



Indiana University
Workshop in Political Theory
and Policy Analysis

POLICY CURRENTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PUBLIC POLICY SECTION
AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Editor's Note

As I write this note, the news in the morning *Washington Post* is that the Bush administration has begun to turn its attention to the upcoming reauthorization of the welfare system. Initial indications are that the administration will recommend that spending remain at exactly the level it has been over the past five years, approximately \$16.5 billion annually. Also proposed is a new goal for the welfare system—the promotion of marriage. This apparently would be implemented by giving financial incentives to states and communities that adopt measures that lead to an increase in the number of low-income people that get, and stay, married. Beyond these broad parameters, the administration's proposals for welfare reform have yet to be spelled out. The politics surrounding this reauthorization process promise to be as heated and emotionally fraught as any policy debate in recent years in Washington.

The welfare reauthorization process is an important opportunity for members of the Public Policy Section to play a useful role in bridging the gap between research and practice. Among our members are many scholars that have focused a considerable portion of their research activities on the implementation of welfare and impacts of welfare policies on low-income families, children, workers, and others. This issue of *Policy Cur-*

rents continues the third article on welfare reform in the series of contributions that was initiated in the previous newsletter with articles by Mark Rom and Lawrence Mead.

In this issue, Christine A. Kelleher and Susan Webb Yackee report on the experience of welfare reform in North Carolina. The paper focuses specifically on the ways that local officials have responded to the new sets of incentives and constraints associated with “second-order” devolution of welfare responsibilities. Among their most interesting findings is the variation in the appetites of local officials for even more devolution of policy responsibilities to the local level. The greatest enthusiasm for additional devolution is found not among those policy professionals that have had the closest experience with welfare reform but among policy and political generalists within county government, such as county commissioners.

In keeping with this series of articles on welfare reform, several new books have recently come to my attention on this topic. Let me briefly mention three. Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg and Sheila D. Collins sent me a copy of their new book, *Washington's New Poor Law: Welfare "Reform" and the Roads Not Taken, 1935 to the Present* (New York: The Apex Press, 2001), which is a spirited analysis of the choices that have been made through the years in fashioning the American welfare system. This book usefully distinguishes several phases in the development of welfare, including the periods during the Great Depression and the early post-World War II years, the dramatic expansion of welfare activities during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the various reforms that were debated and occasionally adopted during the period from 1967 through 1980, and the conservative reforms that were adopted during the Reagan and Clinton administrations. One of the recurrent themes of the book is reflected in its subtitle, “the

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roads not taken," at various junctures in American politics. Specifically, the authors point to the need to take seriously the linkage between welfare and economic policies that might guarantee employment opportunities for poor persons.

A second book that I just received is William Roth's *The Assault on Social Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Roth's book broadens the focus from welfare policy to the larger array of social policies that have been developed in the period from the New Deal forward, including welfare, disability policies, Social Security, and health care. His book is an analysis of the political forces that he sees as responsible for the limited scope of social policy in America. In many respects, his book recalls the penetrating and often caustic arguments articulated by Thorstein Veblen almost eight decades ago. Like Veblen, Roth points to the role of corporations in distorting the images that the public has of low-income people and in shaping public policies to skew the distribution of wealth toward the highest income brackets.

I would strongly recommend that anyone interested in welfare reform pick up a copy of Rebecca Blank and Ron Haskins' edited volume, *The New World of Welfare* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2001). This volume contains a very useful collection of articles analyzing various impacts of welfare in the wake of the 1996 reforms. These impacts include work levels and wages, family income and poverty rates, family formation, children's well-being, the role of fathers, and more. As with any edited volume, not all the papers are equally well-executed or fit together especially well. In particular, in this volume there is a disparate quality to the papers that focus on econometric analyses, those that are devoted principally to policy advocacy, and those that seek to locate the welfare reform process into a larger political context. Yet there is a lot of meat in the various papers in the volume. It is well worth reading.

Finally, let me add that I would very much like to continue this series of articles on welfare and the issues that should inform the developing debate on the reauthorization of welfare. I would also welcome articles on other topics. For example, I would be quite interested in a new series of articles on Children and Public Policy, addressing questions on the politics by which children's issues compete for attention in the policy agenda, as well as substantive issues relating to the direction of early childhood programs and children's health policy. If you would

like to contribute an article on the topic of Welfare Reform, Children and Public Policy, or on a different topic, please contact me by email at kbickers@indiana.edu or by phone at 812-855-4198.

Best regards,

Ken Bickers
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Second-Order Devolution: A Focus on the Opinions of County-Level Officials

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Second-Order Devolution: A Focus on the Opinions of County-Level Officials

How do county officials view their expanded policymaking authority due to second-order devolution? Over the past two decades in the United States, numerous state governors, Members of Congress, and the media have argued for the importance of shifting additional policymaking power to the states. This debate reached a high point during the authorization of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (first-order devolution), as the Congress decentralized some policymaking power to the states to address welfare issues and welfare reform policy problems (Conlan

1998; Walker 2000). In North Carolina and at least nine other states, the state legislatures enacted additional reforms to decentralize welfare policymaking powers to county governments (second-order devolution). Surprisingly, however, despite rhetorical flourishes and major legislation devoted to the decentralization of power, there has been little examination of the impacts of devolution at the sub-national level.

An analysis of the consequences of devolution holds significant and previously untapped implications for observers of national and sub-national government. First, if devolution is a viable policy solution used to address problems on the national agenda, then our understanding of the policymaking process hinges on our understanding of devolution's impacts (Soss et al. 2001; Mettler 2000). We must gain a clearer understanding of devolution to inform lawmakers of the possible consequences of decentralization. Second, as some assume, the transfer of power to a lower level of government allows choices concerning public policy to be pushed down to where officials make public policy decisions that are more in tune with community norms and values (e.g., Eggers and O'Leary 1995; Murray 1984; Kincaid 1998). Thus, it is important to consider how county officials perceive these new responsibilities within the policymaking process.

In 1997, the North Carolina state legislature passed welfare reform legislation that shifted policymaking authority from the state to each of the 100 counties. This devolution took the form of block grants to all counties, and the added fiscal flexibility allowed officials in each county to make policy choices concerning the type and amount of welfare services to offer. The 1997 legislation also devised the "Standard County" versus "Electing County" distinction, which provided even further policymaking discretion to a number of select North Carolina counties. In particular, the legislation gave Electing Counties more flexibility in determining welfare benefit levels and provided additional fiscal resources to innovate and respond creatively to welfare-related policy problems in their counties. This distinction was a highly charged political debate in the state legislature. All counties were allowed to petition the state for Electing County status or they could simply remain a Standard County. Ultimately, 21 Electing Counties were given additional flexibility in the provision of services and were allowed to decide welfare benefit levels.¹ No Electing County, however, chose to deviate from the state's suggested level of welfare cash assistance.

As part of the *Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform* project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we gathered views and attitudes from over 400 North Carolina county officials who participated in the recent welfare reforms in order to track their perceptions of second-order devolution.² We surveyed five actors in each North Carolina county during the summer and fall of 2000. We contacted (with response rates): Members of the County Board of Commissioners (28%), County Managers (65%), County Department of Social Services (DSS) Board Chairs³ (65%), County DSS Directors (67%), and County Work First Administrators (70%).⁴ In this article, we highlight the mean responses of county officials concerning three major topics: the key players of welfare reform, state-county relationships, and the changing role of Work First Administrators in the county. The views and opinions of county policymakers and administrators are particularly important to understand and appreciate because the future reauthorization of national and state legislation will rely considerably on perceptions of sub-national officials regarding changes in policymaking authority.

INFLUENCE – THE KEY PLAYERS IN WELFARE REFORM

Governmental Influences. We asked North Carolina county officials to judge the level of influence that various actors had on welfare reform decisions from 1998 to 2000 in their respective counties. Table 1 reports our descriptive findings in the form of mean influence scores. Aggregately, as well as by each individual set of county officials, the County DSS Directors were perceived to have had the greatest continuing influence on welfare reform. The mean scores for DSS Director influence ranged from 5.8 (by County Commissioners) to 6.7 (by DSS Board Chairs). Each question was measured on a 0 to 7 scale, with 0 representing "None," 1 representing "Low," and 7 representing "High." Work First Administrators were perceived by all respondents to have had the second greatest influence on welfare reform decisions in the counties (5.7), while County Commissioners and County Managers were viewed as having relatively low levels of general influence on welfare reform at 4.2 and 4.1, respectively. These results provide further evidence for the argument that devolution was carried out by those members of the social services community who were directly responsible for the day-to-day implementation of welfare programs.

Table 1. Continuing Welfare Reform Influence

<i>Official's Level of Influence</i>	<i>Type of Respondent (mean scores)</i>					
	All Respondents*	County Commissioners	County Managers	DSS Directors	DSS Board Chairs	Work First Administrators
County Commissioners	4.2 n=397	4.4 n=139	4.1 n=62	4.1 n=66	4.5 n=62	3.9 n=68
County Managers	4.1 n=394	4.4 n=137	4.0 n=63	3.8 n=66	4.4 n=62	3.6 n=66
DSS Directors	6.1 n=395	5.8 n=136	5.9 n=61	6.0 n=65	6.7 n=65	6.3 n=68
DSS Board Chairs	5.4 n=390	5.5 n=132	5.6 n=61	5.2 n=66	6.2 n=65	4.7 n=66
Work First Administrators	5.7 n=359	5.3 n=107	5.5 n=58	6.1 n=66	6.0 n=62	6.0 n=66

Responses scored from 0 to 7, with 0 = no influence, 1 = low influence, and 7 = high influence.

*Question: How much influence or impact do you think the following persons or groups have had on welfare reform (Work First) decisions in your county over the past two years (1998-2000)?

1. County Board of Commissioners
2. County Manager
3. County DSS Director
4. County DSS Board
5. Work First Administrators

Source: Odum IRSS UNC-CH; Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform Project, 2000

These results also point to an important clustering among the county officials' responses: Commissioners and Managers constituted one cluster of respondents (which we will refer to as "Policy Generalists" throughout the article); DSS Directors, Board Chairs, and Work First Administrators emerged as a second group (the "Social Services Community"). The clustering that occurred between Policy Generalists and the Social Services Community on this first question is evident throughout the entire survey. These strong similarities among respondent groups have powerful implications for second-order devolution. The perceptions of those on the receiving end of devolution, especially those involved with the day-to-day execution of welfare policy, are especially important to consider as policymakers struggle to determine whether devolution is a viable and effective policy solution.

When we separate the respondents according to their position in the county, some interesting patterns emerge concerning which actors were influential in shaping the decisions and innovations of welfare reform. County Commissioners and County Managers again seem less

directly engaged in the ongoing process of welfare reform. These Policy Generalists uniformly rated themselves as the least influential actors in the welfare reform process. DSS Directors and Board Chairs both acknowledged their own levels of influence as substantially higher and accorded less influence to Commissioners and Managers. Shaw (2000) confirms these results. Although his focus is on the state level, his findings are quite similar in that political leaders pointed to the prominence of the Social Services Community as driving forces of policymaking and innovation.

External Influences. We also asked respondents to assess the impact of various external governmental and non-governmental actors to welfare reform, including the public-at-large, the business community, non-profit organizations and associations, and members of the state legislature. The questions probed three important topics – sources of welfare policy innovations, the Standard versus Electing County decision, and general levels of influence on welfare reform. The responses are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. External Influences on Welfare Reform

	<i>Sources of Innovation</i>	<i>1997 Influence on Standard versus Electing County Decision</i>	<i>Continuing Influence</i>
Public at-large	3.6	3.1	3.1
Business Community	3.8	3.2	3.5
State Legislature	n/a	4.2	4.0
Non-Profit Organizations / Associations	4.0	3.2	3.5

Responses scored from 0 to 7, with 0 = no influence, 1 = low influence, and 7 = high influence.

*Question: How much influence or impact do you think the following persons or groups have had on welfare reform (Work First) decisions in your county over the past two years (1998-2000)?

1. Public at-large 2. Business Community 3. State Legislature 4. Non-Profit Organizations / Associations

Source: Odum IRSS UNC-CH; Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform Project, 2000

It is interesting to note that almost uniformly, the assessed levels of influence for external actors were significantly lower than the levels for the previously discussed governmental actors. It is also surprising to see how unimportant the general public appeared as a source of innovation and influence upon the perceptions of county officials regarding the implementation of welfare reform. Interestingly, however, county officials did at least slightly acknowledge the significance of the state legislature to welfare reform. Research by Shaw (2000) on the state level presents similar results. Shaw finds that state legislators noted the relatively insignificant role of the public related to welfare reform and instead pointed to the community of political leaders as assuming the most important roles.

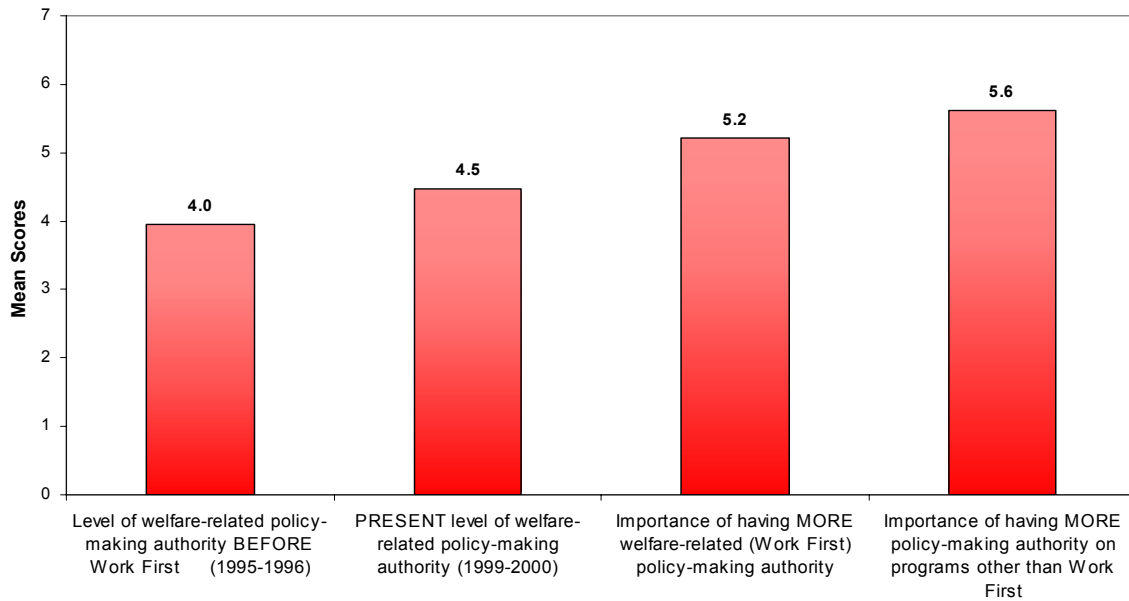
Again, all of these findings have important implications for second-order devolution. A great deal of the rhetoric surrounding North Carolina's recent welfare reforms focused on promoting the involvement of the general community in welfare provision, with particular emphasis on the role of non-profit organizations and associations. While these groups appear to have played some role in welfare reform, clearly county officials did not view them as critical players in the process. While devolution may have shifted policymaking authority and increased fiscal flexibility of county officials, the further devolution of authority to external forces appears only moderately important to the policymaking process.

COUNTY-STATE AUTHORITY RELATIONSHIPS

The 1997 welfare reform legislation in North Carolina provided a unique opportunity to view changing county-state relationships. In particular, we are interested in whether state legislative changes resulted in the perceived decentralization of policymaking authority to the counties. As a result, in 2000, we asked North Carolina county officials to address retrospectively their perceptions of second-order devolution. First, we examined county officials' perceptions of past and present levels of welfare policymaking authority in their county. Second, we explored the preferences of county officials for additional policymaking authority in the future. Finally, we addressed differences between Standard and Electing Counties related to perceptions of authority.

Past, Present, and Future Authority. North Carolina county officials were asked to evaluate past, present, and future levels of authority. County officials evaluated county welfare-related policymaking authority prior to the passage of welfare reform at 4.0 (on the 0-7 scale). As depicted in Figure 1, officials were also asked to assess their "present" levels of policymaking authority in 2000. Compared to their assessments regarding past levels of authority, their perceptions of present levels reveal that county officials noted an increase in authority after welfare reform of 11% (from 4.0 to 4.5). Thus, in the aggregate, respondents viewed the 1997 state legislation as providing some increased decision making authority in the hands of county officials. This gain was a definite and identifiable increase in policymaking dis-

**Figure 1. North Carolina County Officials:
Welfare Reform Authority Levels**



cretion, although not as dramatic as might be expected given the significant legislative attention to the issues of devolution and welfare reform. Finally, our survey asked county officials whether they desired additional welfare-related policymaking authority in the future. A moderately high score of 5.2 suggests that county officials welcome the further devolution of welfare policymaking autonomy.

When the aggregate responses are divided according to the type of county official, contrasting perspectives on county welfare-related authority are revealed. Figure 2 charts the mean responses of County Commissioners, County Managers, DSS Directors, Social Services Board Chairs, and Work First Administrators for past, present, and future levels of desired authority. County Commissioners and County Managers perceived their present levels of authority to be moderate, yet still appeared to desire additional welfare-related policy discretion in the future. From the responses of DSS Directors and Work First Administrators, however, a slightly different pattern emerged. On average, the DSS Directors and Work First Administrators were less desirous of additional authority than the other county actors.

Previously, we indicated that County Commissioners and County Managers held similar views on many questions raised in the survey. This conclusion regarding the Policy Generalists also held true in queries about past, present,

and future levels of desired county welfare-related policymaking authority. These county officials perceived past levels of policymaking authority as moderate, yet still well below the perceptions of DSS Board Chairs and DSS Directors. Figure 2 displays the sharp upward and precisely parallel pattern in the averages for Commissioners and Managers' responses over the present and future time periods (a 23% increase). These actors clearly desired more welfare-related policymaking responsibility at the county level.

As suggested earlier, members of the Social Services Community were considered to be sources of leadership in the implementation of welfare reform. However, the results concerning county-state authority relations suggest that these groups of officials diverge concerning the degree to which they seek additional county policymaking power. More generally, the average responses of DSS Directors and Work First Administrators highlighted the mixed and possibly ambivalent viewpoints that different actors bring to bear on questions surrounding second-order devolution within the domain of welfare policy. Perhaps, however, their responses are reflecting the difficulties associated with dramatic changes to their job responsibilities, including a new concentration on employment-based programs and training for welfare clients.

This cautionary stance by DSS Directors and Work First

**Figure 2. North Carolina County Officials:
Welfare Reform Authority Levels**



Administrators presents several interesting questions concerning preferences for additional policymaking authority. For example, how much authority was too much for the Social Services Community at the county level? Why do members of the Social Services community have such differing viewpoints regarding future levels of desired policymaking authority than Policy Generalists? What might state legislators learn from this variation in opinions?

As shown in the fourth bar of Figure 1 and the last column of Figure 2, we also extended this inquiry beyond the realm of welfare reform policies and queried whether county officials wanted more policymaking authority for programs other than Work First. The mean for all respondents was moderately high at 5.6. County Commissioners showed the strongest support (5.9) for additional authority in other policy arenas, followed closely by County Managers (5.6), County Social Services Board Chairs (5.6), and DSS Directors (5.0).⁵ These results confirmed the preferences of county officials for further expansions of policymaking capabilities. The moderately high support for more authority indicates that county officials have not been dissuaded by their county's experience with welfare reform and recognize the possible utility of devolution to other policy arenas in the future.

Standard versus Electing Counties. Surprisingly, the breakdown between Electing and Standard Counties on these same authority questions provided few differences.

In light of the heated debates and rhetoric surrounding the Electing versus Standard distinction at the state level and in many counties, one would expect to find significant differences between these counties, particularly concerning present and future levels of policymaking authority. After all, the state legislature's devolution experiment presumably gave Electing Counties more authority to change, innovate, and creatively respond to welfare-related policy problems in their counties. We found, however, only relatively minor differences in the opinions of Electing and Standard County officials with the largest differences observed for the present levels of authority. Electing Counties perceived level of authority was at 4.8 and Standard Counties slightly lower at 4.4. As for the importance of having more welfare policymaking power in the future, the Electing and Standard Counties were dead even at 5.2 on the 0-7 scale.

For future levels of desired welfare policymaking authority, the mean for Electing Counties was 5.7 and Standard Counties 5.6. In addition, Electing and Standard Counties scored quite similarly, on average, concerning their desire for more policymaking authority in other arenas. The *Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform* project's 23 in-depth reports provide some insights on this conundrum. These reports, which were completed by 11 researchers from across North Carolina, were commissioned in part to capture the nuances of the Standard versus Electing County decision process.⁶ The reports indicated that the use of the newly devolved authority

and the proposed implementation strategies in many Electing Counties were quite similar to the Standard Counties. As a result, we would therefore expect similar scores on perceived levels of policymaking authority.

One might argue that these results are perhaps the most negative ones relative to the utility of devolution as a policy solution. While Electing Counties were given more authority than Standard Counties, including the freedom to set their own benefit levels and create completely new agencies to implement welfare programs, none of the Electing Counties opted to pursue either of these options. The motivation behind the Electing versus Standard distinction was to promote innovation, push policymaking authority even closer to the people and empower county officials to a greater degree. The officials in these counties, however, do not appear to have embraced these objectives, as reflected in the negligible differences between perceptions of authority between Standard and Electing Counties. The utility of devolution as a policy solution might not be as grim as previously implied, however. Perhaps, one might argue, devolution through the Standard and Electing County distinction is still in the process of evolution. Only time and further examination will reveal the true utility of the Electing County experiment as a vehicle for more successful and innovative policymaking.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF WORK FIRST ADMINISTRATORS

Work First Administrators specifically felt the impact of shifts in policymaking authority. In the case of North Carolina welfare reform, Work First Administrators witnessed their daily work activities dramatically change from ensuring program eligibility to assisting clients in their search for employment. Perhaps even more significantly, the Tracking project's 23 case studies also pointed to a pervasive change in the mindset of county DSS employees. In fact, there appeared to be a definitive culture shift in the provision of assistance to poor families in North Carolina counties. These reports noted the movement towards greater community involvement and collaboration to increase work opportunities for adults receiving cash assistance.

Our survey results focused on the changing environment for Work First Administrators. Our aim was to understand better how these operating-level county officials responded to their shifting responsibilities. Work First Administrators were asked a series of seven questions concerning how they restructured work responsi-

bilities and relationships as a result of county, state, and national welfare reform legislation. As shown in Figure 3, Work First Administrators responded that *Forming Partnerships with Other Agencies* (6.0), *Documentation of Program Results* (5.8), and the *Reeducation/Reorientation of Program Staff* (5.6) all became high priorities after the state welfare reform legislation. In reality, as evident in Figure 3, Work First Administrators responded at a moderate to high level on all questions, indicating substantial shifts away from their former set of work tasks toward a new set of responsibilities that consists of a broader approach to assisting the poor.

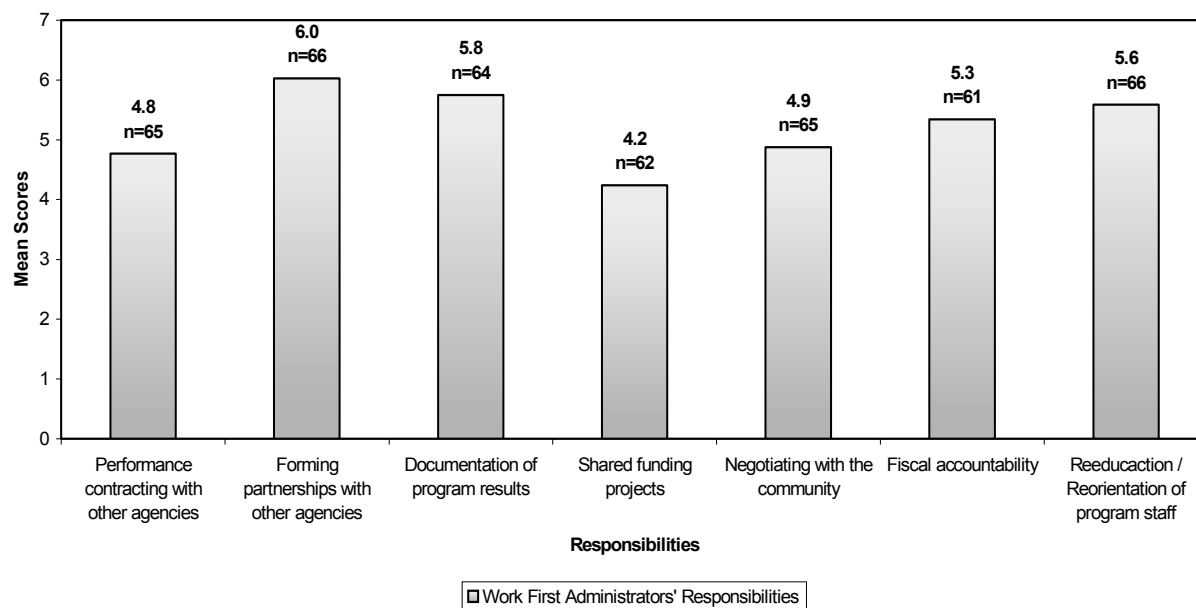
Additionally, we asked whether the Work First Administrators considered these seven shifts in responsibilities, which are highlighted in Figure 3, as positive changes or negative changes. The overwhelming response from Work First Administrators highlights the positive nature of these changes. For example, 92% of respondents ranked *Former Partnerships with Other Agencies* as a positive change in their jobs, 77% ranked *Fiscal Accountability* as positive, and 82% of respondents pointed to the positive impacts of the *Reeducation/Reorientation of Program Staff*. These responses from Work First Administrators characterize the ground-level implementation of recent welfare reforms as extremely positive at best, and at least, as moving in a clearly constructive direction.

CONCLUSIONS

How do county officials view their expanded policymaking authority due to second-order devolution? The 1997 decentralization of welfare policymaking authority in North Carolina provided an appropriate venue for an empirical assessment of county officials' perceptions of devolution. The *Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform* project undertook this challenge and collected opinion data from five county officials to track the perceived success of devolution and the desire for additional policymaking authority in the 100 North Carolina counties. The information in this article provides a closer look at the perceptions and preferences of the county-level government officials who participated in the implementation of the 1997 legislation. Various themes surfaced in this article that merit particular attention, and we will conclude by re-emphasizing four main points with a specific focus on their implications for second-order devolution as a policy solution.

First, a definitive distinction emerged between the perceptions of the Social Services Community (DSS Direc-

Figure 3. Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform:
Degree of Change in Work First Administrators' Responsibilities



tors, DSS Board Chairs, and Work First Administrators) and Policy Generalists (County Commissioners and County Managers). The Social Services Community appeared intimately involved with welfare reform, while Policy Generalists seemed more removed from the process. A second theme involves an examination of the differences, or to be more precise – the lack of differences between the perceptions of officials in Standard Counties versus Electing Counties. While one may assume that sharp differences existed between these counties, the survey data reveals far fewer distinctions than originally hypothesized. Third, the results highlight the changing nature of county-state relationships in North Carolina. County officials reported greater levels of authority after the 1997 welfare reforms, yet expressed mixed views regarding additional policymaking authority in the future. Fourth, there was a perceived organizational culture change in the county Departments of Social Services. The survey results supported a radically different set of job responsibilities for Work First Administrators after the 1997 welfare reforms and a reaching out by Work First Administrators to community groups and resources to build coalitions to assist the poor.

As a direct or indirect result of first- and second-order devolution, many changes have occurred in North Carolina's welfare policy arena. Caseloads have declined dramatically. Counties have reorganized their mechanisms for the provision of social services as well as imple-

mented countless innovative new programs. Non-profit organizations and local religious groups have assumed a new place at the welfare policymaking table. Budgets have been reconfigured, organizational structures have been revamped, and new players have emerged as critical leaders within counties related to the formation and implementation of welfare policy.

While devolution is often touted for these changes and for pushing policymaking power "closer to the people," the findings in this article indicate that it is important to remember that county officials hold dissimilar perceptions regarding the impacts of devolution. In other words, devolved authority affects county administrators and elected county officials in different ways. Additionally, devolution poses a definitive challenge to newly empowered officials. It requires that these officials recognize the presence of new players in the welfare arena, the changing nature of state-county relations, and the creation of new responsibilities for leaders within the policymaking process. If devolution is more universally applied to other policy arenas, then additional systematic research must examine how county-level officials respond to additional authority. It is our hope that our findings and conclusions will begin to fill a gap in our understanding of how sub-national governments perceive the challenges and changes associated with devolution.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The ultimate decision on which counties would become Electing was completed by the state legislature with a lottery. Each of the 25 counties desiring Electing County status were placed in a hat and the House Sergeant-at-Arms drew county names until the state-mandated limit of 15.5% of all statewide welfare cases was reached. Both the media and Senate Democrats criticized this method of selection.

² The *Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform* project is an inter-institutional effort to understand better the decentralization of policy-making powers and autonomy in North Carolina counties after the devolution of power by the 1996 national and 1997 state legislation. This project examines how counties transform their organizations, policies, and decision making as they implement welfare reform due to devolution. As part of the broader *Tracking* project, we supplemented this empirical data with contextual information from 23 North Carolina county case studies by 11 Faculty Associates at University of North Carolina institutions. These studies provide a rich, contextual look at the ramifications of devolving power to counties, how county actors respond to changes in responsibilities and workload, and the dif-

fering goals of major county actors. These reports and general themes from the reports are available on the project's website: www.unc.edu/depts/welfare.

Additional Information on the Survey Methodology: Five sets of North Carolina county officials were surveyed from May 2000 to January 2001 (County Commissioners, County Managers, Department of Social Services Directors, Department of Social Services Board Chairs, and Work First Administrators). A total of 418 county officials responded from 99 of 100 North Carolina counties. The County Commissioners and DSS Board Chairs were both contacted only by mail. Two follow-up surveys were sent to the County Commissioners, and three were sent to the DSS Board Chairs in the summer of 2000.

In addition to mail contact, the County Managers were given the option of responding to a web-based version of the survey as well. Two follow-up surveys were mailed, and two e-mail notifications were sent. Per their request, the surveys for the DSS Directors and Work First Administrators were all completed using the web-based survey methodology. In addition, two follow-up e-mail contacts were initiated for these officials. Following the survey's completion, because the response rate for County Commissioners was quite low, we performed a random phone survey of 12.5% of the non-respondents during December 2000 and January 2001. These 35 Commissioners responded to a set of attribute questions. For this group of County Commissioners (n=35), we tested the difference(s) on these attributes from the mail survey respondents (n=146). We found no statistically significant differences on any of these attributes: years of service (p=.151), political party (p=.262), gender (.760), years of county residence (p=.805), and years of North Carolina residence (p=.435).

³ Each county has a Social Services Board that oversees social services in the county. The Board also has the authority to appoint the Director of Social Services (DSS) Director. The Board is usually comprised of one or two county commissioners as well as other appointees from across the county.

⁴ "Work First" refers to North Carolina's employment-based welfare program. See the North Carolina Department of Social Services website for further details: http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/ei/ei_hm.htm

⁵ This question was not asked of Work First Administrators.

⁶ See Endnote 2 for more details about the in-depth reports.

Levine Prize for the best book in public policy and administration

Deadline: 15 March 2002

From: Paul J. Quirk

Dear Colleagues:

Make sure to encourage your publisher to submit any book you have written that you would like to have considered for the Charles H. Levine Memorial Book Prize. The Levine Book Prize is awarded every year for the best book published in the fields of public policy and administration. The prize is sponsored by the International Political Science Association's Research Committee on the Structure of Governance. It is named in honor of Charles H. Levine, who was a distinguished member of the Research Committee and served on the editorial board of its official journal, *Governance*. To be eligible for this year's prize, books must have a copyright date of 2001.

The criteria for the award are as follows:

1. that the book makes a contribution of theoretical and/or practical significance in the field of public policy and administration;
2. that it takes an explicitly comparative perspective, or produces findings whose implications for comparative research are highly significant; and
3. that it appears in an accessible writing style and form so that both scholars and practitioners might find it valuable to their research and work.

Publishers should send copies of the book with a brief letter of nomination to each of the three members of the selection committee by March 15, 2002.

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Aaron Wildavsky Enduring Contribution Award

Section members are invited to nominate a book or article for the Aaron Wildavsky Enduring Contribution Award. This award is for a book or article published in the last ten to twenty years that continues to influence the study of public policy.

Your nomination should be sent to the chairperson of this year's Wildavsky Award Committee, Helen Ingram. Her contact information is: Helen Ingram, Department of Political Science, University of California at Irvine, Irvine, CA 92697-7075; telephone = 949-824-1434; e-mail = hingram@uci.edu. The deadline for nominations is April 15, 2002.



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Abstracts, announcements, and other information to be printed in the next issue of *Policy Currents* should be sent via email attachment (Word file) or mailed by

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