child welfare policy area prior to 1995. Until recently, Michigan primarily operated under a descending authority model in which the primary source of authority resided with the federal government. The most significant reason behind the arrangement was that the principal revenue source for funding the child welfare system was the federal government. Geen, Boots, and Tumlin (1999) point out that there are currently over 40 separate federal funding sources for child welfare programming. However, they suggest that the primary funding source, Title IV E, is highly inflexible. Geen et al. then conclude that as a result of the restrictive nature of the funding source, there is a tendency on the part of the states to assume a lessening degree of responsibility for program outcomes. This is so, because states are not provided with flexible funding that allows them to fashion unique solutions to programs for which they have ownership. In support of their

conclusion they cite Courtney's (1997) work on the coercive nature of federal funding schemes.

Coercion can come in many forms; in Michigan, pressure is applied through the use of dollars. Along with the federal dollars used to support the child welfare system in Michigan came strings, and mandates. If the state failed to comply, it would lose its funding stream. The most notable mandates are associated with out-of-home placements. If a child is to be eligible for Title IV E funding, the federal funds used to pay for placements, then both the state and local counties must adhere to certain edicts from the federal government. The state is required to meet certain licensing requirements for the placement as well as to make reasonable efforts to prevent that placement in the first place. The local county judges are required to make a judicial finding that reasonable efforts were being made by FIA. The court is essentially prohibited from ordering specific placements. Instead, it must commit that child to the state for care placement and planning. If a judge were to order a specific placement, that court would then be required to pay for it. Given the cost of placement, and the fact that almost half of out-of-home placements are funded by federal dollars, this is not a realistic or viable option (Geen et al., 1999). Local county judges must use court orders that comply with standards set forth by the federal government. Furthermore, judges are required to hold hearings within certain time frames, and affirm previous findings or risk losing the funding source. Local county casework decisions are also driven by federal mandates. Caseworkers are required to make permanency decisions within one year, or the funding source may be eliminated.

The end result is that prior to 1995, Michigan's child welfare system was an example of how Miller (1958) describes power sharing among governmental units. Clearly case work decisions and judicial findings can be made independent of federal mandates, but if those actions fall outside of federal guidelines, funding is stopped. Neither the state nor the counties have the resources to replace the billions of dollars the federal government expends on child welfare in Michigan. Therefore, little autonomy is afforded to descending levels of government. Aside from the rigidly structured Title IV E funding stream, there are few other funding mechanisms available to the child welfare system. The difficulty with such a system is that casework outcomes are supported only by one open-ended funding stream from the federal government. Other funding options traditionally involve only minimal funding with many requiring state and local matches. Some experts, such as Courtney (1997), suggest that this type of funding structure in essence lays out financial incentives for states to place children in foster care rather than provide services to families so that children can remain in their own homes.

While Courtney's (1997) suggestion of perverse incentives may appear extreme, it is not far off the mark. It may be over-reaching to draw a specific conclusion that children are placed in foster care as a result of perverse funding schemes. However, it may be easier to accept the basic premise if one considers that it is difficult to keep at-risk families together if there is little to no funding for services to alleviate conditions and prevent removals. Does that mean that there is an incentive to place children into foster care? No, but it does mean that it is difficult to interdict

abuse and neglect patterns with the only substantive funding source dedicated to paying for out-of-home placements. In essence, if all one does is to pay to remove children from their homes, with no investment in prevention, the conditions that lead to removal, then it follows that there will be an increase in placements.

The key elements of federalism and child welfare primarily remained in this bilateral relationship until the 1990s, when the 83 counties in Michigan were added as a third partner to the relationship that existed between the federal government and the state. This shift was promulgated by the initiation of block grant funding from the federal government to the states in an effort to curb rising child welfare caseload sizes and costs. This occurred because “acknowledging the pitfalls of such funding rigidity and responding to dramatic increases in Title IV E spending, Congress has begun considering ways to give states increased fiscal flexibility and responsibility” (Geen et al., 1999, p. 2). The state thus assumed its role as the junior partner and now tailors its child welfare system through state legislation and administrative rule making by the MFIA. Responsibility for implementation is in turn passed to the county level. Continued funding is of course dependent on adhering to federal law and administrative rules, but some latitude in policy formulation is exercised by individual states.

One often-overlooked element in the race to define power-sharing schemes among levels of government is the relationship among power sharing, funding schemes, and the law. Clearly, there is a good deal of attention paid to formal and informal relationships between administrative units, as well as to the hyperbole that

exists between politically divergent philosophies. While the use of varying types of grants can be a strong indicator of the type of federalism that is predominant, equally important is the tenor of litigation surrounding intergovernmental relations. This is especially true with categorical grants, and the strings routinely attached as conditions of continued funding.

The basis for most major litigation with regard to power-sharing struggles between the federal, state, and local units of government can be found in the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. As Tolley and Wallin (1995) note, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's writings on the case of *New York v. United States* (505 U.S. 144 (1992)) began to signal a subtly different approach to the 10th Amendment and federal-state relations: "The court, through her majority opinion, read the commerce clause in light of the tenth amendment values and held that congress could not legislate in a manner that 'commandeered' state legislative process" (Tolley & Wallin, 1995, p. 1). In essence, this was a departure from previous rulings by the courts where the federal government's power over the states was almost beyond challenge. Previous cases, such as 426 U.S. 833 (1976), essentially provided a strong legal basis for the national approach to governance, or federalism. Conversely, the court's rulings in 301 U.S. 548 (1937) and 115 S.Ct. 1624 (1995) provided a legal basis for a shift towards a more state-centric system, or the devolving federalism model. The premise behind these cases was that the Supreme Court found it unconstitutional for the federal government to use funding schemes and financial inducements to compel state compliance with federal policy.

The question as to whether or not the financial inducements associated with Title IV E funding rise to the level of coercion is a delicate one. At what point is the line crossed between making laws that apply pressure to states, and making laws that are considered to be coercive? Cardozo (1937) suggests that the line is crossed when decision autonomy is denied. However, that distinction is not easily drawn. As Epstein (1993) states, "There is no clear theory that explains why a 5 percent cutoff is not coercive but a 95 percent cutoff is . . ." (Epstein, 1993, p. 155). The question is even more muddled when applied to the child welfare system in Michigan.

Given that the loss of Title IV E funding is based on decisions applied at the county level in Michigan, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much funding is at risk of being lost at any given point. For example, does a given funding scheme result in a scenario such as Cardozo (1937) suggested where there is some arbitrary cutoff of dollars at some arbitrary point? However, the difficulty in determining the impacts of the decisions takes on greater meaning because in Michigan, the individual county that makes the case decisions must absorb any loss of funding. Therefore, the exact amount of pressure associated with the decisions will be inversely proportional to the budgetary situation of any given county. As such, it becomes difficult for states to challenge the federal anti-coercion clause in the 10th amendment. This is because the effects are essentially decentralized to the county level, where the actual extent of coercion is associated with the fiscal well-being of a given county, and are not easily discernable at the state level.

## Summary

A review of the literature suggests that there has been little attention paid to the role government plays in the child welfare field. However, government does play a very significant role in not only creating policy, but also in shaping service delivery.

Government intervention comes in many different shapes and forms. In order to categorize actions as description, or theory, are applied to different events and trends. Over time these theories have evolved to fit the changing environment of newly developing political realities. In general, these theories are considered to be descriptive, and are closely related to political ideologies. For example, conservatives typically espouse a belief in the theory of devolving federalism, which is typified by a more decentralized decision-making process with a higher degree of local control. Conversely, the liberal philosophy is more closely aligned with a traditional theory of federalism, where there is a tendency to have a stronger national government with less local control. One common linkage between both of these theories is that they become more proscriptive at the point of program administration.

Public administration is the pragmatic element of the governmental process through which political actions are typically executed. It is here that what was once a political ideology is fashioned into a proscriptive means of service delivery. In the case of child welfare, when a model of devolving federalism is predominant, administrative structures must be modified to decentralize authority from the national government to the states and local units of government. While there are several

different methods of accomplishing this, one of the most common is through the use of funding mechanisms.

Funding mechanisms are powerful tools for changing services, and it is the application of services to identified social problems that is one of the most commonly accepted courses for attempting to improve associated outcomes. Therefore, changing funding schemes can be used as a means for creating change in social welfare outcomes. Where the difficulties arise is in determining who should decide what services are necessary, and who should pay for those services. The struggle over answering those two basic questions is much more complex than it appears.

One element of politics is the struggle over allocating resources. How that allocation occurs is based in part on political ideology. Those who believe in the need for a strong federal system would tend to favor utilizing categorical grants, which are funds that can only be utilized in a manner strictly proscribed under the conditions of the grant. Those who advocate for more state or local control would favor the use of block grants, which provide a much higher degree of latitude for the grantee in determining how the funds are spent. Current thought suggests that a shift has occurred toward decentralizing authority, or devolving federalism. Support for this shift is based on pluralism, and an understanding that states are in a better position to address local problems. Consequently, when Congress was confronted with an open-ended entitlement program, with costs beginning to spiral out of control, it began "to devolve more financial and operational responsibility for social service delivery to the states" (Geen et al., 1999, p. 1).



Devolving federalism takes shape in Michigan through the creation of the collaborative bodies. These bodies are provided with block grant funding which, as Gallup-Black (1998) suggests, is intended to free them up to make local decisions and implement programmatic changes to which they are more closely linked. Ultimately, as O'Brien (1996) suggests, the theory is that by freeing up funding streams, collaborative efforts are encouraged to design services that can be uniquely fashioned to meet community needs. The intent in the case of child welfare is to improve outcomes for children (Strope, 1995).

Examining changes in child welfare outcomes in Michigan offers an opportunity to test the efficacy of devolving federalism as expressed by the issuance of block grant funding for child welfare in Michigan. If, as Strope (1995) indicates, the intent of using collaborative efforts is to better use flexible funds to lower incidents of child abuse and neglect, and decrease the number of out-of-home placement, then measuring for statistically significant changes in these outcomes is a means for testing certain elements of the theory of devolving federalism. Namely, one can test whether local units of government are better able to fashion solutions to problems as suggested by Gallup-Black (1998). Also, as O'Brien (1996) suggests, by providing flexible funds to collaborative bodies these local units should be able to craft solutions that fit the unique needs of their communities.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

This dissertation seeks to explore the devolving nature of federalism as it relates to child welfare, and to assess whether or not implementation has had a significant impact on child welfare outcomes in Michigan. The outcomes being examined are the number of child abuse or neglect complaints received, number of substantiated child abuse or neglect complaints, the number of repeat substantiations, and the number of children in foster care. The research question then becomes, "Is devolving federalism an effective paradigm for improving child welfare outcomes?" The principal hypothesis is that devolving federalism, as expressed through the issuance of federal block grants, has a significant impact on child welfare outcomes in Michigan. Analyzing the defined outcomes over two distinct time periods is intended to provide a test for this hypothesis. During these two specified time periods, Michigan operated under distinctly different types of federalism. This provides an opportunity to compare the effectiveness of each paradigm in terms of child welfare outcomes that are defined and measured consistently over both of the time periods being studied.

In the process of answering the basic question of the effectiveness of federalism, several other associated elements will be examined. Specifically, does the size of the county, whether small, medium, or large, result in a statistically significant

difference in child welfare outcomes under the devolving federalism model? Does the relative wealth of a county present a statistically significant measure of association with the types of child welfare services that it provides? In an effort to answer these questions further testing is performed through additional analysis following the testing of the four hypotheses.

In examining the child welfare system in Michigan two distinct time periods become of primary interest. The first is the 1992 through 1996 fiscal year period, and the second period is the fiscal years 1996 through 2001. What is so distinctive about these two periods is that they provide an opportunity to compare and contrast the effect of two different federalism paradigms on child welfare outcomes in Michigan.

Between 1990 and 1995 the child welfare system in Michigan operated under a traditional model of federalism in which the authority and decision-making process descended in a top-down hierarchical manner. The model depicted in Figure 4.1 shows the flow of authority, decision making process, and funding schemes for the two time periods being examined. Under this model, the federal government sets strict policy guidelines for child welfare practices as well as for how federal funds can be spent on child welfare cases. Funding eligibility is highly restrictive and grants are typically categorical. The state acts as the conduit responsible for funneling federal dollars to the county level for expenditure under highly restrictive and proscribed guidelines. This is typified by the Child Abuse and Neglect contracts (CA/N) that were issued to counties by the state. CA/N contracts were categorical grants that provided monies to local county FIA offices to provide child welfare services. These

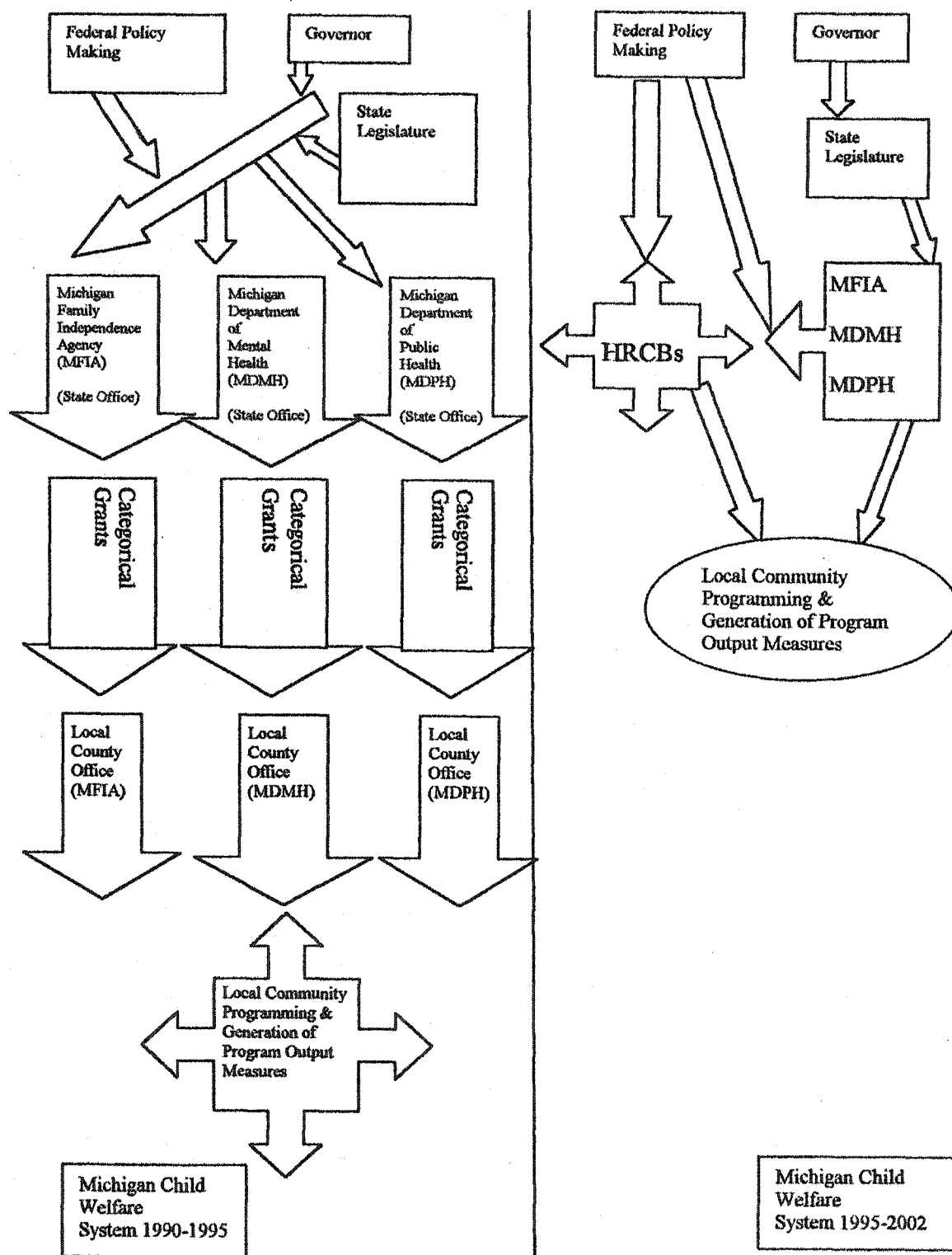


Figure 4.1. Child Welfare and Federalism, 1990–Present.

services were intended to reduce the occurrence of child abuse and neglect as well as to reduce the number of foster care placements. The services that counties could purchase with the CA/N contracts were strictly spelled out by the state.

Examples of services that could be purchased under CA/N contracts were homemakers/parent aides and outreach counseling. Given the restrictive nature of the grants, these two services were almost uniformly provided in every county of the state. What is so distinctive about this approach is that other agencies involved in child welfare, such as mental health and public health, act independently of one another with little or no coordination of services.

In 1994, the political paradigm used to affect child welfare outcomes in Michigan changed. The 1995–1996 Fiscal Year marked the beginning of a shift towards using devolving federalism as a paradigm to effect change in child welfare outcomes. Under the new model, power is delegated from the federal government to the states, and then to the counties and local communities. In Michigan, this shift of authority was made possible by the issuance of block grants and the creation of HRCBs.

Under the devolving federalism model the federal government still sets strict guidelines for child welfare practices as well as for funding eligibility. The difference is that block grants were now made available to each county in the state. Some mandates were made, such as the requirement of the formulation of the multipurpose Human Resource Collaborative Bodies. These HRCBs were mandated to include a member from each of the three primary state agencies, MFIA, MDPH, and MDMH,

but also had to include community members. It was then up to the HRCBs to decide what the community's needs were, and then to make their own decisions about what types of services would best meet those needs. This approach differs dramatically from the one that preceded it, in that communities now had the ability to design their own services to effect child welfare outcomes. All of the members of the HRCBs have an equal say in the decisions being made. Therefore, higher levels of government no longer strictly controlled child welfare services, and the shift to a devolving federalism model for effecting child welfare outcomes in Michigan was in place.

Bell (1999) provides guidance in developing a valid methodological approach to the question of devolving federalism in relation to child welfare outcomes. Bell posits that a valid methodological design must include observable outcomes and the ability to measure those outcomes over several years. The analysis should include data both before and after the implementation of a given change. The measurement of policy change is then accomplished through the estimation of observable outcomes over periods of time. In the case of this research design, child welfare outcomes will be observed both before and after the implementation of HSRBs in Michigan. This design thus provides for comparison groups both before and after the noted change being observed. The change consequently can be followed over a time interval (Bell, 1999, pp. 24–27).

The research approach proposed in this study consists of an exploratory longitudinal study with an analysis of secondary data using quantitative methods. The rationale for choosing a quantitative approach is based on a review of the relevant

literature. That review has provided authority for the decisions made with regard to the methodology selected, and has been arrived at based on the work of Bell (1999), Vogt (1999), and O'Sullivan and Rassel (1999). In addition to their work, the stated purposes of the political paradigm being examined and the intent of using block grants within the child welfare system in Michigan to improve child welfare outcomes suggest *prima facie* that a quantitative approach is an appropriate choice. The outcomes being targeted by the grants are clearly defined, and can be easily quantified. Furthermore, the grants use a baseline to establish a fixed point in time from which it is possible to begin looking at the same outcomes both before and after the initiation of the grants. Furthermore, the secondary data being used are readily available.

The elements required by Bell (1999) for a counterfactual examination are present and included in this research design. The independent variables are listed as the size of the county, and collected and coded at the ordinal level. Other independent variables for measures of association include county size, which are coded at the ordinal level as being small, medium, or large, and also the relative wealth of a county, which is collected at the interval level. The dependent variables are child welfare outcomes. While it may appear to be an assumption to choose the following dependent variables, they are the outcomes targeted by the federal grants; as such, they can be accurately used as measures. The dependent variables are collected at the ratio level, and include the number of CPS referrals taken, the number of CPS referrals assigned for investigation, the number of CPS referrals substantiated, the

number of repeat CPS substantiations, and the number of children placed in foster care. All data are collected and reported utilizing agency annual figures, broken down by data point based on individual county data.

The data are examined over a 9-year time span, beginning in 1992, and ending in 2001. The rationale for the time period selected is based on the availability of data before and after the initiation of block grants. The data are currently available only through the 2001 Fiscal Year, and are not available in the same format prior to 1993. Census data from 1990 and 2000 are utilized to determine a county's ranking as small, medium, or large.

The secondary data are utilized in a longitudinal, exploratory design beginning in 1992, and ending in December 2001. An analysis of the data should indicate whether there has been a statistically significant variance in child welfare outcomes, as measured by change in the dependent variables. If devolving federalism is an effective paradigm for creating change in child welfare outcomes, then there should be a statistically significant decrease in the number of CPS referrals, assigned CPS cases, number of CPS substantiations, a reduced number of repeat CPS substantiations, and fewer children in foster care placements. However, in an effective paradigm, measurement of the dependent variable would indicate either the status quo or an increase in the measured dependent variables. Additional analysis of the data is intended to yield information that demonstrates if a relationship exists between devolving federalism and county size.



Baseline data on all dependent variables from 1992–1996 are included in the analysis. This provides a comparative basis for child welfare outcomes prior to the implementation of block grants. Data from 1996–2001, after the initiation of block grants, are used for comparison.

The study requires an analysis of secondary data, which are readily available. In order to examine the impact of federalism on child welfare in Michigan, a systematic analysis must be followed. In so doing, it is necessary to test a specific hypothesis in a manner that is easy to understand, conforms to readily accepted statistical techniques, is reproducible, and generalizable. High internal validity should enable other researchers to replicate this study in other states in an attempt to measure improved outcomes within their child welfare systems. Generalizability will be addressed later in the methodology section.

#### Possible Intervening Variables

One of the difficulties in conducting research over such a long period of time, and across an entire state, is the possibility of the inadvertent introduction of intervening variables. This occurs when multiple events occur over time that can appear to have the potential to impact on the dependent variables. However, because this study is not laboratory based or experimental in nature, the researcher is not introducing the independent variable(s). Therefore, it is not possible to absolutely control for all potential occurrences where other possible variables can have an impact on the dependent variable.

In order to confront the uncertainty of conducting research under conditions where it is not possible to strictly control for all intervening variables, it is necessary to identify limitations, and make some basic assumptions that must hold true in order for the research to be valid. Although these factors cannot be strictly controlled for in the same sense that they can be in a purely experimental design, they can be identified and dealt with in a counter-factual manner.

There are five primary limitations and assumptions that must be addressed. They are the 1997 Binsfeld Legislation, the creation and statewide implementation of the Families First program, the 5 Tier CPS system, the 1999 change in CPS terminology, and the Adoption & Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997. While these assumptions and limitations will also be dealt with in the Limitations and Assumptions sections of this chapter, it is important to discuss them briefly at the outset to provide a framework for analyzing the methodological approach for this research.

The Binsfeld Legislation was enacted in 1997 as a result of a commission created by Governor John Engler, through Executive Order 1995-12. The executive order in essence established a commission to review existing child welfare laws, review programs and procedures, and examine as agency policy and field training programs for child welfare workers. The commission ended up making 47 recommendations that were to be put into law through the passage of Public Acts 163-172. This series of 10 laws established child death review teams and foster care review boards, articulated grounds for filing mandatory petitions, refined court rules, and mandated that counties formulate protocols for the coordination of child abuse

and neglect investigations. Other elements of the new laws required workers to more vigorously pursue relative placements for children when they were removed from their homes, and set parameters for caseworkers when making monthly home visits.

The Binsfeld Legislation did create extensive changes for case workers, attorneys, judges, and agencies involved in the child welfare field. However, these changes were directed at issues that were in essence peripheral to the outcomes that are the focus of this research. None of the 10 laws was aimed at reducing the number of CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, repeat substantiations, or out-of-home placements. Instead they were aimed at refining the process, encouraging coordination among agencies so that investigations were done more efficiently, facilitating more home like placements through the use of kinship resources, and mandating the filing of petitions under certain circumstances. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the Binsfeld Legislation would act as an intervening variable here. Further support for this assumption is provided through data analysis. If the Binsfeld Legislation is an intervening variable, it would be expected that a significant variation should have occurred in 1999 and 2000, as 9 out of 10 of laws did not go into effect until April 1998.

Families First is a statewide crises intervention program that operates in every county of the state. It is designed to prevent out-of-home placements by providing intensive family-based services. Children's Protective Services workers use Families First when they have established that a preponderance of evidence exists that child abuse or neglect has occurred. The next step is for the worker to complete a risk

assessment. Families First is then used if that risk assessment indicates that there is a high or intensive of risk of harm to the children, and the CPS worker believes that unless intensive home-based services are provided, the children will need to be removed in order to protect them.

At first glance it would appear that Families First would be an intervening variable. If the program were used to prevent out-of-home placements, then it would stand to reason that it would reduce the total number of out-of-home placements being made across the state. However, the program has been in place in every county of the state since 1991. Although Families First does reduce the number of out-of-home placements being made, it has done so since its inception in 1991. As such, given that there has not been any major programmatic change within Families First, the effect it has on the number of out-of-home placements should remain constant over time.

The change to a five-tier CPS disposition system presents another possible intervening variable. In 1999, Michigan changed the way that it coded and disposed of child abuse and neglect complaints. Prior to 1999, when an investigator determined that a preponderance of evidence existed, he or she substantiated the complaint and the individual who perpetrated the abuse or neglect was placed on central registry. Essentially, CPS workers had to decide whether or not to place someone on the central registry. This decision process provided the statistical basis for tracking CPS outcomes.

In 1999 that decision process for disposing of CPS complaints was changed. This change provided workers with five options in disposing of a complaint. Category IV and Category V of these choices are associated with cases that are not being substantiated and Category I, II, and III cases are associated with cases that are substantiated. The key difference is that with Category III dispositions, the perpetrator is not placed on the central registry. This could create a potential problem with the data in that a whole subset of complaints of child abuse and neglect could be substantiated, but not recorded. In essence this would lead to the perception that fewer cases of child abuse or neglect were substantiated.

In order to assess the effects of this major policy change, it is necessary to look at the data collection methods, and how the data are reported for each method. The problem arises in that prior to 1999, data with regard to CPS substantiations could be taken from the central registry. However, category III cases currently are not placed on the central registry, so collecting the data from that source would exclude an entire subset of substantiations, and lead to a false sense that child abuse and neglect are on the decline. In order to control for this policy change, data are obtained from CY 351 reports. This report is discrete enough to pick up Category III cases. This takes into account the change in policy and potential data collection errors.

Along with the change to a five tier CPS disposition in 1999 came a change in the terminology used by CPS workers in determining the outcomes of a CPS case. Prior to 1999, the term *substantiation* was used when a case was investigated, and it

was determined the allegations that initiated the investigation were credible and true. In 1999 that terminology was changed to a finding of a preponderance of evidence, which is more consistent with the legal terminology and the level of proof on which the finding is based. Both of the terms, *substantiation* and *preponderance* require that the investigator determine that enough evidence exists to demonstrate that it is more likely that the abuse or neglect occurred. Simply stated, it is a tipping of the scales, or 51% versus 49%, with regard to the likelihood that abuse or neglect occurred. The end result is that on the surface it may appear that there was a change in the standard for determining if abuse or neglect occurred, but in reality it was nothing more than a question of aligning terminology between policy and law for the consistency of semantics. Therefore, it is not anticipated that any change occurred in the rate that CPS cases resulted in a finding of a preponderance or substantiation as a result of the new terminology.

Another major legislative change that occurred during this time period that could act as a potential intervening variable was the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). The Adoption and Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-89) is federal policy directed at encouraging permanency for children involved with the child welfare system. The three major purposes of ASFA are to expedite permanency, assure the safety of children within the child welfare system, and provide more options for achieving permanency. ASFA is also intended to clarify reasonable efforts requirements, which is inclusive of the time of removal, and at the time permanency decisions are made with regard to termination.

While ASFA was a major piece of federal legislation, its primary focus was not directed at preventing child abuse and neglect. The argument could be made that the number of foster care placements could have been affected by the passage of ASFA. Support for this position could be found in examining the reasonable efforts provisions. However, all the 1997 version of ASFA did was to clarify meaning with regard to provisions that had been established in the 1980 version of ASFA (P.L. 96-272). While there is mention of reasonable efforts in the 1997 version, no new provisions were added with respect to preventing out of home placement. It did, however, provide clarification of meaning. Consequently, it was not anticipated that absent a large policy change with regard to reasonable efforts standards that there would be an appreciable effect on the out-of-home placement numbers. If such an unanticipated result should occur, it would be detectable by a significant change in the 1998 foster care placement numbers. The assumption surrounding this possible intervening variable is further evaluated in this study by examining the foster care data for anomalous changes in 1998, and 1999, where the passage of ASFA would be anticipated to have an impact, if any.

#### Type of Research

It is important in studying the impact of devolving federalism on the implementation of child welfare policy in Michigan to use a quantitative approach. The reason is that it provides a means for measuring specified program outcomes to determine if goals are achieved. By performing a quantitative analysis, readily

accepted statistical techniques can be employed to test hypotheses, and to assist in making it possible to replicate the research. This type of methodology is also cost effective in that data are readily available and in a usable form. Lastly, because the goal of this research is to measure if devolving federalism has had a significant impact on numerically measurable outcomes, statistical analysis provides a valid approach for achieving that goal.

In the case of this research, it is proposed to utilize a quasi-experimental, longitudinal analysis of secondary data. Support for such an approach is provided by Bell (1999). The design is longitudinal in nature and seeks to answer one principal research question: Do federal block grants have a significant impact on child welfare outcomes in Michigan?

Based on the fundamental nature of the underlying research question, the rationale for selecting a quantitative design is also straightforward. The stated purpose of the federal block grants examined in this research is to improve child welfare outcomes. These child welfare outcomes are quantitative measures, and are identified as the number of children in foster care, number of CPS referrals, the number of substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect, and the number of repeat CPS substantiations. In addition, because these outcomes were of interest prior to the implementation of the federal block grants, there are data available not only following implementation of the grants, but also prior to their adoption. Ultimately, this provides a unique ability to track the same performance indicators both prior and subsequent to the occurrence of the event being studied. Given that the outcomes



being observed and measures are consistent over time, a quasi-experimental longitudinal design, utilizing secondary data, is an appropriate choice to study the research question being posed.

A longitudinal study, or design, is one in which a variable, or group of variables, is studied over time. Data are collected on each variable over at least two distinct time periods, with the same cases being analyzed in each period. The result is that it becomes possible to measure variation in the value of the variables being studied over time (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1999, p. 31). This study is being conducted as a longitudinal design since it is conducted over a 9-year period. It is also quasi-experimental in nature, and, as Vogt (1999) suggests, it is the appropriate choice for a research design in which a field study is being conducted under real life circumstances where it is not necessarily possible to randomly assign subjects to a control or experimental group. Furthermore, he also points out that when the intent of the research project being undertaken is to conduct an evaluation, the appropriate design should be quasi-experimental in nature (Vogt, 1999, p. 230). Evaluation research is an investigation that can use several different statistical methods to test the "effectiveness or impact of a social program or intervention" (Vogt, 1999, p. 100). Vogt further suggests that this research approach became prominent during the 1960s with the proliferation of social welfare programs under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

This research is being conducted without the benefit of data being collected by the author for the sole purpose of determining if devolving federalism is an effective

paradigm for improving child welfare outcomes. As such, it is by definition an ex-post facto research design. An ex-post facto research design is one in which any of the following are true: "(a) any investigation using existing rather than new data gathered specifically for the study. Causes will be studied after they have had their effect. (b) any non-experimental research design that takes place after the conditions to be studied have occurred" (Vogt, 1999, p. 105).

### Hypotheses

The overarching hypothesis being tested is: Federal block grants have had a statistically significant impact on child welfare outcomes in Michigan. The null hypothesis then becomes: Federal block grants have not had a statistically significant impact on child welfare outcomes in Michigan. As noted, the hypothesis will be tested utilizing a quasi-experimental, longitudinal design drawing on secondary data. The time period being studied is from January 1993 through January 2001. Because the block grants were implemented in 1995, the design allows for an examination of trends 4 years before and 5 years after the implementation.

In order to accept or reject the principal hypothesis, four other hypotheses must first be tested and answered.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving Federalism and the rate of CPS referrals in Michigan.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS referrals in Michigan.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS substantiations in Michigan.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of CPS substantiations in Michigan.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of repeat CPS substantiations in Michigan.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of repeat CPS substantiations in Michigan.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of foster care placements in Michigan.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of foster care placements in Michigan.

### Variables

There are five variables being used to test the hypothesis. The independent variables are the population size of the county and the presence or absence of a federal, child welfare block grant that was received by the State of Michigan. Each of Michigan's 83 counties received these child welfare block grants either as an individual county, or as a part of a dual county configuration in which a grant was given to a pairing of counties. Dual county grants are more typical of the smaller more rural counties that share the same County FIA Director, or other county

agencies that have historically collaborated. The dependent variables include the number of CPS referrals received by county, the numbers of CPS substantiations in a county, the number of repeat CPS substantiations which occurred in the county, and the number of children placed in a foster care placement.

### Levels of Data

The independent variable has been collected at the ordinal level, with each county coded as large, medium, or small. A large county is one with a population that is greater than or equal to 100,000 and is coded as a 1. Data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that there are 20 counties in Michigan that have a population equal to or greater than 100,000. A medium size county is one that has a population that is less 100,000, but greater than or equal to 40,000 and is coded as a 2. Data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that there are 21 counties in Michigan that have a population equal to or greater than 40,000, but less than 100,000. A small county has a population of less than 40,000 and is coded as a 3. Data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that there are 42 counties in Michigan that have a population less than 40,000. All dependent variables are collected at the interval level.

The data collected are all secondary. For the purposes of testing the hypothesis presented in this research, no primary data are necessary.

## Operational Definitions

In order to provide consistency, and to assist others should they choose to replicate this research, several operational definitions are set forth. In addition, the definitions should help clarify the various issues to be studied. The major terms to be defined include *federal block grant*, *CPS referral*, *CPS substantiation*, *CPS repeat substantiation*, and *foster care placement*.

Federal grants come in two basic forms, categorical or block. Categorical grants are grants that are issued by the federal government to states and localities, and are normally issued for highly specific purposes, with very restrictive limiting clauses on how the money can actually be spent. Block grants are normally issued to states, for a general or overarching purpose directed at impacting a broader problem area. They are generally characterized as having few specific requirements as to how the money is actually spent. For the purposes of this study, it is the issuance of federal block grants that is of interest.

Prior to the 1994–1995 Fiscal Year, no child welfare grants were present at the county level. However, during that Fiscal Year, all that changed. As Caldwell (1996) indicates, all 83 counties in Michigan were included in that change when they began receiving funds from a federal block grant. The aim of those monies was to persuade states to begin to look at preventative strategies directed at curbing the escalating number of children being abused or neglected, and who subsequently entered a foster care or other out-of-home placement. Currently federal money directed at child welfare outcomes flows to local units of government through three

programs: the Child Safety and Permanency Planning, (CSPP), Child Protection: Working Together as Community Partners (CP/CP), and Strong Families/Safe Children (CF/SC).

The second term that needs to be operationally defined is a *CPS referral*. A definition for what constitutes a CPS referral is provided for in part under CPL 238, which defines child abuse and neglect. A referral is an allegation of child abuse or neglect that is received by the MFIA, and is then subsequently entered onto the Service Worker Support System (SWSS). SWSS is a software-based referral system to which all complaints of child abuse and neglect are entered, either rejected or accepted for field investigation, and disposed of. It should be noted that prior to 1996, when the SWSS system was put into operation statewide, referrals were taken manually on a paper form, DSS 3550. The source for these data is the FIA CY 351 reports.

A definition for a *Children's Protective Services (CPS) substantiation* is provided for under CPL 238. The Child Protection Law defines substantiation as any CPS referral that has been assigned for field investigation and subsequently found to be supported by a preponderance of evidence. This results in a person responsible for the health and welfare of a child being placed on the FIA Central Registry. A preponderance of evidence is a legal standard which defines the level of proof that must be demonstrated in order for an allegation or argument to be affirmatively held. The Central Registry is

the system maintained at the department that is used to keep a record of all reports filed with the department pursuant to this act in which relevant and

accurate evidence of child abuse or neglect is found to exist and which is maintained at the department. (Michigan Public Act 238 (1975, as amended 2002, p. 1)

These data are available through FIA CY 351 reports.

A repeat *CPS substantiation* is defined as another CPS substantiation, as already defined, which results in placing an individual who has already been previously placed on the FIA Central Registry on the registry another time.

A *foster care placement* is defined under Public Act 116. This Act defines a placement as any child who is placed outside of his or her own home, for a minimum of one night. That placement needs to be in a licensed foster home, residential facility, relative placement, or a placement with fictive kin, while under the jurisdiction of the Family Division of the Circuit Court. The source for these data is the FIA CY 090 (Part H) reports. However, the foster care data that are reported on the CY 090 are not reflective of the total number of children placed out of their home. Rather it identifies the number of children out of their own home at the end of the year. As such, they represent a snapshot at one point in time, not the totality of the situation. Given that information, it is logical to infer that the actual total number of children placed in foster care during any given year is actually higher. While this presents a problem with the data, it is so only to the extent that if the data were collected in a different fashion, a more accurate picture of the actual number of children removed from their homes each year would be available. As it is, the CY 090 Part H, provides a consistent and reliable source for obtaining the foster care data in that the numbers

reflected within it have been collected and reported consistently over the time span being studied in this research.

### Assumptions

Several assumptions must hold true in order for this research to be valid. The following is a list of these major assumptions. The rationale for making these assumptions is also included.

1. The dependent variable represents observable and measurable intended outcomes for the federal, child welfare block grants instituted in Michigan during the Fiscal Year 1994–1995. However, as Caldwell suggests, the federal block grants are intended to reduce the number of CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS resubstantiations, and the number of children in foster care. Consequently, the literature suggests that this first assumption appears to be true. In accordance with this research design, a set of valid measures is used to test the hypothesis.

2. The 1999 change in categorizing CPS substantiations will not skew the data. In 1999, the Michigan Child Protection Law shifted from having only two options for a decision, those being either to substantiate or leave unsubstantiated a CPS referral assigned for field investigation. The new system allows for five choices in the decision process: Category I, Category II, Category III, Category IV, and Category V. A Category I case is one in which a preponderance of evidence has been found to exist, and one or more of the following is true:

- 1) A court petition is required.
- 2) The child is not deemed to be safe if left in the home.



- 3) The case was previously investigated and classified as a Category II case, and the family refuses to voluntarily cooperate with services.
- 4) The perpetrator is bound over to circuit court for either First, Second, or Third degree Criminal Sexual assault. The perpetrator is bound over for either intent to commit sexual assault or an assault is committed against a child that can be tried as a felony. Other charges include child abuse in the first, second or third degree or involvement with child sexual abuse material. (Michigan Public Act 238, 1975, p. 22)

A Category II case is one in which a preponderance of evidence is found to exist after the completion of a field investigation, and after the worker completes the DSS 4752. It is determined that the child, or children, is at either an intensive risk of harm or a high risk of harm. The DSS 4752 is a structured decision-making tool that has been incorporated into SWSS, and must be completed on CPS cases where a preponderance of evidence is determined to exist. The DSS 4752 is a diagnostic tool used to determine a risk level for each family based on uniform criteria. A Category II case results in the alleged perpetrator having his or her name placed on the central registry.

A Category III case is one in which a worker determines that there is a preponderance of evidence that exists, but following the completion of the risk assessment tool, it is determined that there is either a moderate or low risk of harm to the child or children. In Category III cases the perpetrator is not placed on the central registry. When a worker disposes of a referral as a Category IV case, there is not a determination that a preponderance of abuse or neglect occurred. In cases such as these, services are offered to the family due to the potential risk of harm. In Category IV cases, the alleged perpetrator is not placed on the central registry.

A Category V case is one in which there is no evidence of abuse or neglect, and services are not needed. The alleged perpetrator in Category V cases is not placed on the central registry.

3. The number of decision points has been increased for the CPS investigator as a result of the implementation of the five-tier system. Both of these decision models, however, are based either on finding or not finding a preponderance of evidence, and either on placing or not placing an individual on the central registry. The new system places cases in a category based on the completion of a formalized risk assessment, but the decision point is still a preponderance of evidence. Lastly, the data are consistently reported across time on the FIA CY 100 report. This is important in that Category III cases are expunged from the FIA Central Registry with 24 hours of the preponderance decision. However, the FIA CY 351 is a discrete enough data source to correct for this in that it identifies CPS cases that are opened on the Client Information System, or CIS, which are unaffected by Central Registry expunction. Consequently, the advent of the five-tier system will not diminish the validity of the data collected.

4. The 1999 change in CPS terminology will not affect the data. The terms *substantiation* and *preponderance of evidence* are used interchangeably. Prior to 1999 the Child Protection Law used the term *substantiation* for a finding which resulted in a person being placed on the central registry. The new term indicates that an individual has been placed on the FIA Central Registry as a result of the preponderance of evidence. While it may cause some minor confusion, the change is

semantic. Both terms refer to a preponderance of evidence, a legal term indicating the burden of proof in a civil matter. Simply stated, it means that the burden for substantiation is that one or more of the allegations were more likely than not to have occurred. This simple “tipping of the scales” in one direction or the other is the same burden of proof was required prior to 1993. Consequently, the standard present at the decision point has remained consistent over the period of the study. Therefore, no threat to the design or data has occurred as a result of this change.

5. That variance in community standards will not skew the data. The issue of community standards and their role in the regulatory process has been hotly contested. There is a consensus that community standards should play a role in determining issues involving children. As Godwin (2001) suggests, “When we look at community standards, what we’re looking at is a right that is vested not in state and federal police officers, but rather in the citizens of communities themselves” (Godwin, 2001, p. 4). However, this places into conflict the consent to govern bestowed on the federal government, as well as the state’s authority over localities as represented in Dillon’s Rule. It is within these inherent conflicts that the assumption of community standards must be satisfactorily addressed.

Clearly, by giving our consent to the federal government to be governed, we voluntarily relinquish some rights of self-governance. This concept is further extended by Dillon’s Rule, which consolidates authority in the state by reserving all privileges not expressly granted to localities by the authority of the state constitution. In the context of the child welfare system in Michigan, state law defines what constitutes

child abuse and neglect, which is binding in all 83 counties of the state. However, each county has its own local county FIA office, which in essence becomes the arbiter of what constitutes abuse and neglect in that individual county. But the basis for those decisions lies in uniform agency policy. In addition to such policy and state law, it is the principle of consistency within a given community and its standards, which suggests that a community standard is just that, a standard. By definition, these standards remain relatively constant, although not static. While community standards allow for some variation in policy gray areas, state law and agency policy are highly restrictive in their definitions as to what constitutes child abuse and neglect. In addition, oversight is provided to assure that FIA implements policy consistently. That oversight occurs through the administrative hearing process, peer review, and the Children's Ombudsman.

The Administrative Hearings process is available to any individual who has had a negative action taken against them by the agency. In the case of child welfare, that negative action comes in the form of an individual having his or her name placed on the central registry. When this occurs, a due process letter is sent to the individual informing the person of the right to appeal the decision to an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). The ALJ then holds an evidentiary hearing to determine if the agency followed policy, correctly determined that a preponderance of evidence existed, completed the DSS 4752 accurately, and reflected correctly the risk level to the children (as either being high or intensive).

The peer review team is a group of experienced CPS supervisors that travels to all 83 counties in Michigan to evaluate each county's CPS program based on uniform criteria. This is accomplished through the random selection of CPS cases in each county, which are then read and scored based on how well they complied with agency policy.

The Children's Ombudsman, established by Public Act 74, is an independent office that has as its sole purpose oversight over the MFIA, and its CPS and Foster Care programs. The Ombudsman's office investigates complaints regarding the MFIA's handling of CPS and FC cases, and then publishes findings and recommendations based on their inquiries.

#### Limitations

There are no anticipated limitations in accessing the secondary data required for the completion of this research. Preliminary contacts with agency officials within the Family Independence Agency proved helpful, and resulted in easy access to the data needed for the statistical analysis required to test the hypotheses. Further simplification of the collection process is aided by the underlying nature of the data sources. Given that the Michigan Family Independence Agency is a public organization, the data that it gathers, once sanitized, are subject to freedom of information requests by the public. Sanitizing the data does not diminish their quality, or credibility; it only removes any source of identification.

One possible limitation may include the format in which the data are currently available. The foster care data are available in a county by county form between 1992 and 2001. As previously indicated, the data were obtained from FIA CY 090 (Part H) reports for each of the 83 counties, which yields 913 data points for this particular variable. The CPS data have been provided by the Michigan Child Welfare League, which was provided to them by the Michigan Family Independence Agency.

### Procedures

The timetable for completing this research was the summer of 2003. It was anticipated that once permission was obtained from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) that the study could be completed fairly rapidly. Given that all the data were secondary, and did not identify any particular individual, the risk of harm was greatly reduced. In an attempt to further reduce any possible risk of harm, each county's data that were being utilized did not contain any identifying information.

It was anticipated that HSIRB approval would be obtained by the Winter of 2002. The approval sought was be under the "exempt" category, as no human subjects would be directly involved in the data collection. Furthermore, all the data were publicly available on the MFIA public access web site, and did not identify any particular individual.

The actual collection of foster care data took less a week to accomplish, as all of the data were in a readily usable format. The only delay anticipated in collecting the

data was the time it would take to retrieve some of the pre 1993 data from microfiche. All the CPS and foster care data were available through the Michigan Family Independence Agency, as represented in FIA CY 351 and FIA CY 090 (Part H) reports. Data entry was completed within 1 week of obtaining it. It was anticipated that the attainment of data and data entry would occur by the middle of February 2003. The actual running of statistical tests and data analyses was completed by the end of March of 2003, and the conclusions and recommendations by the end of April 2003.

The actual data were processed using the SPSS Version 11.0 statistical program. Measures of central tendency were run in order to assist in limiting the possibility of data entry error, and were represented graphically. The independent variable, county size, was coded at the ordinal level with a "3" representing a large county, a "2" representing a medium size county, and a "1" representing a small size county. The dependent variables, CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS repeat substantiations, and the foster care placements, were represented as a ratio in the quartile analysis. All of the dependent variables were entered at the interval level, based on the actual number of reported cases in each category, by each individual county.

In testing for measures of association with regard to county wealth, the independent variable was presented at the interval level, which represents the mean income per capita. The dependent variables presented at the ratio level based on the percentage of their services are either prevention based, counseling based, or other.

### Data Analysis Methods

In order to test the hypotheses set forth, it is necessary to utilize analytical tests to determine whether statistically significant changes are occurring with the dependent variables. The first step in the analysis process is to utilize descriptive and bivariate tests to examine trends and patterns in the data, as well as to explore for relationships between variables. For this study, it is also required that a determination be made as to whether or not there has been a statistically significant change in variance with each defined dependent variable over time for each county. In order to test each hypothesis, an analysis was done using ANOVA.

An ANOVA was conducted in which the cases (Michigan counties) that were being studied were divided into three groups, studied over two time periods. The groupings occurred based on county size, and a mean was established for each group prior to the initiation of block grants. The second time period was also grouped based on county size, but represented the mean following the initiation of block grants; 1992–1996 and 1996–2001 then are the grouping periods. It is at this juncture that the ANOVA was used to analyze the variance in means between the two periods.

All data were cleaned and entered in order to assure that they would be usable for further analysis. All data were presented in frequency tables, which would assist in detecting possible data entry errors. Measures of central tendency for variables include running a mode for the independent variable. As the independent variable is expressed nominally, the mode is the only appropriate measure of central tendency.



The dependent variables were being expressed as interval data, so the mean was utilized as the measure for central tendency.

The analysis of variance, or ANOVA, was therefore employed as the analytical tool, since it analyzes group means for interval data. As O'Sullivan and Rassel (1999) suggest, analysis of variance provides information as to the strength and statistical significance of a relationship. This occurs by examining the variance within groups and between groups. To determine whether the difference between the means is statistically significant, the ANOVA utilizes the *F* test as the test of statistical significance (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1999, p. 413).

The *F* test is a statistical test that evaluates the significance of ratios between the total variance in a variable that is explained by the independent variable or by a set of independent variables (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1999, p. 494).

Several analytical tests were run to assess the dispersion of the interval data. This is done, as O'Sullivan and Rassel suggest, because distributions can have similar means, but different overall values (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1999, p. 343). A variance was run to measure the dispersion and variation. The standard deviation, a measure of dispersion, was utilized to measure the average distance of values from the mean. The skew was evaluated to examine the characteristics of the means frequency distribution. A few extremely high or low values skewed to the right indicate a negative skew. A few extremely high or low values skewed to the left indicate a positive skew (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1999, p. 500).

In order to determine and assess if the distribution from the mean is normal, a kurtosis was utilized. Kurtosis is a means of displaying interval data to determine if the curve shows a normally distributed data. If the curve is mesokurtic, the data is represented as a normal bell curve. The presence of a normal, or bell shaped, curve indicates that the data are normally distributed within the population being studied, which occurs because the mode, median, and arithmetic mean all have the same value located at the center of the distribution. The curve may also be skewed either positively or negatively, which is represented by a longer tail on either side of what would be a normally depicted bell curve. This occurs when the Z score is either a high positive or high negative number. A high positive will be reflected with the curve raised to the left and with a longer tail on the right side. A high negative Z score is reflected in a distribution that has the curve on the right side with a longer tail moving to the left (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1999, p. 341). Examples of the positively and negatively skewed data can be viewed in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, respectively.

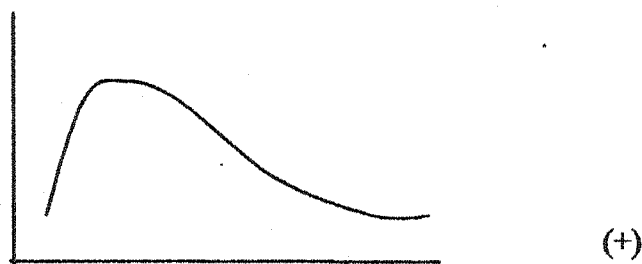


Figure 4.2. Example of Positively Skewed Distribution.

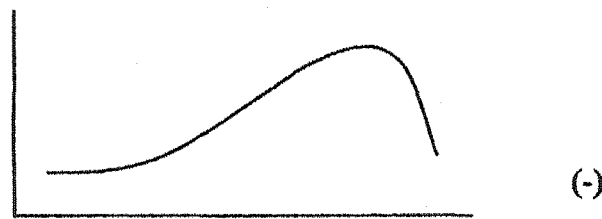


Figure 4.3. Example of Negatively Skewed Distribution.

If the data are represented by a flatter curve, it will be platokurtic. A platokurtic distribution indicates that the data are not evenly distributed across the population, but rather widely distributed without a discernable pattern, and indicates a great deal of variation in the distribution of the population being studied. If the data are represented by a more pointed or high peaked curve, the data are distributed as leptokurtic. A leptokurtic distribution indicates the mean, mode, and arithmetic mean are all closely related, and as such, indicates that there is very little variation in the distribution of the population being studied.

In order to determine how close the sample is to the population parameter, a standard error test is performed. The parameter set for the confidence level in this research study is 99%. As such, with a confidence interval of  $-2.58 - + 2.58$ , we can be 99% sure that the sample is within the population parameter interval (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1999, p. 151).

The analytical method utilized to analyze the data for this study was the  $t$  test. The  $t$  test is the appropriate test for determining whether there is a statistically significant difference between two groups arithmetic averages (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1999). This test is also appropriately run when the dependent variables are expressed

at the interval level, and the independent variable is expressed as nominal, and the  $n < 30$ . The data were displayed on a line chart as the study is looking at data over time.

### Decision Criteria

The  $t$  test being run was one-tailed in that it seeks to compare means from prior to the federal block grants to means for the same factors following the implementation of the federal block grants. As such, the alpha level for a one-tailed test is appropriately set at the .05 level. If the alpha level is equal to or exceeds the .05 level, then the null is rejected. If the alpha level does not meet or exceed the selected alpha level, then the null hypothesis is accepted.

In order to make the a decision as to whether to accept or reject the principal hypothesis ("Is devolving federalism an effective paradigm for improving child welfare outcomes?") decisions as to whether or not to accept or reject the four other hypotheses must be made first. While the decision criteria for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis for H1, H2, H3, and H4 had been set forth, the decision point for accepting or rejecting the principle research question had not.

Unfortunately, there is no overriding authority that tells the researcher at which point the research question had been demonstrated, or satisfactorily answered in either the affirmative or the negative. If the null is rejected in 50% of the cases, has the research question been answered, or does it have to be 100% of the time? Using a decision criteria that needs to hold true in only half the cases appears to be too low as

a criterion for making a decision as to the merit of the underlying research question. Essentially, by using the 50% standard, the question is likely to hold true only half the time, or by little more than random chance.

This research design has resulted in the creation of four hypotheses that were tested. If the null is rejected in 75% of the cases, or in three out of the four hypotheses, then the question that is being posed is answered. We then accept that federalism is an effective paradigm for improving child welfare outcomes. However, if the null is accepted in three out of the four cases, then we reject the premise that federalism is an effective paradigm for improving child welfare outcomes. Because each of the hypotheses was being tested in all of the 83 counties in Michigan, a decision point was also reached at this testing level as well. For the sake of consistency, the same decision point of 80% was used here as well. That is, that in order for a hypothesis to be accepted, it must be accepted, or found to be statistically significant, in 80% of the counties.

## CHAPTER V

### DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of child welfare outcomes and demographic data in an effort to answer whether or not devolving federalism, as expressed through the issuance of federal block grants, has had an effect on child welfare outcomes in Michigan. In order to examine this research question, several hypotheses need to be tested. They are as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS referrals in Michigan.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS referrals in Michigan.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS substantiations in Michigan.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of CPS substantiations in Michigan.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of repeat CPS substantiations in Michigan.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of repeat CPS substantiations in Michigan.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of foster care placements in Michigan.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism the rate of foster care placements in Michigan.

These hypotheses are comprised of five dependent variables. The independent variables are county size; county wealth; and the presence or absence of a federal, child welfare block grant. The independent variable, county size, was determined by ranking each county by population size as being either a large county, a medium-sized county, or a small county. County wealth, another independent variable, was determined by household income. The data for both independent variables, county size and county wealth, were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau. The selection of wealth and size as variables was based on the scope of the research. Data from all 83 counties in Michigan were used. As such there is inherently a great deal of variation from county to county both in terms of population and in the level of fiscal resources any given county may have. In order to consider the possible effects of these variables on child welfare outcomes, they have been included in the analysis.

The data comprising the dependent variables, the number of CPS referrals, the number of CPS substantiations, the number of CPS resubstantiations, and the number of foster care placements, were obtained from the Michigan Family Independence Agency's Management Information Reports. The data for each variable are compiled by factor for each individual county, by year, over the 9-year time period being studied. The selection of the individual variables was based on their identification

within the federal grant process as the factors that determined the issuance of the grants. The time period is from 1992 thorough 2001, and is further divided into two distinct time periods, the 1992/1993 Fiscal Year through the 1995/1996 Fiscal Year (FY), and the 1996/1997 Fiscal Year through the 2000/2001 Fiscal Year. The first time period, FY 92–95, is labeled as “Pre,” and the second period, FY 96–01, as “Post,” referring to the time period before the implementation of block grant funding and the period immediately following the initiation of block grant funding for child welfare in Michigan in 1995. Data were not readily available in the same format for the period immediately preceding or following that which is being utilized for this analysis.

The data analysis will follow several distinct and progressive steps. Each step of the analysis then is dependent on the results of that preceding it. The intent here is to look for significant patterns in the data, if patterns do emerge then to explore for possible correlations between variables, and finally, if correlations in the data occur to determine is there are statistically significant changes in the data.

First, the dependent variables will be examined through the use of descriptive statistics. A mean, standard deviation, and standard error were utilized to provide a descriptive illustration of the central tendencies and thereby to provide an overview of the data. Several graphs have also been created to provide a visual representation of the data.



## Descriptive Analysis

This section contains a descriptive analysis of each of the dependent variables. Under the subheadings for each of the dependent variables, there will be three subsections. The first subsection will provide a presentation of the findings, the second subsection will present a table depicting the findings, and third will be a summary of the findings.

### Foster Care Placements

The data for the dependent variable, foster care placements, was obtained from the Michigan Family Independence Agency's MIR reports. The foster care placement data reflects the number of children, by county who were placed in an out-of-home setting as a result of court and MFIA involvement.

The first table (Table 5.1) in this section provides the descriptive analysis for the Foster Care Placement factor, one of four factors expected to display a statistically significant difference. In Table 5.1 there are two distinct time periods, pre and post. For both periods *N* reflects the number of fiscal years being studied. The pre period is FY 92–95, and the post period is FY 96–01. The mean number of foster care placements for the pre-devolving federalism period was 228.06, while the post-devolving federalism mean indicates a decline in the mean number of foster care placements to 203.51. For the pre-devolving federalism period the standard deviation of the mean was 946.93, and for the post-devolving federalism period the standard

deviation of the mean was 911.62. The standard error during the pre-devolving federalism period was 60.01, and 44.75 during post-devolving federalism.

Table 5.1  
Descriptive Analysis of Foster Care Placements

Foster Care Placements	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Pre 1	4	228.06	946.93	60.01
Post 2	5	203.51	911.62	44.75

#### Summary

In examining the descriptive findings for the dependent variable, foster care placements, as depicted in Table 5.1, two elements of the data appear as significant points of interest and require further exploration.

In examining Table 5.1, it becomes clear that there has been a change in the mean number of foster care placements between the pre and post periods. In fact, the data suggest that there has been a decline in the mean number of foster care placements. While the observation that there has been a change in the mean from pre to post is of significant interest, it is not possible to determine if that change is statistically significant from examining the data based on this level of analysis. However, given that the mean number of foster care placements has declined during this time period, and in particular that the decline has continued during the post period, there is sufficient evidence to conduct further analysis on the data.

The second element of the data that appears as a point of significant interest is the standard deviation. Given that the standard deviation of the mean is a reflection of the variation of the data, the large standard deviation present reflects the possibility that there is a significant difference amongst data elements within the sample. One of the strengths of this research design is the sample size, utilizing data from all 83 counties in Michigan, but that size also presents a problem as reflected in the high standard deviation. By examining all the counties in Michigan, small rural counties are compared with large urban counties, and as such could result in the data being skewed. In order to address this deviation in the data, each independent variable will be grouped by county size so that outcomes in like-sized counties can be analyzed.

Figure 5.1 depicts the mean number of foster care placements by county size over the 9-year period being studied. Large counties show a decline from a year 1 mean of 814.15 ( $SD = 45.39$ ) to 733.65 ( $SD = 17.06$ ) in year 9. There was a significant change in the number of foster care placements for large counties between years 3 and 4 with the mean declining from 853.7 ( $SD = 45.39$ ) in year 3 to 749.55 ( $SD = 17.06$ ) in year 4. This pattern was repeated again in the medium-sized counties, where the mean number of placements fell from 83 ( $SD = 80.80$ ) to 76.33 ( $SD = 2.73$ ) between years 3 and 4. The small counties, however, did not display a significant change in the mean number of foster care placements over the 9-year period. The mean in year 1 was 22.93 ( $SD = 1.56$ ), and the mean in year 9 was 21.67 ( $SD = .59$ ).

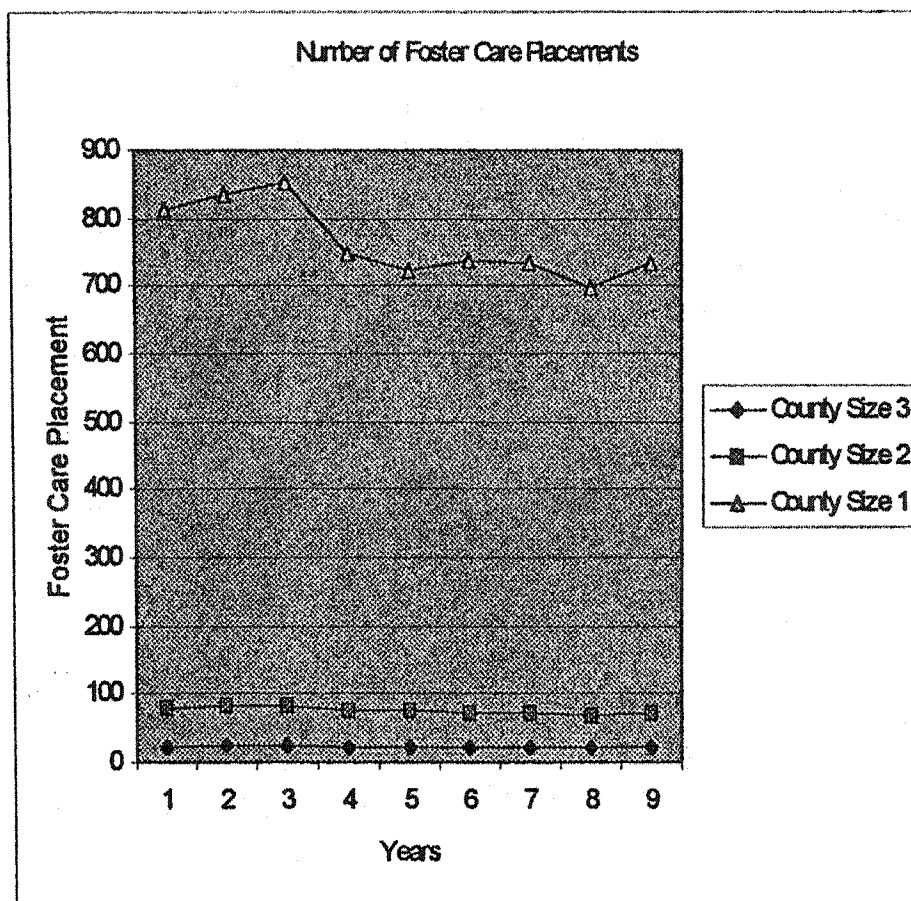


Figure 5.1. Foster Care Placements by County Size, FY 1992–FY 2002.

Another important, and unexpected, finding is the timing for the downward trend in the mean number of foster care placements. In reviewing Figure 5.1, it becomes clear the most dramatic change in direction for foster care placements in large counties occurred between the 3rd and 4th year, prior to the initiations of block grant funding.

While the trend downward continues during the post period, some event or variable appears to have intervened in large counties prior to a change in funding schemes.

### CPS Referrals

The data for this dependent variable were again obtained from MFIA's MIR reports. A CPS referral is counted as any complaint of child abuse or neglect received by the Michigan Family Independence Agency, entered into the Service Workers Support System (SWSS), and assigned to an investigator for field investigation. The data are collected and presented by individual county, by year, over the 9-year time frame being studied.

The second table (Table 5.2) in this section provides the descriptive analysis for the CPS Referral factor, one of four factors expected to display a statistically significant difference. In Table 5.2 there are two distinct time periods, pre and post. For both periods *N* reflects the number of fiscal years being studied. The pre period is FY 92–95, and the post period is FY 96–01. The mean number of CPS referrals for the pre-devolving federalism period was 777.12, while the post-devolving federalism mean indicates a decline in the mean number of CPS referrals to 655.84. For the pre-devolving federalism period the standard deviation of the mean was 2,092.19, and for the post-devolving federalism period the standard deviation of the mean was 1,803.30. The standard error during the pre-devolving federalism period was 132.59, while during the post devolving federalism period it was 88.52.

Table 5.2  
Descriptive Analysis of CPS Referrals

CPS Referrals	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Pre 1	4	777.12	2092.19	132.59
Post 2	5	655.84	1803.30	88.52

### Summary

The descriptive findings for the dependent variable, CPS referrals, are depicted in Table 5.2. They indicate that a need for further analysis exists. Two elements of the data appear as significant points of interest.

In examining Table 5.2 it becomes clear that there has been a change in the mean number of CPS referrals being made to MFIA between the pre and post periods, with the mean showing a decline in CPS referrals between the two periods. As was the case with foster care placements, the standard deviation of the means is high. In order to address this issue, CPS referrals are also being grouped, based on county population size, in an effort to analyze outcomes in like-sized counties.

Figure 5.2 depicts the mean number of CPS referrals, by county size, over the 9-year time frame being studied from 1991 through 2000.

Figure 5.2 depicts several points of interest with regard to the CPS referral data. There was a decrease in the mean number of CPS referrals for large counties (or county size 1). In year 1, or 1992, the mean number of CPS referrals was 2,313.9

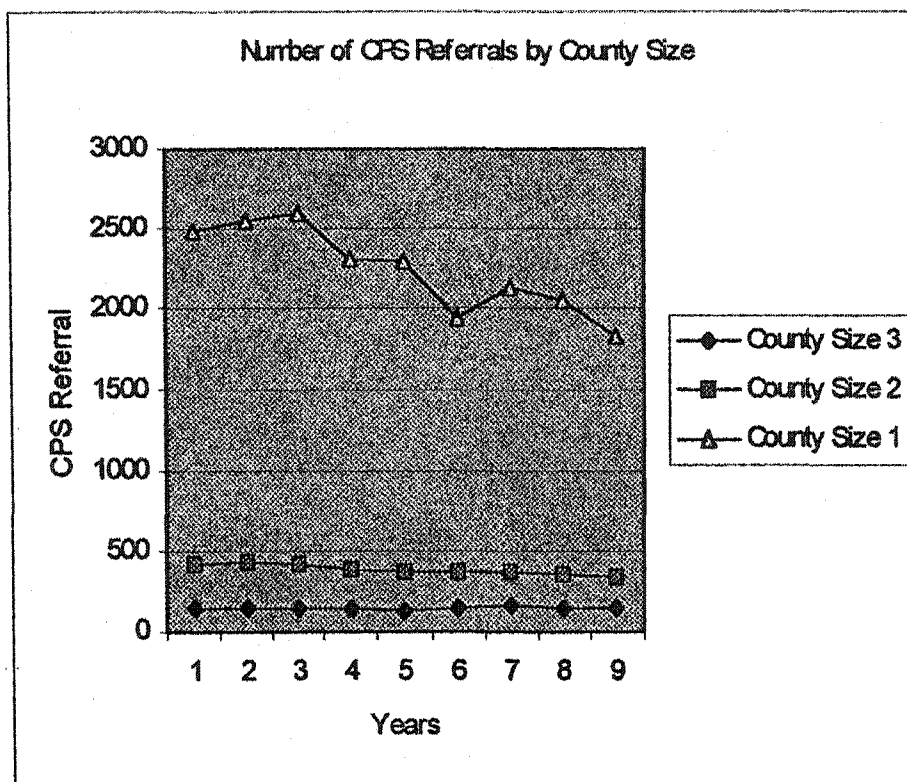


Figure 5.2. CPS Referrals by County Size, FY 1992–FY 2002.

( $SD = 122.55$ ). In year 5, or the post period, the mean number of CPS referrals remained relatively unchanged at 2,299.55 ( $SD = 122.55$ ), followed by a significant decline in year 6 to 1,938 ( $SD = 182.62$ ) referrals and a continuing decline in the mean number to 1938 ( $SD = 182.62$ ) referrals in year 9, or 2000.

County size 2, or medium size counties, displayed a decline in the mean number of CPS referrals from 425.1 to 384.1 ( $SD = 22.26$ ) in year number 4. As with large counties, in medium-sized counties there was a slight decline in the mean number of CPS referrals in year 6 to 365.7 ( $SD = 15.24$ ), and then a significant decline by year 9 to a mean of 335.5 ( $SD = 15.24$ ).

### CPS Substantiations

The third table (Table 5.3) in this section provides the descriptive analysis for the CPS Substantiations factor, another of the four factors expected to display a statistically significant variance. In Table 5.3 there are two distinct time periods, pre and post. For both periods *N* reflects the number of fiscal years being studied. The pre period is FY 92–95, and the post period is FY 96–01. The mean number of CPS substantiations for the pre-devolving federalism period was 171.99, while the post-devolving federalism mean indicates a decline in the mean number of CPS substantiations to 148.06. For the pre-devolving federalism period the standard deviation of the mean was 416.15 and for the post-devolving federalism period the standard deviation of the mean was 355.10. The standard error of the pre-devolving federalism period was 26.37, while for the post-devolving federalism period, it was 17.43.

Figure 5.3 depicts the mean number of CPS substantiations by county size over the 9-year period being studied. Large counties show a significant decline in the number of CPS substantiations between year 1 and year 4, dropping from 533.65 in 1992 to 444.75 in 1994.

### Summary

The most significant decline in means occurred in the pre period, between year three and year four, with a decline in the means from 652.95 to 444.75. The mean



Table 5.3

## CPS Descriptive Statistics

CPS Substantiations	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Pre 1	4	171.99	416.15	26.37
Post 2	5	148.06	355.10	1.43

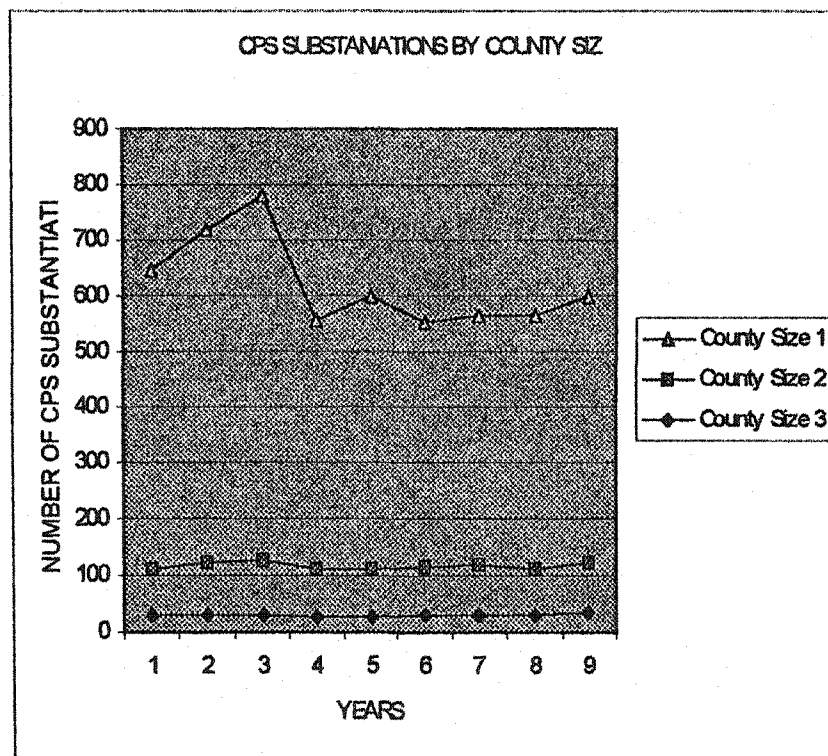


Figure 5.3. Descriptive Analysis of CPS Substantiations, FY 1992–FY 2002.

number of substantiations then increases during the post period to 475.95 in year 9.

The same pattern repeats in medium-sized counties and small counties, both of which display an increase in the mean number of substantiations between year 1 and year 9.

It is also significant to note that both county sizes show the most significant decline in the mean number of substantiations between years 3 and 4, a pattern that emerged in the foster care placement data as well. What is different is the pattern that is beginning to emerge during the post period. While there is an overall decline in the means, the trend appears to reveal a gradual increase in the number of substantiations after year 6.

### CPS Resubstantiations

The fourth table (Table 5.4) in this section provides the descriptive analysis for the CPS Resubstantiation factor, one of four factors expected to display a statistically significant difference. In Table 5.4 there are two distinct time periods, pre and post. For both periods *N* reflects the number of fiscal years being studied. The pre period is FY 92–95, and the post period is FY 96–01. A CPS resubstantiation is an occurrence in which a preponderance of evidence of child abuse or neglect had previously been found in a given family, and then a subsequent referral had been made which also resulted in a finding of a preponderance of evidence. The data for this variable was found in MIR reports from the MFIA.

The mean number of CPS resubstantiations for the pre-devolving federalism period was 52.7, while the post-devolving federalism mean indicates a decline in the mean number of CPS resubstantiations to 22.65. For the pre-devolving federalism period the standard deviation from the mean was 119.40, and for the post-devolving federalism period the standard deviation was 61.31. The standard error during the

pre-devolving federalism period was 7.57, while during the post-devolving federalism period, it was 3.01.

Table 5.4  
Descriptive Analysis of CPS Resubstantiations

CPS Resubstantiations	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Pre 1	4	52.70	119.40	7.57
Post 2	5	22.65	61.31	3.01

Figure 5.4 depicts the mean number of CPS resubstantiations by county size over the 9-year period being studied. Large counties show a decline from a year 1 mean of 165.85 ( $SD = 122.55$ ) to 86.05 ( $SD = 16.82$ ) in year 9. There was a significant decline in the means between year 4 and 5 from 106.35 ( $SD = 122.55$ ) to 69.5 ( $SD = 16.82$ ), but an increase in the mean number of resubstantiations from 69.5 ( $SD = 16.82$ ) in year 5 to 86.05 ( $SD = 16.82$ ) in year 9. Medium-sized counties followed the same pattern showing a decrease from a year 1 mean of 28.19 ( $SD = 10.28$ ) to a year 9 mean of 13.0 ( $SD = 2.52$ ).

### Summary

A significant decline in the mean number of resubstantiations did occur. However, it occurred between years 3 and 4, with the most significant drop in mean scores occurring prior to the implementation of block grant funding. In fact, in some

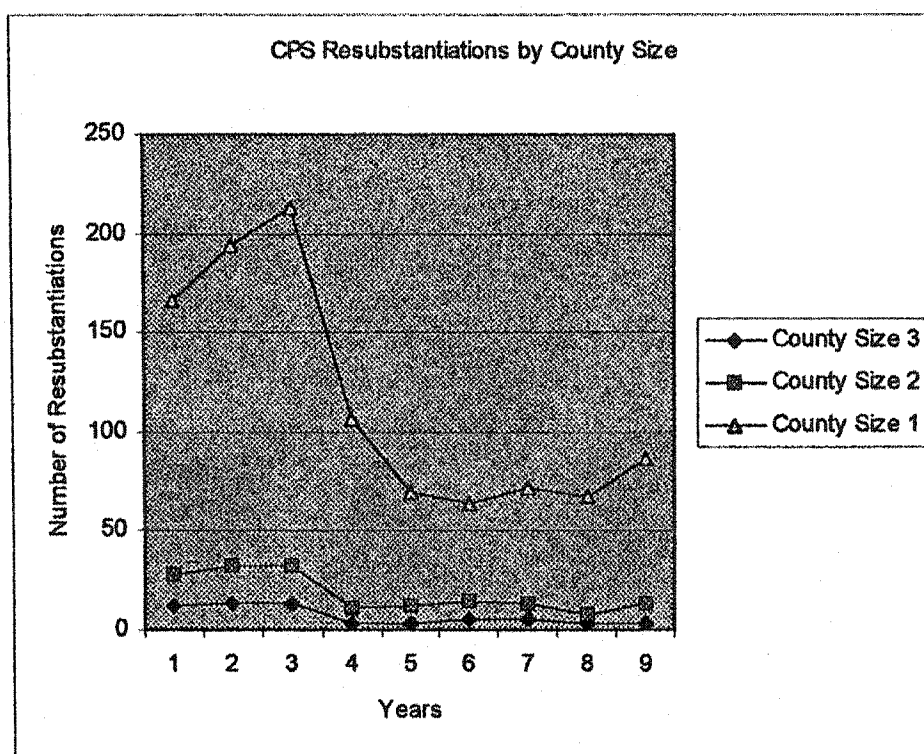


Figure 5.4. CPS Resubstantiations by County Size, FY 1992–FY 2002.

cases there was a slight increase in the mean between years 5 and 9. The pattern of decline here mirrors that of both the Foster Care Placement and CPS Substantiation data, where the most significant change in the data also occurred prior to the implementation of block grant funding. Another unanticipated point of interest is that in large counties, there was an increase in the mean number of occurrences of CPS resubstantiations during the post period, or after the initiation of block grant funding schemes.

The descriptive statistics referenced in the preceding tables and graphs suggest that variance in the variables of interest did occur. However, the variance does not

explain how, or whether, there are relationships among the four variables in this study. In an effort to address that limitation, there is a need to place the independent variables in context. To accomplish this, the four child welfare factors have next been combined into three graphs so that the variables may be examined in terms of their relationship to each other.

### Descriptive Data by County Grouping

Figures 5.5 through 5.7 display the change in means for the four child welfare factors by county size. A separate graph for each county size has been created to display the relationship between the means of each factor by county size. In so doing, it becomes possible to examine the data to determine if there is any statistical significance with the data when they are rearranged to control for the effects of county size. This step in the data analysis thus provides a basis to determine if further testing is warranted on the data.

Figure 5.5 displays the mean number of CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, and CPS resubstantiations, and the mean number of foster care placements for large counties for the 9-year time period being studied. The mean number of CPS referrals in large counties, or county size 1, began to drop significantly in year 6. However, there was not a corresponding significant decline in the mean number of substantiations or foster care placements. The mean number of CPS referrals dropped from 2,487.95 ( $SD = 122.55$ ) in year 1 to 1,823.70 ( $SD = 182.62$ ) in year 9. CPS substantiations dropped from 533.65 ( $SD = 89.43$ ) to 475.95 ( $SD = 16.82$ ). More

significantly, the number of CPS resubstantiations dropped from 165.85 ( $SD = 46.35$ ) to 86.05 ( $SD = 8.49$ ).

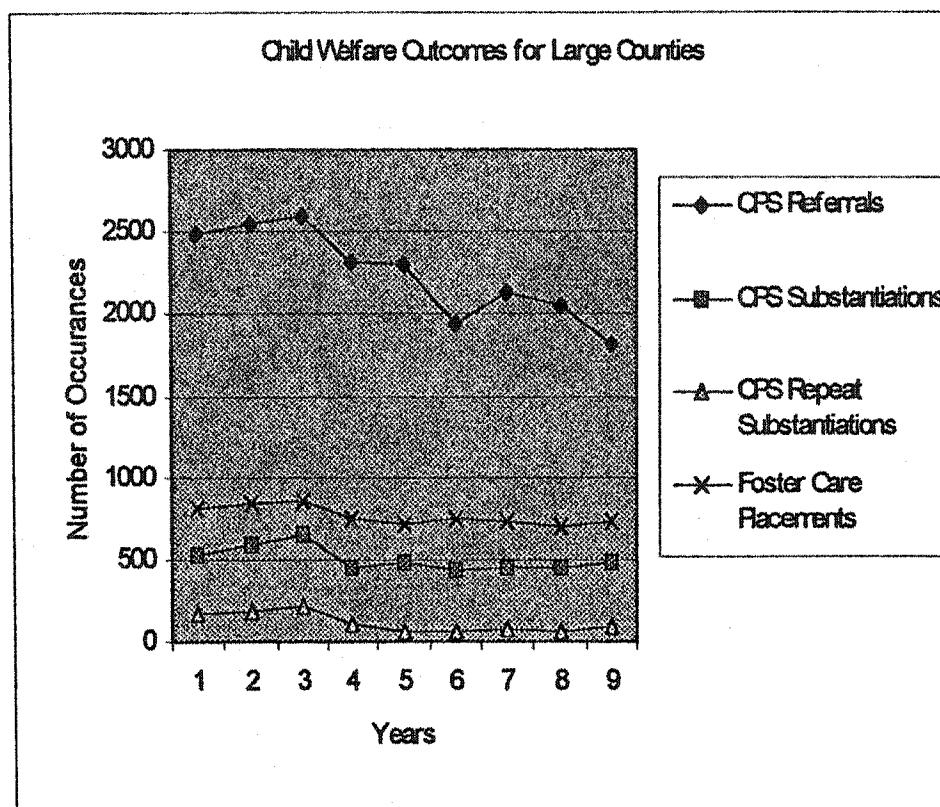


Figure 5.5. Child Welfare Outcomes for Large Counties, FY 1992–2002.

Figure 5.6 displays the mean number of CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, and CPS resubstantiations, and the mean number of foster care placements for medium-sized counties for the nine year time period being studied.

The mean number of CPS referrals for medium-sized counties began to drop significantly in year 6. However, there was not a corresponding significant decline in the mean number of substantiations for foster care placements. The mean number of

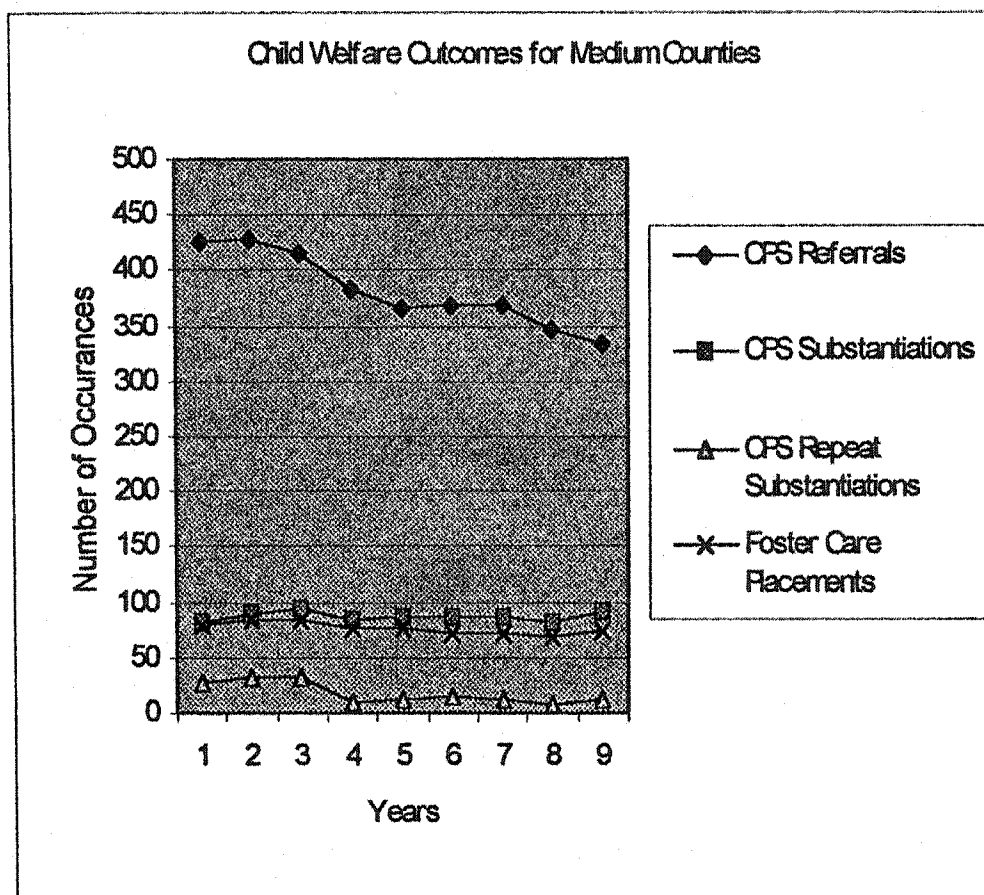


Figure 5.6. Child Welfare Outcomes for Medium Counties, FY 1992–FY 2002.

CPS referrals dropped from 425.10 ( $SD = 22.26$ ) in year 1 to 335.05 ( $SD = 15.24$ ) in year 9. Correspondingly, the number of CPS substantiations actually rose from a mean of 82.43 ( $SD = 4.83$ ) in year 1 to 90.81 ( $SD = 3.66$ ) in year 9.

Figure 5.7 displays the mean number of CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, and CPS resubstantiations, and the mean number of foster care placements for small-sized counties for the 9-year time period being studied. The mean number of CPS referrals in small counties did not begin to drop significantly in year 6, as was the case

both with large and medium-sized counties. The mean number of referrals for small counties went from 149.93 ( $SD = 3.06$ ) in year 1 to 138.40 ( $SD = 7.07$ ) in year 9.

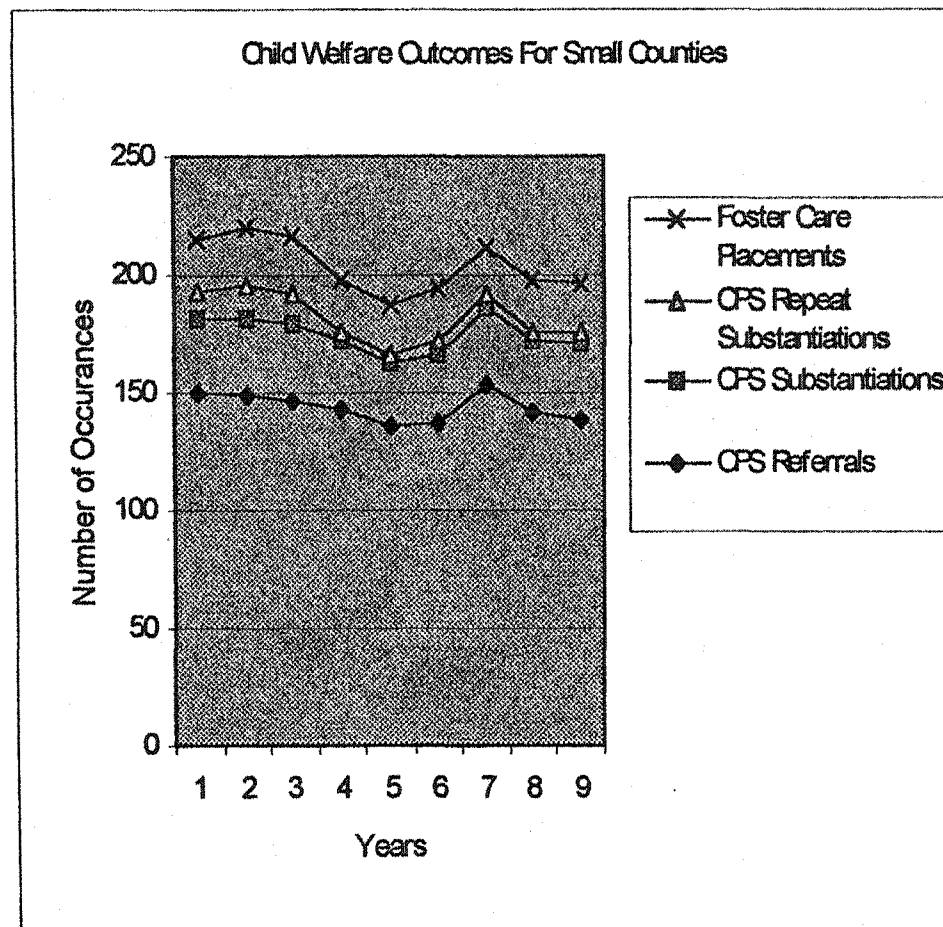


Figure 5.7. Child Welfare Outcomes for Small Counties, FY 1992–FY 2002.

As with medium-sized counties, the number of CPS substantiations actually increased, moving from a mean of 30.98 ( $SD = 4.83$ ) in year 1 to 33.02 ( $SD = 3.66$ ) in year 9. Conversely, the mean number of CPS resubstantiations declined significantly from 11.81 ( $SD = 10.28$ ) in year 1 to 3.71 ( $SD = 2.52$ ) in year 9. The



mean number of foster care placements did not change significantly from the pre to post periods. In year 1 the mean number of Foster Care placements was 22.93 ( $SD = 3.39$ ), and in year 9 the mean was 21.67 ( $SD = 2.73$ ).

### Descriptive Statistics Summary

A review of the results generated by the descriptive statistics raises several questions about identified differences in the dependent variables over the time period being studied. While the descriptive results are intriguing, they lead to yet more questions rather than answers. Clearly there have been changes in the dependent variables over the period being studied, but not all of the changes occurred as expected. For example, the introduction of block grant funding for child welfare outcomes occurred during the 4th and 5th years. However, the descriptive statistics seem to indicate that at least in some of the cases, that changes in the means of the dependent variables occurred prior to that time. Given that the purpose of the change in funding schemes was to effect change in the dependent variable, it was anticipated that significant changes would occur around the 6th year of the time period being studied.

Figures 5.1 through 5.4 depict a single variable by county size, but do not provide insight into patterns of occurrences between variables for a given county size, nor do they provide insight into whether or not there are any correlations between data elements.

Figures 5.5 through 5.7 provide a descriptive illustration of the dependent variables in relation to groupings by county size. Again, while the data suggest that there has been a change in the mean number of occurrences in each of the dependent variables over the time period being studied, this level of analysis does not allow for conclusions to be drawn as to the statistical significance of the differences observed. However, because descriptive statistical testing was done, and there are differences in the data, there are sufficient grounds to conduct further statistical analysis.

#### Child Welfare Outcomes—Correlations

In order to explore for the existence of relationships between these variables, a Pearson product-moment partial correlation coefficients test was now used. The potential for a relationship between wealth and each of the four child welfare variables was explored when controlling for county size. These two variables were selected as a result of the sample size. Because the sample includes the entire state of Michigan, it is critical that size and wealth be considered. If these variables are not considered, the potential exists for a few outlying data points to skew the results.

For the purposes of this research, wealth is defined as the mean household income per county, and these data were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau. County size has previously been defined as being based on a grouping in accord with the population size of a given county. Data for county size were also obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau. The partial correlation coefficients test is found to be statistically significant at the .05 level as represented by the *p* value.

Table 5.5 depicts the relationship between wealth and foster care placements controlling for county size. The correlation is weak ( $r = -.1790$ ), but the  $p$  value is .05, which indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between the relative wealth of a county and the number of foster care placements.

Table 5.5

## Foster Care Placement Correlations

	Size	
	Foster Care Placements	Wealth
Foster Care Placements	1.000 ( 0) $p = .$	-.1790 ( 744) $p = .000$
Wealth	-.1790 ( 744) $p = .000$	1.0000 ( 0) $p = .$

Table 5.6 depicts the relationship between wealth and the number of CPS Referrals when controlling for county size. The correlation is weak ( $r = -.1489$ ), but the  $p$  value is .05, which indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between the relative wealth of a county and the number of CPS referrals.

Table 5.7 depicts the relationship between wealth and the number of CPS substantiations when controlling for county size of a county and the number of CPS substantiations. That is, as county wealth rises, the number of CPS substantiations decreases. Results indicate a significant negative correlation ( $r = -.1730$ ,  $p = .000$ ) between wealth and CPS substantiations.

Table 5.6  
CPS Referrals Correlations

	Size	
	Wealth	CPS Referrals
Wealth	1.000 ( 0) $p = .$	-.1489 ( 744) $p = .000$
CPS Referrals	-.1489 ( 744) $p = .000$	1.0000 ( 0) $p = .$

Table 5.7  
CPS Substantiations Correlations

	Size	
	Wealth	CPS Substantiations
Wealth	1.000 ( 0) $p = .$	-.1730 ( 744) $p = .000$
CPS Substantiations	-.1730 ( 744) $p = .000$	1.0000 ( 0) $p = .$

Table 5.8 depicts the relationship between wealth and the number of CPS resubstantiations when controlling for county size. Results indicate a significant negative correlation ( $r = -.1489, p = .000$ ) between the wealth of a county and the number of CPS resubstantiations. That is, as county wealth rises, CPS resubstantiations decrease.

Table 5.8  
CPS Resubstantiations Correlation

	Size	
	Wealth	CPS Resubstantiations
Wealth	1.000 ( 0) $p = .$	-.1489 ( 744) $p = .000$
CPS Resubstantiations	-.1489 ( 744) $p = .000$	1.0000 ( 0) $p = .$

A two-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation was run in order to determine if there was a relationship between wealth and county size. This was done in response to results generated in running the partial correlation coefficients which showed that, while there were statistically significant findings, the correlations were weak. In addition to the Pearson correlations for wealth and size, a Pearson correlation was completed to test if a statistically significant correlation existed between the relative wealth of a county and each of the four child welfare variables.

Table 5.9 depicts the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation for determining the nature of the relationship between the relative wealth of a county and the size of the county in relationship to child welfare outcomes.

The  $r$  score was .729 with a  $p$  score of .05. The  $r$  score of .729 indicates that there is a strong relationship between size and wealth when considering the independent variables. When employing a partial correlation coefficient for wealth, each independent variable, while controlling for size, supports this conclusion. The

Table 5.9  
Correlations for Wealth, County Size, and Outcomes

		Wealth	Size
Wealth	Pearson Correlation	1	.729
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	<i>N</i>	747	747
Size	Pearson Correlation	.729	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	<i>N</i>	747	747

result of the partial correlation for referrals suggests a weak relationship as reflected by the  $r$  score of  $-.1489$ ; however, it was statistically significant with a  $p$  score of  $.05$ . The partial correlation for foster care rates suggests a weak relationship as noted by the  $r$  score of  $-.1790$ ; however, it was statistically significant with a  $p$  score of  $.05$ . The partial correlation for substantiations also suggests a weak relationship as reflected in the  $r$  score of  $-.1730$ , but it was statistically significant with a  $p$  score of  $.05$ . Finally, the partial correlation for resubstantiations suggests a weak relationship as noted by  $r = -.1489$ . It too though was statistically significant with a  $p$  score of  $.05$ . Consequently, there is negative relationship between wealth and the independent variable, when controlling for county size. This can be attributed to the strength of the relationship of wealth and size, and suggests they are strong indicators of the same relationship.

Table 5.10 presents the results of a Pearson product-moment correlation testing for the existence of a relationship between the relative wealth of a county and

the number of foster care placements. Statistical significance was found at the .05 level. In Table 5.10, test results indicate a correlation ( $r = .102$ ) exists with a statistical significance at the .05 level. Consequently, while there is a statistically significant association between the number of foster care placements and county wealth, the strength of the relationship,  $r = .102$ , suggests that the relationship is weak.

Table 5.10  
Correlations for Relative Wealth and Foster Care Placements

		Foster Care Placements	Wealth
Foster Care Placements	Pearson Correlation	1	.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	<i>N</i>	747	747
Wealth	Pearson Correlation	.102	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	<i>N</i>	747	747

Table 5.11 presents the results of a Pearson product-moment correlation testing for the existence of a relationship between the relative wealth of a county and the number of CPS referrals. Statistical significance is determined at the .05 level. In Table 5.11, test results indicate a correlation ( $r = .209$ ) exists with a statistical significance at the .05 level. Consequently, while there is a statistically significant association between CPS referrals and county wealth, the strength of the relationship,  $r = .209$ , suggests that the relationship is weak.

Table 5.11

## Correlations for Relative Wealth and CPS Referrals

		Wealth	CPS Referrals
Wealth	Pearson Correlation	1	.209
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	<i>N</i>	747	747
CPS Referrals	Pearson Correlation	.209	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	<i>N</i>	747	747

Table 5.12 presents the results of a Pearson product-moment correlation testing for the existence of a relationship between the relative wealth of a county and the number of CPS substantiations. Statistical significance was found at the .05 level. In Table 5.12, test results indicate  $r = .228$  with statistical significance at the .05 level. Consequently, while there is a statistically significant relationship between CPS substantiations and county size, the strength of the relationship, as represented by  $r = .228$  score, suggests that the relationship is weak.

Table 5.13 presents the results of a Pearson product-moment correlation testing for the existence of a relationship between the relative wealth of a county and the number of CPS resubstantiations. Statistical significance was found at the .05 level. In Table 5.13, test results indicate a correlation of  $r = .183$  and statistical significance at the .05 level. Consequently, while there is a statistically significant relationship between CPS resubstantiations and county size, the strength of the relationship, as represented by  $r = .183$ , is weak.



Table 5.12

## Correlation for Relative Wealth and CPS Substantiations

		Wealth	CPS Substantiations
Wealth	Pearson Correlation	1	.228
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	<i>N</i>	747	747
CPS Substantiations	Pearson Correlation	.228	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	<i>N</i>	747	747

Table 5.13

## Correlation for Relative Wealth and CPS Resubstantiations

		Wealth	CPS Resubstantiations
Wealth	Pearson Correlation	1	.183
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	<i>N</i>	747	747
CPS Resubstantiations	Pearson Correlation	.183	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	<i>N</i>	747	747

## Findings—Child Welfare Outcomes Correlations

Having determined through the use of descriptive statistics that differences in the means between the pre and post existed, there were sufficient grounds to conduct further analysis on the data. The next step was to look for the existence of relationships between the variables to determine if there were correlations. This was

accomplished by using a partial correlation. This analysis was done to explore for the existence of possible correlations between the variables and demographic data. A partial correlation was done to determine if there was a correlation between a given independent variable and the relative wealth of a county when controlling for county size.

Each independent variable showed a statistically significant correlation at the .05 level, but in each case the correlations were weak, as demonstrated by  $r$  values for each of the variables tested. The correlations were negative, suggesting that as county wealth increased, the number of foster care placements, CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, and CPS resubstantiations decreased.

Finally, a Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant correlation between wealth and county size in relationship to child wealth outcomes. The results of that correlation were statistically significant at the .05 level, with a strong positive correlation of .729. A Pearson product-moment correlation was then conducted on each of the variables controlling for wealth. All four variables exhibited a statistically significant correlation at the .05 level, but none displayed a strong correlation as determined by the  $r$  values.

#### Analytical Test Results (ANOVA)—Child Welfare Outcomes

The decision to conduct a further analysis of the data employing analytical test results is based on the statistically significant results generated through the use of descriptive and correlation statistics. Thus far, descriptive statistics have been used to

demonstrate that there were changes in the independent variables over the time period being studied. The correlations among those same variables demonstrated that statistically significant correlations existed between the independent and dependent variables. Consequently, the next step was to analyze the independent variables to determine if the differences discovered through the use of the descriptive statistics were statistically significant. Ultimately this resulted in the testing of the study's four hypotheses.

The inferential statistical analysis consists of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), which provides the basis to accept or reject the null hypothesis. The ANOVA is the appropriate choice to use as the analytical tool, as it is designed to test for the existence of statistical significance within and between groups of means. A two-way test is used because the hypotheses being tested are directional. The ANOVA is expressed as an  $F$  ratio, and is followed by the degrees of freedom ( $df$ ). The .05 level of statistical significance is the deciding criterion for determining whether the null hypothesis has been rejected. Immediately following the results of the two-way ANOVA, and the rejection or acceptance of the null hypothesis, is a summary of the findings. The results are as follows.

#### Child Welfare Outcomes—Assumed Variance

##### Foster Care Placements

Table 5.14 illustrates the results of the two-way ANOVA. With two degrees of freedom, the  $F$  ratio was 46.777. The statistical significance was .05, which

indicates that a statistically significant variance occurred in the number of foster care placements since the implementation of a devolving federalism model of child welfare as expressed through the issuance of block grant funding. The null hypothesis, "There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of foster care placements in Michigan," is therefore rejected.

Table 5.14

## ANOVA for the Number of Foster Care Placements

Foster Care Placements	Degrees of Freedom ( <i>df</i> )	<i>F</i>	Significance
Between Groups	2	46.777	.000
Within Groups	744		
Total	746		

CPS Referrals

Table 5.15 illustrates the results of the two-way ANOVA. With two degrees of freedom, the *F* ratio was 94.933. The statistical significance was .05, which indicates that a statistically significant variance occurred in the number of CPS referrals since the implementation of a devolving federalism model of child welfare as expressed through the issuance of block grant funding. The null hypothesis, "There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and CPS referrals in Michigan," is therefore rejected.

Table 5.15  
ANOVA for the Number of CPS Referrals

CPS Referrals	Degrees of Freedom ( <i>df</i> )	<i>F</i>	Significance
Between Groups	2	94.933	.000
Within Groups	744		
Total	746		

### CPS Substantiations

Table 5.16 illustrates the results of the two-way ANOVA. With two degrees of freedom, the *F* ratio was 122.111. The statistical significance was .05, which indicates that a statistically significant variance occurred in the number of CPS substantiations since the implementation of a devolving federalism model of child welfare as expressed through the issuance of block grant funding. The null hypothesis, "There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and CPS substantiations in Michigan," is therefore rejected.

### CPS Resubstantiations

Table 5.17 illustrates the results of the two-way ANOVA. With two degrees of freedom, the *F* ratio was 99.899. The statistical significance was .05, which indicates that a statistically significant variance occurred in the number of CPS resubstantiations since the implementation of a devolving federalism model of child

welfare as expressed through the issuance of block grant funding. The null hypothesis, "There is not a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and CPS resubstantiations in Michigan," is therefore rejected.

Table 5.16

## ANOVA for the Number of CPS Substantiations

CPS Substantiations	Degrees of Freedom ( <i>df</i> )	<i>F</i>	Significance
Between Groups	2	122.111	.000
Within Groups	744		
Total	746		

Table 5.17

## ANOVA for the Number of CPS Resubstantiations

CPS Resubstantiations	Degrees of Freedom ( <i>df</i> )	<i>F</i>	Significance
Between Groups	2	99.899	.000
Within Groups	744		
Total	746		

## Findings—Child Welfare Outcomes Assumed Variance

Four dependent variables (foster care placements, CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, and CPS resubstantiations) were examined in order to determine if a

statistically significant variance had occurred in relation to the number of occurrences since the implementation of block grant funding. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on each of the variables pre- and post-implementation to determine if a statistically significant variance had occurred. All four of the variables displayed a statistically significant variance at the .05 level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for each of the dependent variables.

Of the 83 counties in Michigan, however, only 19% of the counties displayed a statistically significant difference in either three or four of the dependent variables being studied. Another 22% of the counties demonstrated a statistically significant difference in two of the four dependent variables. Finally, 59% of the 83 counties in Michigan demonstrated a statistically significant difference in either none or one of the dependent variables being studied.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

Addressing social issues has increasingly become a complex and highly controversial process. Who is responsible for what issues? How are they addressed? These are questions not easily answered. This research has examined one such issue by exploring the dynamics that exist between child welfare and government.

Each year in the United States millions of children become victims of child abuse or neglect. Over 500,000 of them will be removed from their homes and placed in a foster care setting. In addition, 1,000 of those victims will die as a result of maltreatment. These victims are among the most vulnerable in our society, and yet they are raped, tortured, and murdered on a daily basis in each state throughout this country. In addition to this human tragedy, federal, state, and local units of governments spend billions of dollars each year in an effort to address the issues of child abuse and neglect. What has been of interest in this research is determining what roles each of those different levels of government should play in attempting to address these issues.

In 1995 the federal government began issuing block grant funding to Michigan in an effort to curb rising child welfare caseloads and costs. The idea was to fund state initiatives to create collaborative efforts at the county and local levels, where



presumably decision makers would have a better handle on what each community's specific needs were. Local communities could then best decide what their unmet needs were and use monies as they deemed necessary in order to improve child welfare outcomes. The aim of this research then was to determine if devolving federalism was an effective paradigm for creating change in child welfare outcomes in Michigan.

While the federal government does not mandate how communities meet their needs when utilizing a devolving federalism model, they do set parameters for what is expected. In this case, the federal government identified four child welfare outcomes as the focus of change. Those outcomes are a reduction in the number of: Children's Protective Services (CPS) referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS resubstantiations, and foster care placements.

For the purposes of this study, devolving federalism is expressed through the issuance of federal block grant funding for child welfare outcomes in Michigan. The issuance of those block grants was predicated on the states' ability to make improvements in the child welfare system. Specifically, the intent was to reduce the incidents of child abuse and neglect, and reduce the number of children entering the foster care system. It was from these underlying premises that the basic research question was developed. The research question thus is: Is devolving federalism, as expressed through issuance of federal block grant funding, an effective paradigm for improving child welfare outcomes in Michigan?

In order to answer this research question, a quantitative, quasi-experimental research model was developed. This approach was selected in part because in considering the nature and scope of the problem, conducting the research using a classical experimental research model was not considered to be a feasible approach. One problem was that there are too many actors both internally and externally to control through traditional means. In addition, in order to test for the effects of a change in funding schemes, there needs to be the ability to evaluate the effects of the change in terms of an established baseline. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to examine the rate of occurrences in the data both prior to and following the initiation of change. Because it is not possible to artificially generate large-scale changes in the way the federal government funds initiatives, this research relied on an experimental research design.

In the case of this research, the child welfare outcomes of interest involved data that was being tracked over a 9-year period of time. This data were readily available in the same usable format during the 4 years before the initiation of block grant funding, as well during the 5 years following its introduction. In order to reduce the risk of error, increase the ability to replicate this study, and make it more generalizable, the data were collected for each of the 83 counties in Michigan.

The four hypotheses that were tested are:

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS referrals.

2. There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS substantiations.

3. There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS resubstantiations.

4. There is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of foster care placements.

### Conclusions

Four hypotheses were tested to answer the overarching research question, "Is devolving federalism, as expressed through the issuance of block grant funding, an effective paradigm for creating change in child welfare outcomes in Michigan?" In order to test the research question, a research strategy was followed which included descriptive statistics analysis, correlation coefficients analysis, and finally an inferential statistical analysis.

The descriptive analysis was conducted using a mean, standard deviation, and standard error for the dependent variables, namely CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS resubstantiations, and foster care placements. These descriptive statistics were used in order to gain a basic understanding of how the data were distributed, and to look for patterns within them. The use of descriptive statistics like the mean and standard deviation was the first step in the analysis of the data. This was necessary in order to look for the existence of change in the means for each of the dependent

variables between the two periods. This then provided a basis for determining the need for further analysis.

Table 6.1 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics for the dependent variables. The two time periods that are being studied are presented side-by-side in the same table for ease of comparison. The first period was Fiscal Years 1992 through 1995, and is labeled "FY 1992-1994 (Pre)." The second period, Fiscal Years 1995 through 2001, is labeled "FY 1995-2001 (Post)." The far left column lists each of the dependent variables being studied, with the next column headed "*N*" indicating the number of years being studied. The next three columns present the findings for the mean, standard deviation, and standard error for each of the dependent variables, respectively.

Table 6.1  
Child Welfare Outcomes Measures of Central Tendency

	Traditional Federalism Period FY 1992-1995 (Pre)				Devolving Federalism Period FY 1995-2001 (Post)			
	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
CPS Referrals	4	777.12	2092.19	132.59	5	655.84	1803.30	88.52
CPS Substantiations	4	171.99	416.15	26.37	5	148.06	355.10	17.43
CPS Resubstantiations	4	52.70	119.40	7.57	5	22.65	61.31	3.01
Foster Care Placements	4	228.06	946.93	60.01	5	203.51	911.62	44.75

Test results indicate that there were changes in the mean number of occurrences for each of the dependent variables. In examining the standard deviation of each of the dependent variables it is noted that in each case, the standard deviation was large, suggesting that there is a high degree of variance within the sample group.

The results summarized in Table 6.1 indicate that as the level of involvement by the federal government lessened, the number of CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS resubstantiations, and foster care placements decreased. This is demonstrated by the change in the mean number of occurrences that occurred for each of the dependent variables over the time period being studied. However, while this level of testing does indicate changes have occurred in the dependent variables, it does not permit us to draw conclusions as to the statistical significance of the change, or to determine if there is a relationship between variables. This is so because descriptive statistics can be used only to look for the existence of changes in data, and to help place data elements in the context of the sample. Therefore, they serve as a rationale for determining the need to conduct further testing. If an initial analysis suggests the presences of change, then there is merit in conducting further analysis.

An analysis of the relationships between the relative wealth of a county and each of the four child welfare variables, when controlling for county size, revealed that as the relative wealth of a county increased, the number of CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS resubstantiations, and foster care placements decreased. As O'Brien (1996) suggests, funding is a powerful tool for creating change. This is so, because the availability of funding oftentimes drives the ability to purchase or create

programming. As such, the availability of fiscal resources becomes a significant element in the creation of options. Therefore, it would be expected that those counties that were better off financially would have more success in improving child welfare outcomes.

The decision to examine the wealth and size of counties in terms of their relationship to the dependent variables was made for two reasons. First, given the inherent variation in the size and population of counties in Michigan, it is important to be able to understand what effects the size of a county may have on the dependent variables. For example, logic would dictate that the possibility exists that the larger a county is, the more incidents of abuse or neglect would occur. Second, the literature suggests that there is a relationship between poverty and abuse and neglect.

While the results of partial correlation coefficients tests for each variable were statistically significant at the .05 level, the strength of the relationships was weak. The range of the  $r$  values for the correlations was  $-.1489$  to  $-.1790$ . When interpreting the results of a correlation, it is important to note that the test needs to be evaluated in terms of both the  $r$  value, which indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables being tested, and the  $p$  value, which indicates the statistical significance of the relationship.

Because a partial correlation coefficients test is a two-part test, it is possible for the relationship to be statistically significant, but not present as a strong correlation, which is the case here. Conversely, it is also possible for there to be a strong relationship between the variables, but for it not to be statistically significant.

In order for a correlation to be considered strong, the  $r$  value typically needs to approximate .80 or higher. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there is not a strong relationship between the relative wealth of a county and the dependent variables, when controlling for the size of the county.

One point of interest is that in each case, the correlation for the dependent variables suggests that the direction of the correlation is negative. For example, the  $r$  value for CPS referrals was  $-.1489$ . The implication is that the wealthier a county is, the fewer the number of CPS referrals that would be made in that county. This suggests that as the relative wealth of a county increases, there would be a decrease in the number of occurrences of CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS resubstantiations, and foster care placements. As Gallup and Black (1998) suggest, the ability to be creative in fashioning solutions to complex problems is closely tied to the proximity of the problem, and the ability to act based on possessing the resources to do so. Consequently, those governmental bodies that possess the financial resources to do so are more apt to be able to create positive change. However, as the Child Welfare League of America (2001) points out, poverty and child welfare are closely tied together. Consequently, it may be difficult to arrive at the conclusion that wealthier counties inherently make better programming choices.

Because initial testing yielded statistically significant results, the next step was to run a two-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation to determine if there was a relationship between the relative wealth of a county and county size. This was done in order to see if there was a relationship between the size of a county and its wealth. As

such, it helps to determine if grouping the counties together by size to control for its effects on the dependent variables could skew the data.

A strong statistically significant relationship exists between the size of a county and the relative wealth of a county. While all of the correlations between the relative wealth of a county and the dependent variables were determined to be statistically significant, none showed a strong relationship.

Having determined, though, that statistically significant relationships existed among the variables, the next step in the process was to determine if there was a statistically significant variation in the dependent variables between the traditional federalism and devolving federalism periods. Examining the dependent variables for the existence of statistically significant variance between the pre and post periods was an essential component of this research. Doing so allows for the five hypotheses to be answered, i.e., we are thus able to determine if there was a change in the rate of occurrence for the variables after a change was introduced. In this case, that change was the shift to block grant funding. The intent of this federalism model was to create a reduction in the rates of occurrence for CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS resubstantiations, and the number of foster care placements.

In order to evaluate the possibility of such change, an ANOVA was run on the dependent variables: CPS referrals, CPS substantiations, CPS resubstantiations, and foster care placements. The criterion for determining statistical significance, and either accepting or rejecting the four null hypotheses, was .05. Table 6.2 provides a



summary of the ANOVA results, and specifies whether the hypothesis was accepted or rejected.

Table 6.2  
Summary of Child Welfare Outcome Hypotheses Testing

	<i>df</i> Between Groups	<i>df</i> Within Groups	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> Total	Significance	Hypotheses
CPS Referrals	2	744	746	94.933	.000	Accepted
CPS Substantiations	2	744	746	122.111	.000	Accepted
CPS Resubstantiations	2	744	746	99.899	.000	Accepted
Foster Care Placements	2	744	746	46.777	.000	Accepted

All four of the dependent variables demonstrated a decline in the rate of occurrences following the introduction of block grant funding for child welfare outcomes in Michigan. There was a statistically significant change in the number of CPS referrals being made in Michigan. Therefore, there is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS referrals. This hypothesis is accepted. There was also a statistically significant change in the number of CPS substantiations in Michigan. Therefore, there is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of CPS substantiations, and this hypothesis is accepted. There was also a statistically significant change in the number of CPS resubstantiations. Therefore, there is a statistically significant

relationship between devolving federalism and the number of CPS resubstantiations, and this hypothesis was accepted. Finally, there was a statistically significant change in the number of foster care placements in Michigan. So, there is a statistically significant relationship between devolving federalism and the rate of foster care placements. This hypothesis was also accepted.

Having tested the four hypotheses, the last step is to answer the research question. Logic would suggest after having accepted the four hypotheses that accepting the research question in the affirmative would follow. However, aside from testing the four hypotheses, one other criterion needed to be met. A statistically significant relationship in at least three of four dependent variables had to be found in 80% of Michigan's counties.

This additional criterion for statistical significance was then applied to the 83 counties in Michigan. The presence or absence of the pertinent relationship is relevant to the philosophical underpinnings of devolving federalism. As Gallup and Black (1998) suggest, it is presumed that each county will make the best programming choices based on its own specific needs. This philosophical approach thus holds that there is no "one size fits all" solution; each county has different programming needs. That premise is one of the basic tenets of this research. When the federal government initiates changes in the controls for its funding mechanisms, they are signaling a philosophical change in political paradigms. In this case, it was acknowledging that there are no "one size fits all" solutions, and that by shifting from categorical to block grant funding, the federal government was changing from a traditional model of

federalism to a devolving federalism model. Thus, the suggestion is that local units of government are in a better position not only to understand what problems they face, but also how to address them if given the chance. In this case, chance stems from having the ability to make choices about what program best fits the needs of the community. The ability to make choices is tied to funding or rather funding mechanisms. Therefore, it follows that if there are different programming choices made, there will be different outcomes demonstrated within the sample.

The large degree of variance within the sample indicates that changes in outcomes in large counties may overshadow those in smaller counties. One way to control for this was also to examine outcomes in each individual county for statistical significance. To that end, an ANOVA was run for each dependent variable, by individual county, to determine if there were statistically significant changes in child welfare outcomes after the implementation of block grant funding. The results from comparing child welfare outcomes and type of funding scheme indicate that only 19% of the counties had either three or four of the dependent variables display statistical significant variation.

As a result of the additional testing for statistical significance within individual counties, it is possible to answer the research question. Devolving federalism, as expressed through the issuance of federal block grant funding, has not been an effective paradigm for creating change in child welfare outcomes in Michigan. This conclusion appears to be counterintuitive in light of the fact that all four hypotheses were accepted. However, in order for the research question to be answered, it is

necessary to look at all the data and then place them into a broader context in terms of the literature and philosophical underpinnings of the research.

In the case of this research, the intent was to determine if aligning a funding mechanism with a political philosophy would be successful in creating a desired change. For the purposes of this research, the political philosophy under examination was the utility of devolving federalism, as expressed through the issuance of block grant funding, in improving child welfare outcomes in Michigan.

In order to demonstrate whether or not devolving federalism is an effective paradigm, it is necessary to determine whether the use of block grant funding had a statistically significant impact on child welfare outcomes. To accomplish this, it must be demonstrated not only that a statistically significant change occurred in the dependent variables after the introduction of the independent variable, but also that it occurred in at least 80% of the counties studied. Inclusion of the decision criteria that there needed to be statistically significant changes in the dependent variable in 80% of the counties reduced the likelihood that a few large counties could potentially skew the data.

In addition to examining the overall impacts to child welfare outcomes, it was also necessary to examine the relationship of those outcomes to the philosophical underpinnings of devolving federalism. Because the underlying premise of devolving federalism is that of local control, measures needed to be associated with the several levels of government. This was accomplished by looking at the outcomes at these

lower levels of government, in this case counties, and at what each was able to achieve when given the opportunity to make its own programming choices.

By setting conditions beyond the acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses, the research is strengthened. While it is not possible to suggest conclusions can then be stated in absolute terms, by following the research strategy, and carefully interpreting and reporting the results, it is possible to answer the research question with a high degree of confidence. In this case, the data indicate that devolving federalism, as expressed through the issuance of block grant funding, has not been an effective paradigm for creating change in child welfare outcomes in Michigan.

The conclusions reached in this study both support and refute elements of contemporary literature. Clearly, as Gardner (1994) suggests, government has a role in the child welfare arena, and in attempting to improve child welfare outcomes. When the federal government began issuing block grant funding for child welfare outcomes, it was signaling a change in paradigms. That change was the shift from a tradition model of federalism to one of devolving federalism.

The use of devolving federalism, and the creation of collaborative bodies is, as Gardner (1994) suggests, not only about creating systems change, but also about providing an opportunity to evaluate government funding schemes in relationship to their ability to improve child welfare outcomes. Bell (1999) supports Gardner's suggestion, and points out that it is the study of observable outcomes over time that

provides a basis to test the efficacy of devolving federalism as a tool for improving child welfare outcomes.

The findings of this study demonstrate, as Gardner (1994) and Bell (1999) suggest, that it is possible to evaluate the effects of changing funding schemes on defined outcomes. Moreover, this study provides a reproducible means for analyzing the effects of a change in federal funding schemes, devolving federalism, on child welfare outcomes.

However, this study also brings into question assertions like those made by O'Toole and Riker (1993) and Gallup-Black (1998). It is O'Toole who suggested that the shift in federalism paradigms signaled what would be a more cooperative environment between the federal, state, and local levels of government. It was this increased cooperation, expressed through the issuance of block grants, which was supposed to lead to policy innovation. Then, as Gallup-Black suggests, policy innovation should lead to improved welfare solutions, which is a premise that is not supported by the findings of this study.

Clearly, there was a demonstrated improvement in child welfare outcomes during the period being examined. However, significant changes did not occur in enough instances at the local level to warrant a conclusion that devolving federalism is an effective paradigm for improving child welfare outcomes. In order to test the efficacy of the theory of devolving federalism, it becomes necessary to set decision criterion that capture the impact of decisions made at lower levels of government. For

it is at these lower levels of government that innovation is supposed to occur, which should then lead to improved child welfare outcomes.

If, as Gallup-Black (1998) suggests, that policy innovation at lower levels of government is an underlying premise of devolving federalism, then the theory is flawed when applied to child welfare outcomes in Michigan. In order for Gallup-Black's assertions to be valid, it would be necessary to find statistical significance in 80% of the sample being studied. In the case of this study, that would have required that a significant change occur in at least three of the four child welfare outcomes being examined, and that change would need to be found to have occurred in at least 80% of the 83 counties in Michigan.

This study found significant change in either three or four of the dependent variables being studied in only 19% of the counties in Michigan. Consequently, the results of this research do not support the assertions made by O'Toole and Riker (1993) and Gallup-Black (1998)—that devolving federalism, as expressed through the use of block grant funding and collaborative bodies, is an effective means for creating improvement in child welfare outcomes.

### Recommendations

Nineteen percent of the counties in Michigan were able to achieve statistically significant changes in child welfare outcomes after the initiation of block grant funding. The programming choices made in those counties, and the manner in which they were decided, need to be more thoroughly examined. Had the data to do so been

readily available to this researcher, that could have been accomplished as a part of this research. However, the data were available only starting in 2001. Diligent attempts were made to attain the data both at the state level and from individual counties. Unfortunately, these attempts did not yield data that were amenable to research. The Michigan Family Independence Agency could not readily produce basic documentation as to how counties proposed to spend hundreds of millions of dollars. Contacts with local county offices were also made, with little success in obtaining information. In some cases counties had the data for 2 or 3 years, and in other cases only a year.

Clearly there were counties in Michigan that were able to successfully create change in their child welfare outcomes. However, it does not appear that conducting longitudinal program evaluation within MFIA is a high priority. There is, however, a great deal of focus within the agency on the attainment of meeting standard of promptness goals in the processing of cases. That same degree of attention does not appear to extend to the programming choices made in conjunction with the issuance of these flexible funds. As such, there is a tendency for the agency to be more process focused rather than outcome focused.

MFIA should reconsider the importance of tracking program performance in terms of fiscal expenditures and outcomes. While there is value in measuring the efficiency of accomplishing a task, that should be secondary to accomplishing the stated goals of child protection. The agency already tracks performance figures for child welfare outcomes for each county in the state. What are not tracked are the



individual programming choices made by counties. Moreover, no attention is focused on the formation and operation of the collaborative bodies that have been successful in making programming choices that have led to significant changes in the child welfare outcomes.

Public administrator Robert Agranoff (1986) has done a significant amount of scholarly work in the area of social welfare and collaborative efforts. While his studies do not specifically include child welfare, some of the lessons he presents for successful efforts may apply. Agranoff suggests that there are a few key elements necessary for a collaborative to have success in achieving their stated goals. They include structure, information technology, and an assessment of leadership. Towards those ends, MFIA should undertake a systematic examination of the 19% of counties that were able to demonstrate success in improving child welfare outcomes after the initiation of block grant type funding. Specifically, that examination should include an in-depth analysis as to how these counties approached their efforts to coordinate service decisions and program execution.

MFIA needs to learn to examine how successful county collaborative bodies communicated basic information on perceived needs, how they identified current services available, and how they identified funding sources and determined resource allocation. Also, an assessment of emergent leadership styles and patterns should be explored. The intent here is that MFIA needs to examine how local communities exercise decision authority in terms of outcomes, and then synthesize those lessons into a resource model to be used as a template for other counties. In so doing they

would be able to provide demonstrated and well-reasoned technical support that would facilitate, but not replace, local decision-making authority. This approach then is ultimately consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of devolving federalism.

### Suggestions for Future Research

There are significant opportunities for future research within the child welfare arena in terms of public administration, child welfare outcomes, and federalism. Four areas that present themselves as possible topics for additional research are leadership and training, technology, federalism, and the management of fiscal resources.

There has been reluctance on the part of child welfare practitioners to apply narrowly defined outcomes in program evaluation. This is so, because social workers tend to have great difficulty in trying to quantify the quality of an intervention, or in placing labels on the individuals with whom they work. They are trained to work with the client to establish mutually agreed upon goals. These goals then may or may not fit neatly into what field staff typically deem to be too narrowly defined program objectives. Conversely, the tendency for social welfare administrators has been to conduct program evaluation in relation to the efficiency of completing process goals in terms of standards of promptness.

Part of the disconnect here may stem from the training of administrators and practitioners alike, and presents as an opportunity for future research. Social welfare training typically tends to center on training field-level social workers, and not on training supervisors and managers. Large agencies such as the Michigan Family

Independence Agency have actually undertaken aggressive, formalized staff development through internal training programs such as the Child Welfare Institute. However, this training is focused on providing field staff with core child welfare practitioner skills.

Additionally, the agency has invested heavily in forming partnerships with several institutions of higher learning to create specialized graduate programs in order to produce master's level social workers who specialize in child welfare.

However, there is not an equivalent level of training opportunities or development for administrators. The agency rightfully is placing a significant level of attention on ensuring a high level of competency for field staff. Where additional research may prove valuable is in evaluating the level of preparedness of agency administrators. In so doing, the potential may exist to design training programs which maximize the utilization of the training investment in field staff by refining administrative skills.

An issue related to a possible gap between training and social welfare administration may be how administrators gauge how effectively scarce resources are being utilized. Toward that end, further research should be directed at evaluating how specific programming choices are related to child welfare outcomes across matched county groupings. An additional step would be to look at other states which have undertaken similar approaches to look for relationships between funding schemes and the ability to achieve improvement in child welfare outcomes.

An often overlooked dimension of child welfare policy concerns its administration, and how different levels of governments can play a role in facilitating positive changes in outcomes. Looking at how different funding schemes, or combinations of funding schemes, create change is a function of federalism. The use of a particular type of federalism model now depends largely on how the different layers of government relate politically. How these layers then operate is a function of intergovernmental management (IGM), and herein lies another potential area of research which can build on the work of public administrator Robert Agranoff (1986). He has done extensive work in the areas of intergovernmental management and social welfare, but has not specifically explored IGM in terms of child welfare. Further research in this area should focus not only on how programming choices are made when the opportunity exists, but also on what the outcomes of those choices are. As this research has indicated, there are 19% of counties in Michigan that were able to successfully create statistically significant changes in child welfare outcomes. The choices made in these counties should be studied further to determine the feasibility of replicating their success.

Aside from changes in funding mechanisms that have been attempted in Michigan, there have also been efforts to streamline workloads by introducing technology. These efforts have included tools such as structured decision making, standardized risk and safety assessments, and computer systems. The underlying theory behind the introduction of these tools is to increase client contact time, and to standardize decision making based on validated measures. The key underlying theory

here is that increased contact between the worker and client would lead to improved outcomes. However, there have been no studies undertaken to analyze whether technology advances have really increased worker client contact.

There is readily available data to examine some of the potential effects of these changes in technology. Time study data are available that depicts how workers utilize their time. Those data are available in the same format both before and after major changes that have occurred in agency technology. Because these data track the same specific worker activities over time, they also provide a valuable tool to explore whether or not different policy changes affect how workers spend their time.

In order to have a better understanding of how and why outcomes are either achieved, or not achieved, through the administration of child welfare programs, several areas of additional research have been identified. There is an enormous cost both in terms of human tragedy and financial resources that is associated with child welfare administration in this country. However, how these programs are administered has not received as much attention as have the problems associated with the system's failures. Until more scholars shed light both on the system's successes and failures, there is little likelihood that significant changes will occur.

However, there is hope. The federal government's willingness to try different funding schemes in an effort to improve child welfare outcomes signals an understanding that change is needed. Moreover, states like Michigan are willing participants who have worked actively to facilitate the formation of collaborative bodies at the local level. They have also begun to take the next steps. MFIA has been

investing heavily in developing its field staff, as well as beginning to make substantial investments in state-of-the-art wireless technology to provide workers with instantaneous access to information. In addition, MFIA has also begun to see the need to conduct more systematic analyses of its performance, as evidenced by the creation of its CPS Peer Review Team. While there needs to be a continued effort to improve the skills of those who provide direct services, that commitment to education and skill development needs to be expanded in order to take the next step. That step needs to include comprehensive analyses that are built into the launching of new programmatic initiatives, as well as detailed analyses of existing programs. In the end, the Michigan Family Independence Agency's ability to improve child welfare outcomes will be tied to its willingness to undertake self-evaluation, and to understand the impact of its programmatic choices.

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