The politics of implementation: Egocentric value maximization as strategic action

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Egocentric Value Maximization as a Strategic Action

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ABSTRACT

Moulton and Sandifort's (2017) Strategic Action Field Framework (SAF) positions political authority, exogenous shocks, and the social skills of organizational actors as the drives of stability and changes in coordinated policy implementation. When political authority is weak, how can social skills compensate and drive the implementation process? In this study, we studied a stratified sample of public managers and other organizational actors to examine policy implementation in county level Community Child Protection Teams in North Carolina. We find that when there is weak political impetus and little exogenous funding or interest, policy actors can use social skills to maximize agency level benefits, minimize agency level transaction costs, and create policy at the local level in ways that benefit member agencies.

Keywords: policy implementation, organizational management

For some scholars, the science of implementing policy is a defining characteristic of public management research. Thus, there lies great potential for existing literature in the organizational theory domain to help inform and underscore the elements of existing policy implementation frameworks (Bozeman, 2013). In this paper we use elements of Moulton and Sandifort's Strategic Action Field (SAF) framework (2015) to combine insights insight from policy implementation models and organizational theory to explore policy implementation and coordination at the bounds of the framework's tools for stability and change. Specifically, we examine the tools public managers might use to implement mandates when political and economic authority is low, and when exogenous shocks are absent.

Mandates are often used to produce abstract policy objectives (Howlett, 2018) but the intentional ambiguous design of the mandate often produces problems with the implementation process. The management literature tells us that top down processes that rely on mechanistic tools, such as mandates, often lead to high levels of uncertainty (i.e., instability and change) (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Matland, 1995). Successful implementation is contingent upon understanding the politics of the implementation process, but the actors charged with policy implementation (often within and across organizations) can have little clarity about the legislative or economic goals when mandates are left ambiguous (CITE). When left to make sense of abstract mandates with limited political or economic authority (or clarity), actors develop tools to make sense of the implementation process (deLeon & deLeon, 2002). When there are multiple actors, the processes of policy implementation can largely be seen as a Strategic Action Field (SAF), where the processes of collective action are central to coordinating policy change and direction (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011).

Organizations can largely make up the strategic action field, and the general understanding of policy implementation processes in a strategic action field should consider organizational and management theory as a central theme (Sandifort & Moulton, 2014; Weible & Carter, 2017). In ambiguous policy contexts, bottom up approaches can be useful since top down mechanisms can be weak (deLeon & deLeon, 2002). Thus, the focus on organizations and managerial processes can be important. The organizations within the domain of particular strategic action fields use various tools to coordinate the public policy process, and in policy domains with low economic and political authority, coordinated actions can rely largely or managerial and organizational processes (Sandifort & Moulton, 2017). In policy domains with low economic and political authority, what organizational tools are used coordinate and implement mandate public policy?

To explore, we examine organizational actors in Community Child Protection Teams (CCPTs) in North Carolina. CCPTs are statutorily mandated county level interagency collaborative structures. Formed in 1992, the policy mechanism functions as a tool for coordinating state level child welfare policy with county level child welfare policy challenges. North Carolina is a county-administered state, and implementation of both state and federal policy is largely the responsibility of each county. Since coordinating child welfare policy typically involves multiple agencies, CCPTs mandate collaboration across county level agencies to coordinate child welfare policy across the county level strategic action field (citation). However, CCPT coordination is a generally low priority for policy makers, and the policy mandate is unfunded and largely ungoverned. In short, the given policy mandate was not only ambiguous, but there are low levels of state level buy-in and monitoring. This has led to high

variance in success of implementation of the CCPT mandate across the 100 county Strategic

Action Fields in North Carolina.

We take advantage of the county level variance in CCPT functioning in North Carolina to

explore what drives in policy implementation in the shared absence of strong political and

economic exogenous impetus. We position CCPTs as an apparatus of organizations and actors

charged with implementing and navigating child welfare policy, and explore the driving forces

when both political authority and exogenous impetus are weak. What organizational and

management tools drive implementation in the strategic action field when political and

exogenous drivers are inconsistent?

Theoretical Framework

Despite decades of discussion between and among organizational and policy

implementation scholars (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Elmore, 1978), the role of

organizational and management theory in public policy processes is largely undeveloped

Bozeman, 2013). Moulton and Sandfort (2017) put forth three components to capture

management processes in policy implementation: program intervention which focuses on the

processes for service delivery (e.g., methods of coordination, or system operations); the scale of

analysis which refers to the organizational structure, operations, and mechanisms for delivery;

and, the mechanisms that create stability and change (i.e. political influence, social skills, or

exogenous shocks). We focus our study on the mechanisms that create stability and change.

The dynamics between and among individual actors are important for explaining stability

and change in policy processes when there are high levels of uncertainty (Ingram & Schneider,

1990; Lynn & Robichau, 2013; May, 1993). Social power is leveraged, information is shared,

and self-interest put forth among individual actors (Sabatier & Mazemanian, 1980: Yanow, 1987).

Moulton and Sandifort's (2017) framework, however, better interjects organizational actors and managerial hierarchies as central to the policy implementation process, putting forth a foundation for exploring the linkages that are common drivers of organizational coordination and policy implementation. The SAF describes these common linkages as political authority, exogenous shocks, and social values. *Political authority* is the impetus for the coordination process, and it is typically related to policy mandates or legislative power. *Exogenous shocks* refer to a change in the external environment such as changes in funding, instability in partnerships, and limited direction that can function to drive coordination. *Social skills* refer to where members use brokering and bridging tools to drive cooperation for the coordination of policy implementation.

Moulton and Sandifort's SAF posits that within each setting there are multiple sources of authority that function to provide field actors with a process for coordination for a given service intervention. Social skills can play a crucial role: field actors will utilize social skills to compensate for ineffective service interventions by "leveraging existing authority sources in new ways, facilitating the creation of additional sources of authority, or capitalizing on exogenous shocks to create new authority for action" (Moulton and Sandfort, 2017, p. 156).

Based on the assumption that all three elements (political authority, exogenous shocks, and social skills) interact to legitimate program goals, we juxtapose these elements as drivers for policy coordination and action based on stability and change. The political economy of CCPTs provides a unique opportunity to examine the following research questions: when political

authority is weak and without the presence of meaningful shocks, do social skills pick up the slack as drivers of stability and change? How do strategic actors use social skills?

North Carolina's Community Child Protection Teams as a Strategic Action Field

The SAF guided our interview protocols, seeking to decipher the usefulness of each driver. Essentially, we want to parse out if CCPT activity is driven by the law (i.e. political authority), changes in policies or funding (i.e. exogenous shocks), the ways agencies and community organize socially (i.e. social skills), or because of the shared local beliefs (i.e. value). Mapping CCPT behavior onto the SAF themes is particularly useful for framing recommendations. In as much, the extent to which CCPT activity is responsive to political authority, economic and policy shocks, and internal social organization strategies should help inform the degree to which legislation, shifts in economic authority, and engaging local CCPT social values are successful at encouraging active, responsive CCPTs.

Methodology

A two phased research design was employed to garner a better understanding of initial survey results. The first phase involved examining data collected in a longitudinal survey instrument that was administered during 2014-2016. We then constructed a quantitative measure of CCPT activity level for each county. Survey respondents reported the frequency of attendance for each member in degrees ranging from Never (0) to Very Frequently (5). The frequency of attendance was multiplied by whether or not that statutorily required member was involved (1-5). This process produced an "activity score" ranging from 0-44 for each county. We took the three-year moving average of this score as an indicator of the success level of each county CCPT and separated the scores into quartiles. We then calculated overall frequency of participation to

produce a 3-year moving average and divided it into quartiles (inactive-highly active). Next, we sought to examine the relationship between success and resources.

Using an exogenous measure of county wealth, we tiered the counties in North Carolina by resource level. The resource tiers were imported from the North Carolina Department of Commerce where each of the 100 North Carolina counties were assigned scores ranging from 1 (Most distressed) to 3 (least distressed) (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2017). We then analyzed the relationship of county resource level and CCPT participation level and found that CCPT success was unsurprisingly slightly correlated with county resource levels. Using ordered logistic regression, we estimated the actionable changes that were implemented to improve CCPT success level, but we found no statistical relationship between these actionable changes and CCPT level of success for a given county: counties with higher reported action steps were no more likely to have more successful CCPTs. To fully explore the correlation between CCPT success and county resource levels we initiated the second phase: qualitative interviews.

To identify participants for the qualitative interviews we used a list of CCPT chairs generated by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services as a sampling frame. We randomly selected three low participation counties (from resource tiers 1 and 2), two middle participation counties (from resource tiers 1 and 2), and three high participation counties (from resource tiers 1 and 3). To recruit participants, we contacted three CCPT chairs, by email, from each success quartile, stratifying participants by both county and resource level. Participating chairs were asked for references to identify additional participants. Additional participants were contacted via email. We interviewed county level CCPT chairs and members (N=20). Participants provided consent prior to the interview; written consent was obtained for in-person interviews and verbal consent, for phone interviews. Skype audio recording was used to conduct

telephone interviews, and digital audio recorders were used for in-person interviews. The

transcripts were then transcribed by research team members.

The interviews (n = 20) took a phenomenological approach and were semi-structured in

design. Phenomenological qualitative inquiry was chosen because it complements the need to

gain a nuanced understanding of individual experiences to produce collective experience and

meaning (Husserl, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994). We were primarily interested in the drivers

of CCPT coordination, and the degree of political and exogenous drivers of stability and change.

We explicitly asked about CCPT processes and membership, linkages to county and state policy,

constraints, and family participation (See interview protocol in Appendix A).

Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were linked to the strategic action

framework corresponding to CCPT processes, county and state policy, and family participation.

The codebook was developed using the elements of the SAF that create stability and change (i.e.

political influence, social skills, and exogenous shocks). The first step of the process involved

encoding the data using three, general a priori codes based on stability and/or change: political

influence, social skills, and exogenous shocks. A second scan of the data was guided by

secondary codes developed from the SAF (see Table 1). During this second phase of data coding,

additional themes emerged that fit within the context of the child codes.

[Insert Table 1]

Fereday and Cochrane (2006) utilize this approach because it allows the integration of deductive

and inductive analysis. This is useful when the goal is to employ theory to highlight the parts of a

framework that explains phenomena. This method allows the researcher to organize data in a

way that illustrates the linkages from data to the theory and from the theory to all of the data

pertaining to the theory (Fereday and Cochrane, 2006; Richards & Morse, 2007). Each transcribed interview was coded by two researchers and points of disagreements in code were resolved through consensual agreement.

Findings

Based on the data, it was evident that CCPTs were mainly functioning to respond to limited policies (i.e. political authority) or funding (i.e. exogenous shocks). Policy mandates were not a huge driver of change or stability because partners rarely regarded CCPTs as a conduit for state-level change. Most participants expressed frustration with low levels of state guidance, buy-in and limited state funding. The following section provides an overview of some of those frustrations expressed by participants.

Low political authority

Interestingly, all of the participants conveyed having a limited understanding of the value of CCPTS to the State of North Carolina. Participants reported an unclear and under developed linkage that often led to frustrations with understanding their roles. As a result, interviewees consistently specified the need for opportunities to increase understanding (i.e. training, workshops, conferences). One participant stated:

> "I think we operate at a high level but, maybe we're just flying blind because
>
> …we've never had anyone come and observe or do anything, offer any insight or
>
> you know, coaching or anything. Um, so, I think that there may be some other
>
> counties out there that are not operating at the same level…and, they may not
>
> even know it."

We heard consistent complaints of little to no feedback being received from the state. For example, one interviewee stated, "on a statewide level I'm not sure that we've ever gotten any

direct feedback". Another interviewee provided details on a specific initiative directed towards seeking feedback from the state in regard to systemic issues at the county level that needed more attention. The participant described the state response below.

> "A few years back we did write a letter…and we got back…a wishy-washy letter…thanking us for our input…they didn't think that this was an issue that needed to be addressed at this point in time."

Limited exogenous shocks

Participants also consistently cited that inadequate funding, or a lack thereof, limited the ability of CCPTs to function. Coordination activities require resources, time, and energy. Participants reported that Child Fatality Protection Team (CFPT) partnerships were beneficial because it provided some of the necessary resources such as meeting space, funds for marketing materials, and funds for refreshments during meetings. One participant discussed the significant contributions being made by CFPT partnerships:

> "…they will, they send their communications person over so she has been able to, um, when we have, you know, education campaigns that we were are interested in running, for example that safe sleep campaign that I was talking about, um, they come over so they utilize their communications team time, resources, energy to um, put out those types of things, like, rack cards and you know, buses, you know, signs on the side of buses…"

Interviewees also reported that many participants primarily focus on finding solutions and information that are organization specific. Many participants reported on how this limited the process because it was virtually impossible to focus on systemic issues. In addition, participants

stated that it was hard to maintain a systemic focus because few recognized the CCPT as a

conduit for state-level change.

> "Um, the only one's I've heard a couple people say is that the um, part of
>
> the, the stakeholders want to focus on only the medical um, so- and then part
>
> of them want to focus on the social issues."

Low Buy-In. There were consistent reports across all of the counties about limited

attendance from law enforcement personnel. When discussing law enforcement personnel

participants often stated that, "…they just don't see how it was beneficial to them".

Largely, there were two consistent themes related to attendance: mandates were not

effective and problems focus was mainly driven by organizational self-interest. Mandates were

not effective for improving participation, it is essentially the "state saying, "Thou shalt do X, Y,

Z" [which] is unlikely to change things but if groups wanted to have conversations" by because

of some valuable benefit they would. In addition, mandated members would typically arrange for

delegates to attend CCPT meetings on their behalf. Often times these delegates are not as

invested and did not make a significant contribution. As one participant remarked:

> "And so I think it would be nice that if, if directors are going to appoint delegates
>
> that they at least have conversations with people in their agency to see who
>
> actually is interested in being a part of it."

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> needed to be addressed at this point in time."

Collaboration fatigue. Participants described collaboration fatigue as a major problem.

Public agencies in the state are a part of other action fields (i.e. youth advocacy, foster care,

juvenile crime prevention council, school board meetings, etc.), and the competing demands of

other strategic action fields strained CCPT participation. Consequently, in counties where CCPT

stability was low agency leaders frequently instead attended collaborations that are found to be

more useful, either leaving the action field without the presence of the agency or delegating

participation to street-level bureaucrats in the agency. We gleaned that this was because the main

benefit of attending CCPT meetings is to share information and resources useful to the particular

agencies involved. An agency director with waffling attendance shared with us, for instance, that

truancy information she needed from the county school district to help inform her cases was

more usefully obtained by sitting on the school board:

> "Um, right now all I, it wha- what looks like kind of a challenge is …through
>
> CCPT, I'm currently sitting on their, uh, meeting board things for those, like
>
> truancy so I'm already meeting with the school monthly."

So, participants largely attended the particular apparatus that best served the needs of their

respective agency. If CCPTs had an advantage over other strategic action fields, members

prioritized using the CCPT as a policy implementation tool. Otherwise, many of the mandated

members of the SAF prioritized other conduits for child welfare policy implementation. Child

welfare work is difficult, and agencies are under resourced and stretched thin with

responsibilities and policy implementation with drastic consequences for children and families.

In this setting, when time is constrained and agencies can use any apparatus to implement the

same sets of policies with the same sets of actors even the presence of free lunch could mean a

different strategic action field could take priority over another. One participant reported:

> "Juvenile crime prevention council meets…but they, they supply lunch when they
>
> meet and I know that's ridiculous that, that you go there and you eat for free and
>
> they have really good participation of, I mean of all the key players. They come
>
> and they um, have time to talk to each other and that meeting takes more than an
>
> hour, but nobody really minds because you're getting fried chicken and [laughs]."

Drivers of change and stability: Using social skills to support policy coordination

Our findings indicated that CCPTs mainly utilize social skills for policy coordination in

response to limited exogenous shocks and limited political or economic authority. These social

skills weren't usually used in isolation, however. Instead, they had a vector: the agencies in the

strategic action field used their social skills to appeal to the values of other members in the field. Specifically, members upheld stability by prioritizing the goals and values of the individual agencies that were members of the field.

The context of the "values" that drove stability and change were interesting as well. Participants overall cited an overwhelming dedication to children, families, and child welfare policy by members within the strategic action field. However, participants reported values linked to the well-being of children and families even in CCPTs that were poorly or not at all functioning. What seemed to drive stability and change, however, was the degree to which members of the SAF could either gain agency level benefits or minimize costs.

Political authority was low, and most participants neither understood the state statute well nor understood the ways local engagement would be used to drive state policy. Thus, relying on policy mandates were not an effective tool for creating change or stability. In fact, all of the participants described efforts to coordinate compliance with the state mandate as a burden to the functions of the CCPT.

We found evidence of the interplay between social skills and value building as key drivers of stability and change. Specifically, teams sought to integrate CCPT and Child Fatality Protection Team (CFPT) structures. Integrating the teams through an informal process of relationship building allowed CCPTs to deal with the main challenges: information sharing and problem solving at the agency level, collaboration fatigue, and emphasis on implementation and change of local policy when linkages to state policymaking is unclear (i.e. "going local"). Value was maximized through each of these efforts by focusing on agency specific goals.

Integrating CCPT and CFPT structures

In our sample, we found that most counties had CCPTs that were combined with CFPTs. The integration of the CCPT and CFPT structures provided positive benefits for both groups. For starters, attendees were associated with both CCPT and CFPT teams. Integrating both teams helped to align services, while also providing diverse expertise. This approach helped to remedy the issue of having limited resources and information (i.e. exogenous shocks). Likewise, participants remarked:

> "the biggest thing that we talk about…is open communication…we have to
>
> request all these records and then, that's a nightmare for everybody."

Funding and resources were an additional benefit to partnering with CFPTs. Partnering with CFPTs provided access to funding to help solve local issues, marketing materials, meeting space, and refreshments for meetings. While access to funding functions to provide support for marketing and solving local issues, having the ability to offer refreshments during meetings seemed to provide an incentive to attend meetings. For example, one participant responded: Most strikingly, the value that is being created is being accomplished through the CFPTs. CFPT partnerships provided the added benefits of information sharing, networking, and coordinating local policy response. We found contrasting evidence in one county that chose to separate CFPT and CCPT structures to meet the state statute. As a result, this CCPT was barely functional.

> "It was reduced. It was still active but the DSS side of it was not very active. It
>
> was primarily um, health…With DSS attending but not really, um, moving cases
>
> through or, or using you know, using it as an evaluation tool for it's own
>
> performance."

Information Sharing and problem solving. Another positive aspect to integrating CCPT and CFPT structures is related to information sharing. This structure provided agencies

with a mechanism for coordinating activities to solve issues within the community but mostly to solve individual problems. One main function was to coordinate between other agencies to assist the department of social services or other agencies with difficult cases such as truancy, underage driving, drowning prevention. For example, one participant stated:

"I think it's more the exchange of information and um, kind of like fishing"

In addition, this structure provided a mechanism for creating alignment between multiple agencies which established a way to share information on specific cases. Clients/families are not always forthcoming about involvement with other agencies. These informal partnerships provided an alternative for sharing information given the lack of a state-wide data base. Many participants mentioned the need for a state-wide database that stored data on families as they moved across county lines.

"…you know it's such bigger systems issues…I think that the, the bigger issue is um, having systems within each of our areas that talk to each other and that are open for us to review."

"Going local". Participants often implemented changes to local policy when linkages to the state were unclear. Almost every participant reported feeling confused or frustrated with the nature of interaction with the state. As a result, CCPTs would implement changes to local policy in ways that signified value to them. One participant reported:

"School comes a lot but it seems like its because they have big issues with truancy that they need help solving"

Participants often reported the need to address concerns at the community level to ensure specificity of the solutions being implemented. This makes sense because we found that when

CCPTs didn't work it was because other collaborations were fulfilling their local needs. One

CPCT member remarked:

> "I think that you should be looking at the gaps in the service needs in the
>
> community and you should be advocating for um, getting those needs met and to
>
> have everyone in the table at the community- everyone possible, um, at the table
>
> so that you can talk about what's going on in your community and what needs to
>
> be addressed."

Implications

Our study extends the SAF Framework with an empirical examination of the relative

bounds of the drivers of organizational coordination and policy implementation. When there is

weak political impetus and little exogenous funding or interest, we find that policy actors can use

social skills to maximize agency level benefits, minimize agency level transaction costs, and

create policy at the local level.

The importance of this finding lies largely in the recent emphasis on managerial and

organizational processes that guide strategic action. Strategic action fields, when framed as

primary vehicles for collective action, are largely guided by political context, norms, and policy

beliefs (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). The emphasis on organizational theory in SAFs, fittingly,

has been guided by normative and institutional views perspectives of organization: the conduits

for social change in SAFs rest in shared beliefs and organization (citation).

Still, economic theory can play a pivotal role in SAFs too. Sandifort and Moulton (2015)

suggest that market logics can act as guides to strategic action, mostly exogenously as an

economic authority. We underscore the importance of economic logics with our findings, but we

find them *endogenously*. Economic authority in our sample was weak: the state does not fund

CCPTs. Most exogenous authority was weak, as there was little political enforcement or impetus as well (other than the presence of a statute.

The endogenous nature of economic forces was present in the reasoning of members of the Strategic Action Field and rooted in transaction costs (rooted in market *frictions* rather than an either exogenously clearing market, or exogenous efforts to impose a clearing market). The actors in the CCPT SAF were largely public agencies. Public agencies can face substantial transaction costs in conducting social value, including accessing difficult or protected information and navigating centralized (or decentralized) bureaucracy, and often act in ways to minimize organizational frictions in public service (Coupet, Albrecht, Williams, & Farruggia, 2019). So, while organizations indeed bring norms, values, and policy beliefs to bear in collective social efforts in public administration, we also find that, with weak exogenous influence, public service organizations can act to solve egocentric performance goals and reduce transaction costs. We found this egocentric impetus in a few different respects.

First, the county level CCPTs included actors that interacted with each other within and across other SAFs. Whether or not they participated in the CCPT SAF varied largely by they degree to which actors could use the SAF to solve pressing organizational problems. For instance, law enforcement agencies had low participation in counties where law enforcement and justice goals could not be pursued through the CCPT, despite the state mandate.

Secondly, participating organizations used social skills to engage in information sharing and strategic planning, but pursued information that again helped solve pressing egocentric agency goals. For instance, county social service agencies were almost universally frustrated about the unclear mandate and lack of training from the state for effective use of CCPTs, even in very active CCPT counties. In lieu of this guidance, social service agencies, mandated to

organize and lead CCPT activity, typically used meetings and planning to solicit information, advice and guidance from other CCPT members that would help difficult cases progress. One small county provided an interesting *ceteris paribus* of sorts. One CCPT member noted CCPT participation challenges were due to the presence of another county planning SAF with almost precisely the same members. The non CCPT SAF garnered participation because they served a fried chicken lunch!

Third, the state statute intended CCPTs to serve as a conduit to send information from the counties to the state level governance to inform and improve state child welfare policy. Participants complained of broken and incomplete linkages to the state. The state, for instance, solicited recommendations from each county but almost ever responded to recommendations and child welfare inquiries. Participants also noted, almost universally, that it was unclear that CCPTs were in any way guiding state policy. Active CCPTs, we found, then used the CCPT apparatus to drive *local* change and policy implementation in a way consistent with solving agency level problems. Inactive and nonfunctioning CCPTs reported *both* frustration with state level political buy in *and* unclear local value and usefulness for county level agencies.

We do not think this sort of egocentric strategic action is necessarily at odds with collective action and shared public values. We do not find an inherent tension our sample. Participants indicated strong public welfare orientation and commitment to child welfare almost universally, and egocentric actions were still very much in pursuit of public goals. We posit that the social welfare agency managers seeking information to guide tough family cases were acting in a manner consistent with the collective goal of improving child welfare policy implementation.

We do envision scenarios, however, where these tensions could be at odds. Some SAFs might include singularly focused organizations intent on maximizing goals, like profit or political power, that are at odds with other SAF actors. The use of social skills, or any other driver of change, where egocentric goals are at odds with collective action in a policy context would be a fruitful area of inquiry.

This study underscores the importance of social skills in the SAF, particularly in the presence of low exogenous impetus. We also think this study underscores the importance of engaging management and organization theory in the SAF collective action framework. We posit that the study's main contribution is the potential scope of organization theory that should be engaged in SAFs. Organizational entities in SAFs bring norms, institutions, and values, but also egocentric strategic management and efficiency goals. These are not necessarily in opposition to norms, values, and collective institutions brought to bear and can work in conjunction with organizational theories rooted in sociology and community psychology[1], but our findings suggest that theories of economic organization and institutional economics should be engaged.

Conclusion

This study explored policy implementation in the presence of low political buy in and limited exogenous economic authority. Using a stratified random sample of Community Child Protection Teams in North Carolina, we interviewed strategic actors to learn about primary policy implementation tools. We found that, when CCPTs functioned well, actors used social skills to build local capacity in a way that maximized egocentric value for the agencies in the SAF. We encourage future scholarship to engage economic organization and institutional

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[1] The authors of this study actually believe that many of social science's most interesting questions lie at the intersections of phenomena that sociology and economic theories explain well

economic theories as organizational drivers of stability and change, and that endogenous economic frictions common to public agencies can influence how and the degree to which public agencies engage in SAF collective action.

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Table 1

Strategic Action Field codes and findings

Preliminary codes	Secondary codes: *Processes* in place to support policy coordination & action	Findings
Sources of authority This refers to the degree of (perceived) influence from (1) political authority, (2) economic authority, (3) norms, or (4) values	- Describes feedback/influence from superiors or the state - Describes economic authority - Describes norms of participation, policy coordination and action - Describes any appeals to values that promote, policy coordination and action	- Limited feedback from superiors - Limited economic authority - Social norms function as authority to increase participation (checking in with needs of members, providing food, follow up emails etc.) - Values function to increase buy-in for members that saw value when it was evident

Social skills
Degree of use of tactics such as interpreting, framing, brokering, and bridging
	- Describes the skills or structures used to support policy coordination and action	- Evidence of tactics such as framing, brokering, bridging for agency level goals
		- Established relationships
		  ▪ Integrating CCPT and Child Fatality Protection Team (CFPT) structures;
		  ▪ Information sharing and problem solving at the agency level (in place of official training)
		- Local policy creation
		  ▪ Emphasis on implementation and change of local policy when linkages to state policymaking is unclear
		- Benefits received through interaction with other agencies (i.e. funding, marketing, resources, etc.)

Exogenous shocks
Degree of stability or instability; changes in funding, legislation, or field actors
	- Describes situations that cause stability or instability associated with policy coordination and action
	- Describes access to funding in relation to policy coordination
	- Describes legislation put in place to promote policy coordination and action
	- Describes field actors that are involved in promoting policy coordination and action
		- Social skills are used to secure additional resources through seeking out partnerships
		- Social skills used to increase emphasis on local policy creation when state mandate was unclear or inefficient
		- Instability in partnerships was remedied by creating partnerships that work for issues at hand
		  ▪ Mandates created collaboration fatigue
		  ▪ Mandates required delegated individuals to attend and they did not contribute
		- Buy-in and attendance: low participation
		  ▪ When value isn't evident it doesn't function as a source of authority
		  ▪ Participation motivated by self interest
		- Limited funding/No funding to support policy coordination
		    ▪ Remedied by participating in groups that have funding