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# Policy Implementation in Social Welfare: A Framework for Analysis

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*A review of the research on implementation of federal-state partnership programs indicates a need for more analyses of the post-legislative phase of social welfare policy. This paper addresses the importance of research on policy implementation in social welfare. It examines some critical tools in the policy implementation analysis process, presents a framework for analysis, and offers recommendations to stimulate interest in the study of the implementation process.*

Researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners have increasingly concerned themselves with the effectiveness of federally-mandated, state-administered programs.<sup>1</sup> During the last 20 years, various scholars, recognizing that the interdependent relationship between and among government officials at the federal and state levels is crucial to successful implementation, have begun to analyze the policy implementation process (Goggin, 1987; Goggin, Bowman, Lester, & O'Toole, 1990; Palumbo & Calista, 1990; Palumbo & Harder, 1981; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Although many articles that provide analyses of policy implementation are found in the literatures of other disciplines, a review of articles published between 1978 and 1992 by six social work periodicals that focus on social policy and social welfare research produced only twelve citations. Thus, there is a pressing need for more analyses of policy implementation by social workers and social welfare researchers.

This paper addresses the importance of research on policy implementation in social welfare, examines some critical tools in the policy implementation analysis process, and offers recommendations to stimulate increased interest in such analysis. Public Law 100-485, the Family Support Act (FSA) of 1988, and specifically the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) section of the Act, is used to illustrate the types of issues addressed by an implementation analysis. The FSA provides an important challenge to national, state, and local evaluators to analyze state officials' interpretation, application, and implementation of this reform measure. There are many decisions that remain to be made that will shape how the provisions of the Act will be carried out at the state-level and that will determine how productive or punitive the FSA will be nationally (Chilman, 1992; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 1988; Rom, 1989).

#### RATIONALE FOR STUDYING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation is evolutionary, and is influenced by the ideological, political, and economic climates in which it occurs. The goals and objectives stated in legislation are interpreted initially by administrators responsible for policy implementation. These interpretations become broader and more varied as the policy objectives filter down through the bureaucratic structure of the implementing organization. The implementation process can facilitate or hinder program development. When the program development phase is complete, what is actually implemented may vary substantially from the original policy directive (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980; Palumbo & Harder, 1981).

Research on welfare policy implementation has several purposes: to address the influence of state bureaucratic factors on welfare policy implementation; to explain variation in policy implementation within and across states; to demonstrate the interrelationship between the policy implementation process and program performance; and to assess the extent of intended change produced in the larger society by a program. Implementation researchers attempt to explain the implementation process, examine the extent to which programmatic goals were satisfied, and describe how well the policy performed, given the way in which the state complied with the federal mandate.

Implementation research is not necessarily prescriptive in the sense of determining the goodness or rightness of policy statements. Instead, it takes the policy articulated as a starting point, as the set of propositions which will be transformed into actions by a variety of actors. This does not, however, imply a mechanistic or technocratic analytic view; norms, values, and preferences are as much a part of implementation research as they are the policy formulation and policy implementation processes.

The importance of implementation analysis can be appreciated by considering the FSA, which was passed in 1988, but which had not been fully implemented by several states as of 1992. The FSA includes broadly defined educational and training opportunities; job search, health benefits, and child-care supports; limited work requirements for two-parent families; increased enforcement of child-support payments; and up to a year of continued child care and medical care for some families who leave AFDC due to employment.

The central feature of the FSA is the creation of the JOBS program which consolidates and expands prior authority for education, training, and work programs. Participation in the JOBS program is required for selected AFDC recipients in exchange for continued public assistance. The selected groups include: (1) custodial parents under 24 years of age who have not completed high school or who have little or no work experience; (2) recipients or applicants who have received AFDC for thirty-six of the preceding sixty months; and (3) recipients within two years of becoming ineligible for AFDC due to the age of their youngest child (Chilman, 1992; NASW, 1991). Since recipients are expected to work in exchange for public assistance, the FSA attempts to shift AFDC from a redistributive program (i.e., one that redirects wealth to benefit particular segments of society so as to satisfy equity concerns) to a developmental program (i.e., one that attempts to enhance directly the economic well-being of the state or community) (Gueron, 1990; Rom, 1989; Sanger, 1990).

It is important to acknowledge at the outset limitations of the FSA which may not support achievement of its goals of poverty reduction and self-sufficiency. For instance, the FSA does not specify how much education and training is acceptable in any state program. Nor does the Act create or provide for the creation of jobs. Instead, it largely emphasizes activities either to enhance

the education and skills of recipients or to compel recipients to locate and accept available employment. The effectiveness of either of these approaches depends on the availability of jobs in the local economy, and the Act does not assure that families attaining employment will have enough income to meet their basic needs. It also does not address the income needs of AFDC families who are not employed (Chilman, 1992; Greenburg, 1992; Gueron, 1990). In fact, Gueron (1990) asserts that the fundamental dilemma of the FSA is the impossibility of simultaneously reaching these two major policy goals—reducing poverty and encouraging self-support.

Although the policy details have been outlined by federal officials, the primary design, implementation, administration, and coordination of the FSA is left to state officials (Evans, 1992; Reggins, 1991; U.S. Congress, 1988). In the absence of a national welfare standard, and given the unique social, economic, and political conditions of each state, eligibility criteria and program benefits can vary within the boundaries established by the federal legislation (Evans, 1992; Rom, 1989).

If the uniqueness of implementation is dependent on the above conditions, on the commitment to and interpretation of the policy by implementing officials, and on the structural and organizational processes of the implementing organization (Chambers, 1986; Glass, 1990; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975), it is important for welfare policy analysts and evaluators to analyze these operating characteristics in relation to the implementation process. Although variation across state welfare programs is clearly permissible and expected, the implementation procedures that contribute to this variation need to be documented. Case studies of how states move from a redistributive to a developmental welfare system are needed to enhance our knowledge base and to provide models for implementation analysis. Such information will enable social workers to play an active role in shaping evolving federal and state welfare initiatives.

#### A FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

There have been many attempts to understand, explain, and analyze the relationship between policy and implementation.

Although a multitude of case studies with varying conceptual frameworks exist, there is no generally accepted theory to provide guidance to research on policy implementation. Scholars have not yet developed a typology for studying policy implementation, a major step toward theory building (Goggin et al., 1990). As Goggin et al. (1990, p. 11) argue, "a topographical map that characterizes the terrain in precise terms, indicates quantitative measures, and specifies precise relationships among the various elements is needed."

Despite these limitations, implementation research has managed to shift the focus from "how a bill becomes a law" to "how a law becomes a program." Such studies have demonstrated the complex and dynamic nature of policy implementation and have emphasized the importance of a policy subsystem and the difficulties that a subsystem creates for coordination and control. Research on the implementation process has illuminated several dilemmas that implementing officials may face and has identified factors that seem to account for variation in programmatic results (Glass, 1990; Goggin et al., 1990; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

A review of the various conceptual frameworks employed in implementation analyses suggests a number of conditions as requisites for successful policy implementation: (1) clearly defined goals and objectives; (2) administrators with technical competence to implement and execute the policy; (3) clearly defined populations; (4) intelligible enabling legislation; (5) the publication of federal regulations prior to program implementation; (6) program procedures for implementors and administrators to follow; (7) training assistance from the federal level to state implementors during implementation of joint programs; and (8) adequate resources (Chambers, 1986; Glass, 1990; Goggin, 1987; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Palumbo & Calista, 1990; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). The implementation process also is facilitated or blocked through the implementing organization's structure and its functional processes (Gryski & Usher, 1980; Magill, 1984; Sosin, 1990; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

Building upon these prior studies, a framework is proposed for implementation analysis. The framework incorporates the

following domains: (1) enabling legislation; (2) federal regulations; (3) organizational structure; (4) organizational process; and (5) program performance (See Figure 1). The proposed framework enables the implementation process to be studied and analyzed so that inferences can be made about the relationship between policy design, policy implementation, and policy outcome. It can be applied to investigate how the administrative authority of those responsible for implementing, coordinating, and administering federally-mandated, state-administered programs affects variation in policy implementation.

The *enabling legislation* and the *federal regulations* address the legal contract between the federal and state governments. The legislation is the actual law which mandates the policy decision. The regulations contain the provisions which authorize the implementation of the policy, including rewards for compliance in carrying out the policy and legal sanctions for noncompliance (Chambers, 1986; Goggin, 1987; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983).

*Organizational structure* is defined as the degree to which the implementing organization represents complexity, formalization, and centralization (Goggin, 1987; Magill, 1984; Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980). *Organizational process* is defined as how functional activities, such as decision making, are affected by the administrative procedures necessary for complying with the new policy (Sosin, 1990). *Program performance* involves the actual outcome, the result, of the implementation process. Assessment of program performance is concerned with who and how many clients or target groups were reached and the types and amount of program's resources they received (Hasenfeld, 1984; Palumbo & Calista, 1990).

## APPLYING THE ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK TO THE FSA

The following sections illustrate the application of the proposed analytic framework. The types of issues addressed in implementation research are identified using the FSA as a case example. These discussions are not intended to be definitive, but

Figure 1:

### Implementation Analysis Framework

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<b>Enabling Legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy Goals &amp; Objectives</li> <li>Target Population</li> <li>Fiscal Arrangements</li> <li>Major Provisions</li> <li>Eligibility Guidelines</li> <li>Federal Administrator</li> <li>State Administrator</li> <li>Rules of Entitlement</li> <li>Benefits</li> </ul>
<b>Federal Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provisions which Implement Policy</li> <li>Sanctions for Compliance</li> <li>Target Populations</li> <li>Eligibility Requirements</li> <li>Financing &amp; Administration</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing Agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Federal Bureaucracy</li> <li>b. State Bureaucracy</li> <li>c. Local Agency</li> </ul> </li> <li>Mission of Agency (ies)</li> <li>Implementing Officials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Professional Orientation</li> <li>b. Educational Training</li> <li>c. Previous Experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication Patterns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Top Down</li> <li>b. Bottom Up</li> </ul> </li> <li>Internal Decision Making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Centralized</li> <li>b. Decentralized</li> </ul> </li> <li>Resource Allocation</li> </ul>
<b>Program Performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who Governs</li> <li>How Funds are Used</li> <li>Who Benefits</li> <li>Extent of Goal &amp; Objective Achievement</li> <li>Activities Contribute to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Success</li> <li>b. Failure</li> </ul> </li> <li>Mechanisms to Revise Failures</li> </ul> <hr/>

are suggestive of the ways in which this framework can be used to generate information about the policy implementation process.

### *Enabling Legislation*

How federal legislation is drafted can affect the extent to which public policy objectives are attained (Magill, 1984; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980; Palumbo & Harder, 1981; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). The statutes, which make the legislation binding, structure the implementation process through the delineation of legal objectives, selection of implementing institutions, provision of legal and financial resources to those institutions, and regulation of the opportunities for participation by nonagency actors in the implementation process (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). To the extent that the statute provides precise and clear instructions to implementing officials and others, the more likely it is that the policy outputs of the implementing agencies will be consistent with the policy directive (Magill, 1984). However, it is rare when ambiguity is not present in federal legislation.

The FSA allows the state to set cash benefit levels. By doing so, the federal government permits wide variation in the welfare benefits that states can, and do, pay to welfare recipients (Rom, 1989). The policy allows state officials to exercise discretion regarding benefits and eligibility in order to satisfy the unique needs of their citizenry, as determined by their local political and economic climates (Peterson, 1980).

States are required to establish and operate a JOBS program to give welfare recipients education, training, and work experience. In seeking to meet federally-mandated participation rates with limited resources, state officials can impose extensive and unproductive requirements on many families. In addition, JOBS implementation cannot be viewed in itself as a comprehensive response to the needs of poor families. JOBS implementation does not address the low benefits, restrictive eligibility rules, and frequent procedural arbitrariness facing families in need of AFDC (Chilman, 1992; Greenberg, 1992).

The total cost of the FSA over 5 years is estimated by the Congressional Budget Office to be \$3.3 billion to the federal government and \$.7 billion to the states. Initially funding was appropriated by Congress through 1991, but further funding has

been appropriated for each of the federal fiscal years through 1995. Federal funding for JOBS in 1992 and 1993 was \$1 billion (Chilman, 1992). While these amounts seem like a lot, they are actually a minimal resource commitment.

Federal JOBS funding is not open-ended (Greenberg, 1992). Instead, each state is eligible to draw down a capped entitlement amount from the federal government each year. The state's capped entitlement amount is based on its pro rata share of the total federal allocation. Most of the federal funds available to the state for JOBS are at one of two matching rates: 60 percent or the state's Medicaid matching rate for the JOBS program, whichever is greater. Federal funds are also available to cover up to 50 percent of administrative, transportation, and supportive service costs. The state is eligible for open-ended federal funding at the state's Medicaid match rate for child care expenses; however, matching rates for child care administrative and other costs are determined by separate formulae. Given the variety of formulae involved, determining the match rate for a particular expenditure can be problematic.

### *Federal Regulations*

The details of a statute are generally spelled-out in regulations. In addition to stating the rules of entitlement, the regulations document enforcement procedures, including, as appropriate, incentives and sanctions. Regulations further clarify the benefits to be provided, define the target population, and specify eligibility criteria and administrative authority. They also may identify areas of federal involvement such as technical assistance provision, plan and program reviews, evaluations, and audits.

The regulations provide the guidelines for implementation, but often do not address who is responsible for monitoring task completion nor how this monitoring is to occur. Mechanisms to ensure accountability are not always clearly stated, although the penalty for noncompliance is usually explicit. Thus, each level of government involved in policy implementation often develops a separate, and potentially conflicting, system of accountability. Together, the enabling legislation and the federal regulations establish a binding legal contract between federal and state officials for policy implementation.

The nature of implementation of federally-mandated, state-administered programs rests, although not exclusively, on fiscal and structural contracts. The contracts adhere to the elements of organizational control. By stating the function for which funds must be spent, the federal government specifies the conditions and purposes, and regulates the processes by which state governments are to accomplish federal objectives (Chilman, 1992). Grant giving acts as an incentive, an inducement, and as a facilitator, for the continued influence of the federal government in state capacity building and problem solving. Money, plus regulations, is the medium through which the federal government influences state affairs (Chambers, 1986; Chilman, 1992; Glass, 1990).

To begin operating a JOBS program, each state must submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and must receive HHS approval. The state plan must include a description of services to be provided and a description or flow chart explaining the progression of clients into and through the JOBS program. The plan must also present the state's decisions on a number of state options, e.g., whether parents of very young children will be required to participate, whether the state will permit or assist post-secondary education, and how the state will define "good cause" for failure to participate (Greenberg, 1992). In addition to the JOBS plan, the state is required to submit concurrently for approval a Supportive Services Plan, describing such things as the methods used to provide child care, the amount the state will pay for such care, and the other supportive services that will be provided.

Responsibility is vested with the Governor to assure that JOBS activities will be coordinated with programs under the Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and with any other relevant employment, training, or education program available in the state. In developing the state JOBS plan, and in carrying out the JOBS program, the state AFDC agency must consult and coordinate with other providers in order to: identify existing resources; prevent duplication of services; assure that other program services are available to enable participants to achieve self-sufficiency; and assure that the costs for these other services (e.g., JTPA or other employment services, adult education, early childhood education programs) are not incurred by the JOBS program (Chilman, 1992; Greenberg, 1992).

Yet the regulations for the JOBS program may be at variance with those for JTPA or other education and job training programs. Although these programs share the goal of facilitating employment, contradictory regulations guiding the state towards this end may constrain actual programmatic coordination. Funding commitments within each program also may affect JOBS participants' access to these other services. And competition about how individuals are "counted" or "credited" could well develop among the various programs.

### *Organizational Structure*

Where a program is located within federal and state administering agencies is important because the policy outcome may be more a reflection of the implementing organization and the persons responsible for implementation than the legislation itself. Two key factors in the organizational structure which influence implementation are the appropriateness of the bureaucratic organization to the policy and the capabilities of the officials responsible for carrying out the policy.

The degree of fit between the mission of the implementing organization and the goals of the program to be implemented will affect: the length of time it takes to put the program into operation; the extent to which accommodations are made to opposing or supporting groups; and the relationship between government officials at different levels of the administering organizations (Chambers, 1986; Chilman, 1992; Glass, 1990; Goggin, 1987; Magill, 1984; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Palumbo & Harder, 1981). If there is a good fit between the program being implemented and the implementing organization, interpretation is simplified; goals may not need further renegotiations; resistance is lessened; and implementing officials can get on with the job of making the policy work.

A good fit also is determined by the professional competence of the officials authorized to carry out the mandate. The personnel responsible for administering the new program should possess the professional knowledge, skills, and training needed to increase the success of both program development and program performance. Implementors within the organization must deal with intra- and inter-organizational procedures, resource allocation, bureaucratic norms, and the values and preferences

of governmental and nongovernmental actors concerning program development, service delivery, and the target population (Chambers, 1986; Goggin, 1987; Magill, 1984). Nongovernmental stakeholders include lobby, constituency, and consumer groups who pressure implementors to administer policies in ways that advance their own interests.

The requirements of the FSA are numerous and complex and are likely to be burdensome to many states. For example, effective service coordination with other relevant programs is a major feature of the JOBS program. Meeting this requirement may be a challenge for many states, especially for those without prior experience in welfare-to-work programs.

The legislation also requires that all funds for the program be administered through the state AFDC agency, whether these funds are from public or private sources and whether they go to public or private services, such as child care or family service agencies. Not surprisingly, previous research has found that problems can arise with this method of fund collection and disbursement (Chilman, 1992).

Moreover, initial enthusiasm and high hopes about the possibilities of using JOBS as a way to address barriers to employment for families receiving AFDC have begun to give way to an increased sense of pessimism (Chilman, 1992). The Act's "pay-offs," in terms of lower welfare costs and increased recipient self-sufficiency through employment and child support, are not immediate and will probably be very small or nonexistent, at least without displacing other employees. State officials' primary concern has become, not unexpectedly, the expected financial outlay for their state (Chilman, 1992).

Program administrators will need to work closely and persuasively with various antiwelfare, low-tax political groups in their communities, as well as with numerous advocacy and client rights' organizations. Implementors will need to be highly skilled at managing competing and conflicting demands arising from actors in their organizations and in their communities. In addition, technical competence and practical skills are needed for the program design and service delivery phases. Yet most staff members of public welfare agencies are not equipped to carry out the necessary job skills training assessments (Chilman, 1992).

*Organizational Process*

Inter-organizational procedures such as communications, administrative distance, and administrative complexity have an effect on the bureaucratic structure and thereby influence the functional procedures of policy implementation. As Palumbo and Harder (1981) point out, policies are implemented to produce as little disruption as possible within the existing structure of the implementing organization.

Key factors that affect the way in which the organization functions include: the internal decision-making structure of the organization; the degree of reliance placed on intermediaries; the degree of disruption caused by the innovation; the degree of resistance to change in organizational procedures; and the number of officials from different organizational levels who are engaged in the implementation process (Sosin, 1990; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Layers of “red tape” between the major decision makers at the top of the policy sphere and the service personnel at the bottom of the operations, coupled with a lack of clear lines of communication, permit program implementors to use their discretion as they attempt to turn specific policies into public services.

The JOBS program expressly encourages states to find ways to promote welfare recipients’ self-sufficiency through employment and job training. However, due to ambiguous and controversial rules for participation, some state officials find it problematic to answer questions about how JOBS is operating. It is often extremely difficult to get accurate calculations of the number of recipients participating in assessment or other activity components of JOBS (Greenberg, 1992). What counts as participation? Who counts as required participants—children and/or custodial parents? What is the unduplicated count of families assisted by a JOBS program?

The issue of “counting” intersects with organizational processes in two ways. First, is how what is to be counted is defined. In the JOBS program, decision making by local officials regarding participation is complicated by the need to balance numeric requirements against edibility criteria. When calculating the number of persons required to participate, officials must work to assure an acceptable rate of participation, according to HHS

guidelines, in order to receive federal funding. At the same time, they have to make decisions about who is to participate on a case-by-case basis. Officials must exclude those who: (1) are exempt; (2) have a good cause for not participating; (3) reside in an area where there is no JOBS program; or (4) are not required to participate because the state cannot guarantee needed child care. The case-by-case exclusion method will vary at the local level and will cause considerable variation in participant characteristics across and within states. And after all the exclusions are considered, according to Greenberg (1992), the number of persons required to participate is substantially reduced, thereby posing a potential threat to local achievement of an acceptable participation rate.

Second, is how counting is to be accomplished—that is, the organizational processes and procedures that need to be instituted or modified to obtain management information on participation. The accountability system required for the JOBS program may well represent an additional burden to local and state program implementors. Moreover, since accountability systems are not standardized, acquisition of data beyond what is needed by a particular level of organization may be viewed as an external demand that conflicts or interferes with usual work processes.

### *Program Performance*

Policy outcomes cannot be evaluated unless the policy has been implemented and services delivered. “The delivery of services shapes policy outcomes more than the design of the policy” (Palumbo & Calista, 1990, p. xiii). “Outcomes,” in this framework, refer to the degree to which the policy’s goals are achieved. Since implementation is a process related to outcome (Goggin et al., 1990; Palumbo & Calista, 1990), it is central to the policy cycle. Examining the relationship between the implementation process and the policy’s outcomes permits one to make inferences about program performance and the conditions under which intended outcomes can be maximized. Further, clarifying the rationale for political decision making during the implementation process generates information needed to redesign and restructure the policy to improve program performance.

The following types of questions would allow us to gain a better understanding of how a state’s choices in JOBS implemen-

tation relate to the results observed. First, what do program participants actually do? What percentage of participants are in: basic education? post-secondary education? a training program? a job through on-the-job-training or wage subsidy? What proportion are engaged in job search activities that don't improve their skills or literacy?

Second, what is the program's sanction rate? A program's sanction rate is a good indicator of whether the state emphasizes the program's benefits or its punitive aspects. When a participant is sanctioned, her share of the AFDC grant is cut off for a period of time, with an escalating penalty structure. In a two-parent family, the share for both parents can be cut off. Despite the sanction rules, states can attempt to minimize the coercive features of JOBS by emphasizing program access for volunteers, participant choice, and conciliation efforts that seek to resolve problems without resorting to sanctions (Greenberg, 1992).

Third, what choices and services are offered to the three groups targeted by the FSA? What proportion of teenaged parents are served? Of long-term recipients? Of those within two years of becoming ineligible? What is the proportion of the total participant pool that each of these groups represents? What special service packages, if any, are used to accommodate each of these target groups?

Depending on the research goals, other issues that could be investigated include: How many participants get child care assistance? What do they get? How much does the state actually pay or reimburse? What is the role of recipient choice? What type of recipient seem to benefit most from the program? How much of the state's federal entitlement is being spent?

Ultimately, however, the central question is whether or not the JOBS program and its related services actually assist welfare recipients to leave the welfare rolls and to obtain jobs that will allow them to support their families at an adequate level. Research that sheds light on how this can be achieved—what particular mix of local circumstances, experiences, actors, and interventions is necessary—will make an important contribution to the ongoing national debate about welfare reform and to the lives of welfare recipients.

## CONCLUSION

Research on policy implementation, to date, has provided a description of what implementation is and how it varies across time, policies, and units of government. Advances have been made in linking certain characteristics of the policy's design and setting with outcome (Goggin et al., 1990). While there is no shortage of variables to explain implementation and its outcomes, critical indicators have neither been specified nor quantified. The operationalization and measurement of key variables and the careful testing of hypotheses have just begun (Goggin et al., 1990). Focusing on the mechanisms that are used to implement programs, rather than solely on the programs themselves, is the best way to develop a theory of implementation.

Social workers are often directly involved with the implementation of federally-mandated, state-administered initiatives such as the JOBS program. Working in a variety of capacities within and outside of implementing agencies, social workers play key roles in shaping how services are ultimately delivered. These occupational vantage points afford social workers unique opportunities to be both producers and consumers of implementation information. Social workers can contribute to this body of research by sharing their experiences with and insights into the implementation process. Implementation studies offer social workers, whether employed as an agency bureaucrat or as line staff, an information base for advocacy. Developing an understanding of implementation as a process entailing multiple decision points subject to leverage will allow social workers to exert their influence more actively and effectively.

While implementation research has added much to our knowledge of what implementation is and how and why it varies, it has not been as helpful in providing a generally accepted theoretical framework; in differentiating among types of implementation outcomes; in specifying the causal pattern associated with these outcomes; or in explaining the frequency with which these patterns occur (Goggin, 1987). The framework proposed here represents a beginning effort at the synthesis that needs to occur to advance the development of implementation analysis in social welfare. As such, it serves as a heuristic for investigating and

understanding the transformation of a public law into a social program.

Federally-mandated, state-administered programs, by their very nature, entail ambiguous legislation and regulations in order to allow for local "fit." Increased federal specificity about the choice of implementing organization or the provision of technical assistance might enhance program goal attainment without sacrificing local discretion. In addition, inclusion of precise monitoring and evaluation requirements could enhance the accountability of local implementors to federal policy makers and intended beneficiaries. Yet which facets of a program should be accompanied by explicit federal criteria necessitates value judgments about social objectives as well as assessment of local responses. The questions of where and how a balance can be struck between federal and state interests remain pressing. Case studies of various federally-mandated, state-administered programs would enhance insight into this tradeoff and further the dialogue on policy implementation in social welfare.

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### Note

1. In this article, federally-mandated, state-administered programs refers to social welfare programs that are mandated through federal legislation but implemented and administered by state authorities, e.g. Medicaid, Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Maternal and Child Health Services (Title V), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program (EPSDT).

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