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Public Managers in Integrated Services Collaboratives: What Works Is Workarounds

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Public managers in local integrated services collaboratives find that commitment to local partnership goals sometimes requires evading policy directives that are imposed by legislation or bureaucratic superiors. Using data that reveal what is often concealed, the author finds that these workarounds can be defined and identified and that they often revolve around central features of policy rather than marginal details. Workarounds emerge in the space created by certain managerial strategies and dispositions: treating directives as starting points for negotiation, using performance to justify discretion and manage risk, establishing local collaborative goals as an alternative locus of accountability, and distinguishing front-door services from back-door accounting. By aggregating data from clusters of workaround stories, researchers and practitioners can (1) identify policy flaws in need of repair, (2) illuminate tensions in the integrated service ideal, and (3) inform the enduring normative debate over administrative discretion and public accountability.

Increased reliance on service delivery networks that bridge bureaucratic silos has focused attention on how network governance dynamics differ from traditional theories of hierarchy (Kettl 2006; Salamon 2002). Public managers in local integrated service collaboratives must simultaneously navigate the constraints and opportunities posed by horizontal (network) and vertical (bureaucratic) relationships (Agranoff 2006). Often, this work takes place in interagency teams that must "barrier bust," translating generic bureaucratic signals into procedures that work for specific local priorities, settings, and/or clients (Gardner 2005). As Briar-Lawson and colleagues suggest, these "barrier-busting strategies also serve as data sources, and they enable learning, development, and quality improvement" (2001, 187).

When commitment to the goals of a local collaborative prompts evasion of vertically imposed legislative or bureaucratic directives, a common managerial response is a *workaround.* An alternative to either simple compliance or overt attempts to change the rules, workarounds are informal, situated practices that typically attract little attention (Ferneley and Sobreperez 2006). Workaround stories frequently stay underground because of their informal, ad hoc character and their potential to expose local managers to reprisal from compliance-oriented superiors (Ban 1995; Campbell 2011; Levin and Sanger 1994; O'Leary 2010; Storing 1980). However, under the right conditions, including respect for respondent confidentiality, workaround stories are told.

During the course of more than 2,000 confidential interviews with local leaders in California since 1996, we have come to understand that workarounds are an essential component of local policy implementation and a useful source of data for policy analysis.[1] Only one among many possible forms of local discretion, a workaround involves (1) a specific policy procedure or rule enforceable by bureaucratic superiors (2) that constrains or impedes local implementation and goal attainment and (3) prompts a local response that is counter to the procedure or rule but responsive to the underlying policy intent. This working definition emerged inductively from hearing, in multiple local settings, workaround stories like these:

> In dealing with mandated partner requirements, we are more flexible in order to be more strategic. Instead of trying to get the housing person the legislation calls for, which has been difficult, we find somebody who represents housing from another organization that wouldn't fit the letter of the law right now, but would be a good advocate and help us address some of the issues. (interview with local workforce manager, April 11, 2005)

> If a person is a dislocated worker, just laid off or fired, and they earned quite a bit of money— like the high salaried people that make $80,000 and up—it's hard for us to enroll them because we can't meet the *wage replacement* performance measure. No matter what kind of training we give them, they're not going to start at that

high level. The way we get around that is we tell them to go to a temporary agency, get any kind of job, and get a wage record with a pay stub. Then we can use that wage as opposed to the previous wage in determining the wage replacement measure. So we tell them, "Go to McDonald's, flip hamburgers, but just get your wage down so we can bring you into the program." (Interview with local One-Stop Career Center staff, May 15, 2005)

As stories like these accumulated, we began to see the promise of clustering and aggregating the stories to indicate common flaws in policy design or difficulties with certain implementation procedures (Campbell 2011). Previous literature suggests that such an approach has guided reform efforts in fields as diverse as information systems (Azad and King 2008), ergonomics (Courtright et al. 1998), health care (Johnson, Miller, and Horowitz 2008), nursing (Vestal 2008; Welch 2008), and warfare (Ambrose 1997).

Drawing on a unique database, this article analyzes a sample of workaround stories told by local public managers during an evaluation of how 10 California communities implemented a new federal workforce development program (the Workforce Investment Act) between 2000 and 2005. A key legislative objective was to overcome bureaucratic fragmentation by integrating workforce services. The interviewees were public managers and frontline staff who played either lead or key participant roles in the resulting local collaboratives. By identifying, coding, and aggregating their stories, we found that workarounds often revolve around central features of policy rather than simply marginal details and that they emerge in the space created by certain managerial strategies and dispositions.

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The next sections situate the workforce system research within the broader literature on integrated services and distinguish the term "workaround" from related concepts used by public administration scholars. The methods section describes our interview sample and the approach used to identify, code, and analyze workaround stories. The findings reported include (1) the frequency and scope of identified workaround stories, (2) the bureaucratic policy elements that frequently impede integration of local workforce services, and (3) the managerial strategies associated with crafting workarounds. The discussion section argues that by treating workaround stories as key data, researchers and practitioners can (1) backward map (Elmore 1979) to identify policy system flaws in need of repair, (2) deepen awareness of inherent paradoxes and tensions in the integrated service ideal, and (3) inform the enduring normative debate over administrative discretion and public accountability.

Integrated Services in Workforce Development Policy
Promoting collaboration among traditional service delivery silos through integration and partnership are fundamental themes in the Workforce Investment Act, legislation passed by the U.S. Congress in 1998. To overcome service fragmentation, the legislation called for systems alignment to bring together parallel, competing, and/or complementary local systems and programs. The ideal of integrated services was given a specific form in the legislation, which identified

17 *mandatory partners* and recommended their *colocation* at One-Stop Career Centers, a central point of entry for any citizen needing workforce services. Local Workforce Investment Boards were directed to promote workforce system integration.

In California, 33 separate federal, state, and local funding streams allocate $4 billion to $5 billion in support of local workforce programs (California Budget Project 2005, 1, 4), an indication of the scope of the service integration challenge. Local workforce collaboratives assemble resources from diverse sources, each with its own rules, regulations, and reporting requirements (Posner 2009, 238) and in the context of a dramatic overall decline in federal support. Taking inflation into account, the United States spent almost 10 times *less* on workforce programs in 2000 than it did in 1978 (Giloth 2004, 2–3). While this funding cut encouraged the search for collaborative efficiencies (King 1999), it also eliminated staff who helped work out partnership arrangements (California Budget Project 2005).

The interagency collaboratives at One-Stops have characteristics that are similar to a distinct organization with its own internal rules, regulations, procedures, and processes (Bardach 1998). But these collaborative arrangements are interlaced intricately with the mandates, customers, and performance requirements of each partner agency. Public managers in this setting often find themselves caught between the continuing pull of the agencies in which their jobs and most programmatic resources exist and their identity as participants in entrepreneurial networks that cross bureaucratic boundaries. The One-Stops we studied had widely differing experiences with the same state agency, based on the stance taken by that agency's local agents. Some agents chose fierce loyalty to their home agency and its rules and directives, adopting a compliance mind-set and often being viewed as uncooperative partners. Other agents made local collaboration their priority and were generally open to pursuing workarounds of home agency directives.

Distinguishing Workarounds from Related Terms
A common policy implementation storyline is the *misuse* of local managerial discretion to displace legislatively intended outcomes (Lipsky 1980; Pressman and Wildavsky 1973), but discretion also can be used to bypass implementation obstacles and realize stated policy objectives. Levin and Sanger identify "creative subversion" (1994, 217) as a key skill of innovative public managers, who operate partly outside the chain of command. Ban describes the "creative coper" (1995, 13) who refuses to be demoralized by bureaucratic constraints and works within or around the system to get things done.

The present use of the workaround concept is broader than that of Bardach (1977, 188), who defined "workaround" restrictively to designate a low-cost strategy to avoid implementation delays caused by "missing or imperfect program elements," but narrower than the full range of possible actions by which career public servants work against the wishes of their superiors, which O'Leary (2006, 2010) terms "guerilla government." A workaround also differs, in one

critical respect, from what Agranoff and McGuire term "adjustment seeking … seeking latitude in implementation by requesting some form of local asymmetrical treatment or program adjustment that is not technically or apparently within standards, rules, or guidelines, but nonetheless forwards the purpose for which both higher-level and local managers are working" (2003, 75). As defined here, a workaround occurs when this type of latitude is *seized* by local managers or staff rather than *granted* through formal requests or provisions.

Network management research often focuses on conflicts *within local networks* (O'Leary et al. 2009, 12; Posner 2009, 241), often paying less attention to how public managers navigate conflict *within the chains of command in their home agency.* As one workforce manager put it, "Sometimes the bureaucracies of each organization mitigate against the collaboration; these are the obstacles we try to overcome. If there is something we cannot do in a partnership manner, it is usually because of somebody else's rules and regulations, rather than our own recalcitrance" [interview with workforce partner staff, March 24, 2005]. The focus here is on what happens when the "somebody" in the way are officials at higher levels of a local manager's own agency.

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Research Methods

Our understanding of the workaround concept emerged inductively during semistructured, confidential interviews conducted as part of formal evaluations of how local communities implement federal, state, or foundation policy initiatives.[2] The interviews asked basic policy implementation questions: What is working? What isn't working? How? Why? The author and colleagues began to notice similarly structured stories appearing, unbidden, in multiple settings. The stories stood out as anomalous for three reasons. First, they countered common expectations about successful policy implementation, which is typically associated with variables controlled at the top, such as having a single task or mission, adequate resources, and clearly defined administrative responsibilities. Second, the stories were freely shared, even though our respondents had some reason to fear potential reprisals. Finally, the stories were entertaining, often told with pride of a sly local who had outsmarted the dull bureaucrats:

> While we were working hard locally to get all the partners to work together seamlessly, the head of one state agency issued a directive that their sign would be out in front of the One-Stop, blazing away. Well, our folks put together a sandwich sign that they would put out in front only when state folks came down to visit … when the state folks left we put it away. (Interview with local workforce board manager, July 7, 2005)

Sample of Interviews

To illustrate the nature and analytic utility of the workaround concept, we constructed a purposive sample of 69 interviews from among 300 conducted during an evaluation of California's workforce development system. The evaluation design featured intensive case study research in 10 local workforce areas, selected to reflect the considerable geographic and demographic diversity of the state. The sample of 69 interviews includes all 10 of the local Workforce Investment Board executive directors who hold overall responsibility for local implementation (one from each case study area), 19 interviews conducted with managers of One-Stop centers (local areas have varying numbers of centers, and not all center managers were interviewed), and 40 interviews with frontline staff employed by the One-Stop center or staff representatives of local partner agencies (four from each of the 10 areas, picked at random from the completed interviews). The last set of 40 interviews was analyzed in two waves. We first selected and analyzed 20 interviews, then randomly selected 20 more to confirm that we had achieved theoretical saturation, finding that the results did not shift significantly.

Coding and Analyses

In coding interview transcripts, we followed a three-step procedure. First, each transcript was read in its entirety, highlighting statements that indicated either local dissatisfaction with policy directives or uses of local discretion. In some cases, this required piecing together quotes from different parts of the interview that together constituted a single storyline (Peters 2010, 65; Riessman 1993; Seidman 1991). This yielded a total of 138 separate references. Second, the highlighted sections were reread, looking for evidence that linked dissatisfaction with a directive to the crafting of a specific local response. Generic statements indicating a predilection to evade directives but providing no specifics were not sufficient for inclusion (e.g., "our director has the ability to put the legislation aside and do what is important"; interview with Workforce Investment Board member, March 25, 2005). On the other hand, we did include workaround accounts in which the specific directives at issue were not mentioned but could be readily inferred. This narrowed the sample to 51 references. Third, the remaining stories were coded according to whether the exercise of discretion had a positive effect on the achievement of intended federal policy goals or whether they were better characterized as efforts to subvert or displace those goals in favor of purely local objectives. Although respondents were understandably more eager to share the former, we did encounter four accounts in which local discretion was clearly being misused, for example, by evading rules capping the percentage of federal funds that could cover administrative overhead: "Because local workforce programs here got absorbed into City and County governments, they take a huge slice off the top … it means fewer services are delivered" (interview with One-Stop Career Center director, April 14, 2005). There was more gray area in coding stories about how some local areas evaded competitive contracting requirements in order to keep certain long-standing service providers in place. In some rural areas, this seemed a reasonable accommodation, given that often only one organization had the capacity to deliver services. In other cases, this strategy served to deliver political spoils, whether or not the provider was providing the best or most efficient use of funds. We counted the former as a workaround, the latter as not.

Once we had delineated 47 stories meeting all three definitional criteria, we coded each story to identify the key policy element or requirement addressed. Finally, after considering broad patterns in

the stories and what we knew about their tellers, and informed by insights gleaned from the local workforce implementation study from which these stories were drawn (Campbell et al. 2006), we identified four common managerial strategies or dispositions associated with the use of workarounds.

Methodological Limitations

The findings are limited in three important respects. First, as Ban (1995) suggests, the nature of and frequency with which coping mechanisms such as workarounds are deployed may vary according to the organizational culture of different public agencies. California's workforce system is arguably a unique rather than a representative case, given the state's large size, the diversity of its local settings, and the widely perceived inadequacies of the statewide agencies charged with implementing the new workforce legislation (Pence and Campbell 2004). Overall, the California context creates pressures for local flexibility that are likely greater than in other settings. Second, because our evaluations were not designed specifically to ask for workaround stories, we have no reliable way to determine how frequently workarounds are used in day-to-day administrative practice, even for this sample. Getting an accurate picture of their frequency would be difficult, given their informality, their tendency to stay underground, and also tricky definitional issues: What counts as a bureaucratic constraint on local implementation? Which discretionary acts are simply permitted by legislative latitude, and which are seized by opportunistic managers? Where does one draw the line to exclude discretion that does not support policy goal attainment? Finally, our interview protocols were designed to ascertain how certain key policy provisions of the new workforce legislation were being locally implemented, thus shaping the types of workaround stories we heard and the policy elements to which they pointed. While the evidence supports the point that workarounds are prompted by central features of policy, it cannot support broader generalizations about which policy elements are most frequently at issue. Given these challenges, the goal of this article is relatively modest—to demonstrate that these stories can be defined and identified (however imperfectly) and to suggest how their analysis can inform policy development, implementation, and managerial practice.

Findings

This section first documents the frequency with which workaround stories were told and the range of issues that they involved. Second, it illustrates how workaround stories can be analyzed to identify flawed elements in policy designs or bureaucratic requirements. Finally, it describes four managerial strategies and dispositions associated with crafting workarounds.

Frequency and Range

As summarized in table 1, we found at least one mention of a workaround in 38 of the 69 interviews and a total of 47 workaround stories. Though this is an imprecise measure, the data suggest that workarounds are relatively common in practice—particularly as our protocols did not specifically prompt for workaround stories. Directors of local Workforce Investment Boards and managers of One-Stop centers were somewhat more likely to share a workaround story than frontline staff or career center partners. Based on these data, workarounds seem to be an important variable within the larger story of local policy implementation and managerial discretion.

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Workaround Stories by Local Area and Type of Respondent

Local Area	WIB Executive Directors	One-Stop Directors/ Managers	Local Partners/ Frontline Staff	Total
1	1/1	3/4	2/4	6/9
2	1/1	2/3	0/4	3/8
3	1/1	1/3	2/4	4/8
4	1/1	2/2	2/4	5/7
5	1/1	2/2	1/4	4/7
6	1/1	1/1	1/4	3/6
7	1/1	1/1	3/4	5/6
8	1/1	0/1	1/4	2/6
9	0/1	1/1	3/4	4/6
10	0/1	1/1	1/4	2/6
Totals	8/10	14/19	16/40	38/69
	80%	74%	40%	55%
Total stories coded	13	16	18	47

Note: Numbers in cells represent the number of interviews in which we found a workaround story out of the total number of interviews analyzed.

The accounts that we coded included brief, one-sentence references to relatively idiosyncratic matters, as well as longer narratives touching on fundamental issues for the workforce system. As an example of the former, here is how one respondent explained why his or her agency did not comply with requirements for colocating partners: "The state would not let our agency put our staff back into a newly acquired facility because the building is over a large basement and they did not get an engineer's certification as meeting seismic requirements" (interview with local representative of state agency, August 23, 2005). By contrast, consider the important policy considerations at stake in the following workaround story:

> The Department of Labor and the General Accounting Office are claiming that the workforce system is only serving a couple hundred thousand people a year across the nation. But they are only counting those who are formally enrolled in training programs because no one in the system has come up with a way to capture data on the much larger number of people who use our system of universal services. Universal access was one of the wonderful ideas in the legislation, but we've had no leadership on how to gather data to tell that part of the story and so the whole program is undervalued and at risk of further federal funding cuts. So we've developed our own tracking system and know that in just our one local area we are serving approximately 70,000 individuals with universal services each year. (Interview with local One-Stop Career Center manager, April 16, 2005)

Other respondents questioned whether this local area's workaround led to overcounting (e.g., "they include people who just come in to get a drink of water"). In either case, the stories point to a fundamental implementation flaw: no accurate method exists by which to document how many individuals are being served.

Using Workaround Stories to Identify Problematic Policies and Requirements

The policy cauldron that generates workarounds is made up of compliance demands, reporting requirements, and program rules that are pervasive, penetrating, and ever shifting. A survey of local Workforce Investment Board executive directors in California

Table 2 Policy Workarounds in Workforce Development Integrated Services Collaboratives

Policy Element	Policy Objective/ Directive	Local Workaround Examples
Mandated partners/ colocation of service $n = 14$	Better service coordination by colocating 17 *mandated partners* in local One-Stop Career Centers	• Ignore colocation—there is no physical space big enough to colocate, and it is easier/more cost effective to link partners by phone. • Mandated partners colocate, but many refuse to share the cost of facility infrastructure because of restrictions in their enabling legislation or budget constraints. Local areas are written up by state auditors but unable to change. • Union rules affecting some partners restrict the hours when the One-Stop can be open, so they create "satellite offices" staffed by one or two partners to provide after-hours services using mobile vans. • State agency directs local agents not to participate in One-Stops, but they continue anyway.
Client eligibility/ client services $n = 10$	Restrict services to certain clients	• As part of an interagency team, one agency helps a client who is not formally eligible for its services but is eligible for services provided by another partner. The partner agency reciprocates when appropriate, and each reports only their eligible clients. • Even though disability funding covers only those with the most severe disabilities, local staff use those funds to serve more moderately disabled individuals whom they see more frequently.
	Serve only eligible clients as defined by your agency	• A workforce director at a community college finds a way to provide needed training services for One-Stop customers sooner by short-circuiting the normal two-year college approval process for new courses.
Funding silos and restrictions $n = 9$	Ensure fiscal accountability	• A local area collaborative sets up a parallel nonprofit organization to compete for funds for which a public agency is not eligible and uses those funds to fill service gaps in the publicly funded system. • Provide informed estimates rather than real numbers in responding to state fiscal reporting deadlines, whose timelines are unrealistically short.
	Local partners report to multiple agencies, each with separate rules	• Business assistance services are required of all local areas, but no designated funding for this purpose is provided, so a percentage of all existing funding streams are siphoned off for this purpose. • Partner agencies pool funds to create flexibility in carrying funds over from one fiscal year to the next.
Governance $n = 8$	Ensure objective oversight of funds	• Ignored in rural areas where only one or two experienced providers exist; provision is simply unfeasible. • Small counties band together to create a joint administrative entity so that existing local service delivery contractors can continue.
	Entity managing contracts cannot provide services	• A local area creates a parallel 501(c)(3) organization to serve as a "virtual" firewall, but the nonprofit board members are the same as those of the entity that is delivering services. • Service delivery contractors in one local area are routinely allowed on the administrative entities' board because their expertise is considered invaluable to planning.
Performance accountability $n = 6$	Ensure that public funds lead to measurable outcomes; must meet federal performance measures or risk fiscal sanctions	• A network of agencies provides youth workforce services. Placement measures of those serving harder-to-employ youth are averaged with those serving more ready-to-employ youth, and one overall figure is reported for all providers. • In serving dislocated workers who have lost high-paying jobs, local workforce officials first help them get low-paying fast food jobs, after which the new job placement will be compared to the low wage rather than to the higher wage at their previous job. • The Workforce Investment Act requires local areas to provide universal services available to any citizen, but there is no official measure tracking the number of clients served, resulting in misleading reports to Congress. In response, local areas began creating their own systems to count universal service customers.

estimated that local staff spend approximately 40 percent of their time on federal and state compliance and reporting requirements (Campbell et al. 2006). Even if this self-reported figure is somewhat high, local officials are universal in viewing many of the bureaucratic demands that they face as unnecessary and counterproductive. Table 2 summarizes five policy or implementation elements that spurred the need for workarounds in this sample of interviews and gives examples of the types of workarounds that local officials crafted in response.

The 47 workaround stories center on major provisions of federal workforce legislation, including client eligibility requirements and performance measures, factors that research previously identified as barriers to service delivery integration (Ewalt 2004; Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill 1999). Ironically, the most frequently mentioned workarounds—present in more than one-quarter of the coded stories (14 of 47)—concern the two key mechanisms by which the Workforce Investment Act sought to promote integrated services: mandated partners and colocation of services. In practice, respondents felt that these mandates actually restricted rather than expanded local partnership options (Henig and Stone 2008). Managers prefer to let partnerships evolve organically, maintaining their relationships with preexisting partners and adding new partners only if they are willing or able to assist in significant ways.

An analysis of the stories on this topic shows how workarounds might be used to inform policy analysis (see table 3). For example, one frequently mentioned flaw in the mandatory partner concept is the lack of cost-sharing provisions for colocated partners. By noticing story clusters related to this theme and related comments from respondents, we can identify policy design flaws and/or possible remedies.

Workaround Strategies as a Managerial Craft
Finally, guided by lessons learned in previous implementation research (Campbell 2002, 2010, 2011; Campbell and Erbstein 2010; Campbell and Glunt 2006; Campbell et al. 2004; Campbell et al. 2006; Campbell and Wright 2005), we examined the workaround stories for what they reveal about the working strategies and dispositions of public managers. We identified four distinct approaches by which this sample of managers created the space in which workarounds emerged:

- Treating directives as starting points for negotiation
- Using performance to justify discretion and manage risk
- Establishing local collaborative goals as an alternative locus of accountability
- Distinguishing front-door services from back-door accounting

Table 3 From Workaround Stories to Potential Policy Fixes: The Example of Cost Sharing

Representative workaround stories (from among the 14 stories coded "mandatory partners/colocation"):

"There is some language in WIA about mandated partners and resource sharing. The way my predecessor interpreted this was 'OK. You're a mandated partner, give us $40,000.' After I had gotten my 'legs,' I said this doesn't work, you cannot mandate people to participate. You certainly cannot say, 'You are supposed to be at the table and by the way, give us $40,000.' So the principle I tried to put forward from the beginning was—how can our system best serve your agency and clients? Forget about the money thing. How can we best serve your agency and clients? That got everybody to the table. We had incredible participation, over 90% for several years. There is this real spirit of really trying to come together and partner." (Interview with local workforce director, October 18, 2005)

"Colocation wasn't realistic in this town. We all believed that it would happen, and signed up, and I went to meeting after meeting, representing the department, and got the powers above to buy into it. Then we started looking at money issues and agreements, blah-blah-blah, and it dragged on and on. We were trying to fund it as a partnership with all the agencies, and we were going to throw our money in a pot, with the lease, and the rent, and all that; but then we needed somebody to be the person that was going to head up either the purchase of the building. And one partner decided they were going to step in and be the lead agency for that, and then they just took over and it was nothing like my vision of a One-Stop; it's now going to be just a whole bunch of county offices, that have nothing to do with employment … which I don't think is the purpose of a One-Stop. So we pulled out and said: 'You know what? I have affordable rent where I'm at, and we're not going to go forward with moving into that building.' It took way too long to get it all together. And we're such a small town, do we need one building? All it takes is a phone call." (Interview with staff at One-Stop partner, August 22, 2005)

Related respondent explanations of policy design flaws:

"The problem is that they mandate that partners be there, but they don't mandate that they pay. They mandate that you collect. Basically you have to kick them out, but by law they have to be there, so how do you kick them out if they're mandated to be there? It's the law that is wrong."

"The cost-sharing MOU [memorandum of understanding] took three years because of their legal people and our legal people. So, no, it has not been an easy process. That's part of the problem of bringing bureaucracies together. You have to get used to the time it takes for bureaucracies to manage their paperwork together."

"We're aware that WIA money should not cover 100% of the One-Stop operation for the partners. These agencies should be paying a portion of the costs, but they don't have the budget to do it. They say, 'We're willing, but where do we get the money?'"

Possible policy prescriptions in response to identified problems:

• Require that all mandated partners participate in cost sharing for One-stop facilities
• Provide a separate funding stream dedicated to funding One-Stop facilities
• Relax both the mandated partner and colocation requirements, in favor of letting local areas design their own partnership and facility arrangements, subject to approvals

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Treating directives as starting points for negotiation. Local managers never know when a federal or state bureaucratic directive will undermine some aspect of hard-won collaborative relationships. For example, the state director of a key partner agency may suddenly decide that because of budget cuts, the agency can no longer colocate staff at the One-Stop. The impact may be large or small in any given case, but the randomness of such bureaucratic "shocks" can induce a sense of helplessness (Seligman 1975). For some managers, the repeated shocks lead to passive acquiescence, "just tell me what to do and I'll do it"— similar to what Ban terms "demoralized managers" (1995, 13). But for others it leads, as one respondent put it, to "treating directives as starting points for negotiation." When this negotiation is conducted openly and formally, we are in the realm of requests for waivers or other approved local exceptions. By contrast, workarounds come into play because many managers view the effort to seek formal adjustments or exceptions to policy as a waste of time, preferring to seek retrospective forgiveness rather than advance permission.[3] An experienced manager stated, "I can move a lot faster and get a lot more done if I don't have certain levels of approval process to go through." One can see the appeal of this mind-set for managers of integrated services collaboratives; waiting for approvals means risking the collaborative's forward momentum because of bureaucratic delays across multiple agencies. Managers often adopted broad, generic rationales to support the workaround posture—they emphasized how unique their local setting is compared to other jurisdictions or called selectively on legislative language supporting local discretion. As one local workforce area director put it, "We try our darnedest to obey the law, but we have also found provisions in the law, especially the local flexibility clause, that allows us to do a lot of things for which others are still waiting for direction from the state. We don't wait."

Using performance to justify discretion and manage risk. The model of devolution says that higher authorities will increase local discretion in exchange for stricter accountability for outcomes (Gardner 2005; Page 2005; Provan and Milward 2001; Schorr 1997). Instead, this analysis finds that important types of local discretion are not granted but seized and that performance becomes a part of the supportive cover that allows workarounds to go unchallenged. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that managers keep their workaround practices under wraps until they can point to performance improvements that justify deviations from standard procedures (Levin and Sanger 1994, 224; Storing 1980, 10). Some managers' standard reply to compliance audit concerns was "look at our results." Where local areas establish an ongoing track record of performance, state compliance officials who otherwise might have cause to look for problems instead become local champions.

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Establishing the local collaborative goals as an alternative locus of accountability. Managers and staff in workforce collaboratives see themselves as accountable not only to state and federal program requirements, but equally to local needs and demands. Noting how quickly staff responded to a local board member's information request, a Workforce Investment Board manager explained, "Six or seven years ago, our staff response would have been, 'We don't collect that because we're not required to.' Now, no one on our staff would ever dream of saying that to one of our local board members." High-functioning workforce collaboratives establish

greater local control in part by agreeing on clear and unique goals—such as serving small business needs first or emphasizing jobs placements that provide livable wages. Then they adapt grant-seeking and operational procedures in pursuit of those goals, privileging accountability and relevance to the local setting over strict compliance with bureaucratic guidelines. They redefine state and federal bureaucracies as support structures for their own efforts rather than seeing them as masters to be served.

Distinguishing front-door services from back-door accounting.
Local service integration will not flourish unless clear arrangements have been worked out for co-enrolling clients and sharing credit for outcomes (Page 2005). A One-Stop administrator used the following analogy: "Imagine the One-Stop as a car dealership. It is Toyota, Chevrolet, and Mercedes all in one. You work for Mercedes, but there is always someone telling you that you need to make it work for Toyota and Chevrolet as well. How much are you really going to buy into it when you know that you are paid to sell Mercedes?" Managers address this challenge by ensuring that their collaboratives have two faces. One face, directed toward the client, works as seamlessly as possible, with little regard for interorganizational distinctions and barriers. The other face, directed toward the particular bureaucracies to which local agencies must report, accounts for the work in a fashion that allows credit to be shared and in ways that fit with the established regulations of the separate agencies. This approach allows for timely, on-the-spot operational adjustments that meet immediate client needs. Later, those steps can be reconciled with established reporting procedures. Finding ways to work around procedural requirements in this fashion is the essence of what it takes to make an integrated services collaborative perform.

Discussion and Implications

Using data that reveal what is often concealed, we find that workarounds can be defined and identified, that they occur with some regularity (though are routinely spurned by some local managers), that they often revolve around central features of policy rather than marginal details, and that they emerge in the space created by certain managerial strategies and dispositions. Although this research has not attempted to prove it directly, the context in which these stories were told suggests that managers believe that "workarounds work." One went so far as to exclaim, "We don't need new policies; what works is workarounds."

But should workarounds be celebrated or feared? Knowing that they exist and can be used to support service integration goals does not by itself answer this normative question, which is tied to a long-standing debate about the proper balance between administrative discretion and public accountability. In his seminal work on street-level bureaucracy, Lipsky points to an essential conflict: "A paradox of public service provision in democratic societies is that policies must be administered fairly; similarly situated people must be treated alike. And yet … we also want our public services to be responsive to the presenting case" (1980, 229). Behn captures the same paradox at the community scale: "To improve performance, public agencies have to adapt general principles to local circumstances … public employees need to employ not impersonal rules

> Although this research has not attempted to prove it directly, the context in which these stories were told suggests that managers believe that "workarounds work."

Table 4 Workarounds and Formal Rules: Alternative Normative Perspectives

		Informal Workarounds	
		Viewed as Negative (−)	*Viewed as Positive* (+)
Formal Rules	*Viewed as Negative* (−)	Nothing works	Local heroes
	Viewed as Positive (+)	Local villains	Embrace paradox

but their personal knowledge of the specifics of the local problems and the local conditions … But discretion opens the door to reciprocity—and thus to corruption" (2010, 1).

Consistent with the traditional understanding of the politics–administration dichotomy (Wilson 1887) and with studies linking implementation failure to local goal displacement (Lipsky 1980; Pressman and Wildavsky 1973), one response to the dilemma is summarized by Hupe and Hill: "Public servants, especially those with an implementation task, fulfill their jobs within a hierarchical setting, with fixed competences, led by documents and guided by rules. If what is achieved is not what was expected, shortcomings in implementation are to blame, particularly insufficient rule compliance" (2006, 18). By contrast, a wide range of normative and empirical work can be cited in support of enhancing managerial discretion. Brehm and Gates (1997) argue that in most cases, managerial discretion works to achieve policy goals as intended, primarily because of strong professional norms. Storing notes that the essence of good administration is the "exercise of experienced, informed, responsible discretion … not mere obedience to higher command" but that this statesmanlike work "tends to be done under cover" (1980, 10). Micheli and Neely (2010) argue for feedback loops so that the commitment and contributions of local organizations are heard at higher levels of decision making. Honig suggests building policy from ground-level practice, rather than mandating practice with policy, because "implementability and success are not inherent properties of particular policies" but "the product of interactions between people, policies, and places" (2006, 2, 10).

Loyalties on these issues have been influenced not only by theoretical concerns, but also by historical and political events. During the 1960s and 1970s, when the policy implementation literature was first coming of age, Washington bureaucrats sought to enforce new civil rights laws against strong local opposition in the South and to wage a war on poverty through categorical grants that took power and discretion away from local officials. Today, the context has shifted dramatically, in large part because of the effort to reinvent and downsize government bureaucracies. Ironically, while devolution and results-based accountability nominally embrace local discretion, spending reductions and the pressure on federal and state officials to produce results have weakened its practice in certain respects. For example, downsizing often eliminates layers of middle managers in local governments who can use their experience and community rootedness to "tap deep into the community's culture and sometimes put aside standard and prescribed ways of doing things" (Morgan et al. 1996, 362; see also Sennett 2006).

Table 4 outlines one way of summarizing alternative normative perspectives. The matrix is based on whether one takes a generally positive (emphasizing beneficial features, +) or negative (emphasizing drawbacks, –) stance toward formal policy rules, one the one hand, and informal workarounds, on the other. Leaving aside suboptimal cases in which *neither* formal rules nor workarounds are deemed effective, the most intriguing possibility is to avoid a simplistic portrayal of local managers as either villains or heroes, depending on whether they stick to the rules or learn how to bend them. Rather, we might fruitfully embrace the paradox that both formal rules and workarounds are positive and necessary elements of successful administration and implementation, as depicted in the lower-right cell of the matrix. The task from this perspective is to keep these elements in a dynamic balance that addresses the inherent trade-offs between discretion and accountability.

Considerations for Future Research

A key question is whether workarounds can inform administration reform and policy development activities. To draw on the analogy of computers, it is all well and good that creative technical services staff can help us navigate glitches in the latest software programs, but eventually, we want to be able to download a patch to fix the problem. Can open conversations about workarounds be used to catalyze practical change or fruitful new lines of research? On the one hand, efforts to bring workarounds out of the shadows might risk undermining the informal character that makes them useful in the first place (Campbell 2011). On the other hand, there is also risk in defaulting on their analytic promise, as successful workarounds sometimes become embedded and invisible, institutionalizing inefficiencies rather than subjecting them to scrutiny (Agranoff 2007, 182; Petrides, McClelland, and Nodine 2004). Among the respondents in our cases, many made a deliberate calculation that a workaround was preferable to taking the time to challenge certain directives. In some cases, they previously had made repeated and public attempts to alert higher authorities to certain implementation challenges or flaws. When the hoped-for response was not forthcoming, the managers gave up in frustration and resorted to a workaround strategy. The question becomes whether we can create organizational forums, conflict-resolution mechanisms, or other channels by which workaround-spawning procedures or rules can be openly discussed so that organizations learn and develop (O'Leary 2010). The preceding analysis suggests three broad strategies by which this might occur.

First, by asking why a workaround needed to happen, one can begin to "backward map" analytically to identify sources of policy weakness or failure (Elmore 1979). It might be particularly fruitful to do so across distinct but related policy domains, identifying common implementation problems and potential remedies. Second, we might use workaround stories to better understand fundamental tensions and contradictions in the integrated services ideal. On the one hand, policy makers want innovative use of local discretion to achieve service integration that saves money while benefiting citizens. On the other hand, decision makers want greater accountability for, and control over, how public funds are spent. These competing rationales coexist uneasily, defining a structural tension that local public managers cope with daily. We need new accountability mechanisms that can both honor and discipline local variation while promoting both transparency and organizational learning. One

promising direction is suggested by the PerformanceStat/CitiStat model, which creates regular forums that hold frontline managers to performance targets while enabling greater deliberation and flexibility in how targets are achieved (Behn 2008). Another is Bryson's reconceptualization of strategic planning as an ongoing managerial practice in which performance is judged with reference to the "situated context" and "actors' practical wisdom is accorded new respect" (2010, 259).

Finally, we might build on our exploration of workaround strategies to consider workarounds as a managerial craft to be nurtured, with due respect given to both promise and limits. Workarounds are part of the "dynamic repair" (Sennett 2008) or "developmental innovation" (Patton 2011) that characterizes the work of people who face difficult or ambiguous problems. Within public administration, this view has been most forcefully articulated in Lindblom's (1959, 1979) theory of "muddling through" or "disjointed incrementalism," rooted in assumptions about the inherent limits of centralized intelligence and power. From this perspective, workarounds crafted by local managers are an essential part of how central policy formation is disciplined by a respect for the individuality of particular places and people (Berry 2005; Dunne 1993; Forester 1999; Scott 1998).

Having identified workarounds as an implementation concept worthy of attention, future research might tell us more about the characteristics of local settings, organizational types (government, nonprofit, for profit), or particular policy domains that encourage or constrain workarounds. We might also inquire more systematically into the characteristics of public managers who are more likely to excel at this administrative craft (O'Leary 2006, 2010). Once a broader empirical foundation is in place, a subsequent step would be to position the workaround concept in a broader theoretical context by connecting it to related concepts in implementation and street-level bureaucracy research. Unless workaround stories are told and heeded, we will fail to profit from essential data for understanding and improving the policy implementation process. Regardless of whether we succeed in this goal, workarounds will persist as an important part of the arsenal of implementation strategies used by public managers.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. The interviews occurred during research and evaluation projects for which the author was the principal investigator. The projects focused on (1) the Workforce Investment Act, (2) a state faith-based initiative aimed at helping hard-to-employ

citizens get job training and employment services, (3) a county program that created attendance policies and sanctions for welfare recipients, and (4) two foundation projects that promoted civic engagement related to young children and older youth. Readers interested in learning more about the research can consult previously published research (Campbell 2002, 2010, 2011; Campbell et al. 2004; Campbell et al. 2006; Campbell and Erbstein 2010; Campbell and Glunt 2006; Campbell and Wright 2005) and the collection of evaluation reports available at http://ucanr.org/sites/UC_CCP/publications/.

2. Our approach to evaluation emphasizes cross-case comparison of implementation dynamics, tensions, and difficulties in multiple local settings. Qualitative interviews to capture the perspective and insights of local implementers were the primary data collection strategy in all projects, but many other methods were used, including analysis of census data, surveys, focus groups, document review, and meeting observations. The analysis in this article draws primarily on interviews, but it is informed by the larger body of data and evidence. Readers wishing more information of our methods can consult the publications listed in note 1.

3. This maxim shows up repeatedly in recent discussions of entrepreneurialism and organizational development, but its original source is not immediately apparent.

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