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Disparities in the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act

Helen Grace Neri
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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Helen G. Neri

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Walden University
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Abstract

Disparities in the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act

by

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Master of Public Administration, Purdue University Global, 2014

Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, Ateneo de Davao University, Philippines, 1995

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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August 2022

Abstract

Culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the developmental disability system suffer from socioeconomic and social services disparities. Efforts to address the disparities issue included enacting Welfare and Institutions Code 4519.5 § (e), (f), (g), and (h), also known as the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act or the disparities law. The law mandated monitoring of developmental disability system expenditures and allocated funding to the regional centers and community-based organizations to assist with implementing activities to address the disparity. Schneider and Ingram's and Jun's theories of social construction framed the inquiry as to how the law impacted considerations of the social construction of culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The analysis utilized a code-based deductive content analysis of California grant proposals and reports from 2016–2017 through 2019–2020. Findings indicated themes supporting a positive impact of the disparities law on the social construction of the target populations. A strong indication of increased services was evident in the analysis of the grant reports. The analysis of grant proposals indicated a stakeholder engagement. Findings may promote positive social change through continued engagement of stakeholders and the target populations to ensure that effectively implemented activities are being institutionalized in the developmental disability system to support members of the culturally and linguistically diverse population to meet their individual goals.

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Dedication

My family in the Philippines served as an inspiration for this dissertation. I am immensely grateful to my mother, who never stopped sending her powerful prayers my way. I wish to convey to my mother that I remain a testimony to her hard work, dedication, and steadfast resolve to raise all her eight children despite single motherhood uncertainty. Thank you for your love for my brothers and sisters, Sotero Jr., Reynaldo, Angelito, Vilma, Cecille, Cleofe, Ruby Jean, and my in-laws, nieces, and nephews, and for the close family that we are.

To my daughters, Kelilah and Leandra, you are the soul contracts that make several lifetimes worth living. Your love, support, and understanding fuel my spirit to persevere. To my ex-husband and father of my children, thank you for the journey. I am and will always be grateful.

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Lastly, I would like to thank the Association of Regional Center Agencies for strengthening my resolve and passion for understanding the disparity issue in the developmental disability system. Thanks to Alta California Regional Center for the job stability and support while I went through this PhD journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this study, I focused on the implementation of the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) §4519.5 (h) of the Lanterman Developmental Disability Services Act (LDDSA), also known as the Lanterman Act. This law allocated funding to regional centers and community-based organizations to implement the recommendations and plans gathered during the annual purchase of service (POS) disparity meetings. The law sought to address the growing gap in service access and utilization among the culturally and linguistically diverse populations served in the developmental disability service system.

I examined the implementation of the disparities law using the theories of the social construction of target populations (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993) and public administration's social construction (see Jun, 2005) as the framework. The examination of social construction was critical in the discernment of the law's effectiveness in reconstructing individuals with developmental disabilities of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The typification of the ethnically diverse individuals with developmental disabilities as positively constructed but politically weak (see Wagner & Morris, 2018) remained exemplified by poor historical treatment and lack of self-advocacy (see Castell, 2014). Other health studies pointed to sedentary lifestyles, several comorbid conditions, and lack of emotional and social support (see Haverkamp et al., 2004) as factors for needing advocacy and protection. The developmental disability system in California was a product of parents' advocacy with children in state mental institutions (see Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2003).

The intent of the WIC 4519.5 (h), the disparity law, was to reduce the existing disparities and promote equity among culturally diverse individuals in the system (Department of Developmental Services [DDS], 2020d). In turn, this might enhance favorable social consideration and political power, resulting in a more favorable social construction. The disparity law acknowledged that those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds were in the category of dependents and weak (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993) and did not benefit from the developmental disability system for a long time. I examined the strategies implemented by bureaucratic agencies and community-based organizations to promote equity among the diverse groups to ascertain whether it resulted in a favorable social construction.

The disparities law, WIC 4519.5 Section (h), mandated that regional centers and community-based organizations implement the plans and recommendations of annual POS disparity meetings held by both regional centers and the DDS. Input from the stakeholders was considered in the conceptualizations of grant projects. Jun (2005) asserted that the interpretive perspective seeks to understand and explain the social world primarily from the actors' viewpoint in social situations. Jun insisted that human beings are social reality creators, and people construct meaning in the social world through social interactions. The disparity law mandated that grant activities reflect the recommendations and plans obtained during disparity meetings; it stood to reason that bureaucratic agencies' activities would show an accurate implementation of the social reality of the stakeholders. Therefore, I examined the social markers of an interpretive approach to strategies in the grantmaking process.

Evidence of the influence of the social reality of those advocating for an issue to be addressed at the policy level was abundant in the literature (see Pierce et al., 2014). Pierce et al. (2014) investigated the influence of social construction and feed-forward proposition in their analysis of peer-reviewed articles and journals on policy design. Pierce et al. found that the approach's prevalence was apparent in agencies such as social welfare services, health systems, and criminal justice systems. Individuals with developmental disabilities present as innocent, unlucky, and dependent (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Wagner & Morris, 2018) and are, therefore, worthy of advocacy and protection. Those culturally and linguistically diverse populations reported their social reality as fraught with culturally related challenges, barrier laden, and language limited, contributing to their non-utilization of regional center services. Bureaucratic agencies and advocates see this as an issue needing redress in policy designs.

The history of policymaking on the benefits received by disabled veterans and the voting rights of mentally incompetent people was socially constructed (see Schneider & Ingram, 2005). In Jensen's (2005) analysis of the program for a pension for original veterans in the 1818 pension law, it was evident that institutions, events, ideas, social structures, policy feedback, and the beliefs and ambitions of national policymakers shaped the definition and perception of veterans as a social group. These worked to make that group politically and culturally relevant. In Schriener's (2005) review of the history of suffrage in America, voting availability went from allowing only male voters to property holders and taxpayers to ensure the competencies of the electorate by preserving the moral and intellectual qualities of the voters. The changes excluded persons identified as

“idiots” or “insane” or individuals who were morally and intellectually unfit for democratic citizenship.

The LDDSA (Welfare and Institutions Code, Sections 4500–4905) was socially constructed by a small group of parents, professionals, and legislators who challenged the state’s treatment of people with mental retardation (see Braun, 2000). This group comprised middle-class White families (DDS, 1998b) and at the time of the current study did not represent the population within the DDS (2019e). Understanding the history of the law and its social construction was crucial to understanding the design of services offered within.

This policy analysis was conducted to understand the potential to address the needs of the ethnically diverse populations served under the LDDSA through the reported outcomes of bureaucratic agencies’ grantmaking. An analysis of barriers, challenges, successes, and suggested solutions, as found in the grant reports, could pave the way for improvement recommendations. The social change implications may include policy implementation responsive to the target populations’ needs and grant implementation strategies that represent those individuals’ social reality. This chapter includes the background of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical frameworks on which the study hinged, nature of the study, definitions and acronyms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the disparities discourse in the developmental disability services system.

Background

Differences in access and utilization of developmental disabilities services impede the culturally and linguistically diverse clients and their families from living fully integrated lives in their communities (see Social Determinants of Health, W.H.O, n.d.). The perpetuation of the ongoing disparities in service access and use would appear to hinder California's progress to promoting equitable use of services among its diverse population. California remains one of the world's most diverse states. Of its current 39 million people, 39% are Hispanic-Latino, 38% are White, 14% are Asian, 6% are African American, 3% are multiracial, and 1% are Pacific Islanders (see Johnson, 2017). These figures reflect the state's developmentally disabled population serving at least 23 ethnicities and 45 spoken languages (Association of Regional Center Agencies [ARCA], 2018). The developmental disability system also reflects the state's overall communities, with 38.6% Hispanic-Latino and 31% White (see DDS, 2018d). Although both California and the developmental disabilities populations are majority Hispanic-Latino, the system's expenditures favor Whites and place culturally and linguistically diverse communities behind in the expenditure ladder (see ARCA, 2018).

The LDDSA (W & I Code, § 4500-4905) was passed in 1969 in California to create a regional center network to serve the developmentally disabled populations in a community setting (see Braun, 2000). The law, also known as The Lanterman Act, enumerates the rights of people with developmental disabilities to services and supports to live independent and everyday life (see DDS, 2019e). The addition of Section WIC 4519.5 in 2012 mandated the DDS and the regional centers to collaborate on compiling

data for POS expenditures and service utilization and posting these data on each of the regional center's websites (see DDS, 2020d) annually. The California Legislature reviewed the provisions of this chapter in 2014. In 2016, Welfare and Institutions Code Section 4519.5 expanded to include Sections (f), (g), and (h), providing for regional centers to meet with their stakeholders annually to report their yearly expenditures by ethnicity and to gather feedback and report back to the department. The mandate included providing annual funding for activities recommended by the stakeholders and the community in addressing the gap in service access and utilization.

Problem Statement

There is a problem in California's developmental disability system. Despite an infusion of 11 million dollars annually, the equity indicator did not show an anticipated movement. This problem negatively impacts the system's culturally and linguistically diverse populations because many of them suffer in silence and forego services that most families find helpful. There were many anecdotal causes attributed to the ongoing disparity. Financial data presented by the expenditures showed that White populations favor some services while the same services remain unpopular among other groups. This reality gave rise to the possibility that the developmental disability system's services and supports were no longer responsive to the system's current constituencies. The legislature's efforts to address the inequity in the system were codified in the disparity law and gave life to the grant projects of both the community-based organizations (CBOs) and the regional center system. A study investigating the grant projects' representativeness to the desires and social reality of the target populations and the

projects' impact on them could provide the stakeholders and lawmakers the needed information to progress or modify the law. Investigation of the change in the social construction of the target population because of the disparity law could further provide a venue for the evolution of services. This evolution could pave the way for culturally responsive services and supports.

The LDDSA, in its inception, primarily catered to middle-class White families in California. The DDS (1998b) started tracking the system populations' changes and published in 1998 that 51.5% of its population was White compared to 23.9% Hispanic. In comparison, the developmental disability population of 2019 was 40.23% Hispanic and 29.49% White (DDS, 2019f). The system's services and supports had not changed as when the system's population was primarily White. The expenditure trend continues to favor its original service recipients. The expansion of the disparity law in 2016 encouraged culturally and linguistically diverse activities to promote equity among the populations and reduce the existing disparities. The addition also allocated 11 million dollars in funding annually to achieve these objectives. California has now invested 33 million, with another 11 million announced for the fiscal year 2020–2021. Many advocacy groups, the media, and nonprofit organizations are critical of the disparities in the disability system. Advocates continually prompt the legislature to delve into the system and understand why the differences continue. One advocacy group claimed that regional centers propagate a culture of “no,” contributing to the existing disparities. Members of this organization accused the regional center system of hiding information, little accountability, intimidation, threat of retaliation, and families not having a voice in

the matter (see Bazzano et al., 2018). An analysis of Disability Voice United pointed to an increase in disparity among the Hispanic populations, with all 19 regional centers exhibiting a decrease in per capita expenditures compared to their White counterparts.

Studies claimed that structured or institutional racism in implementing developmental disability laws was part of the problem and perpetuated the disparity (see Harrington & Kang, 2016; Public Counsel, 2019). The ARCA defense of the regional center system cited the effects of eliminating services that the diverse communities preferred. The 2009 financial crisis stopped camp and social, recreational services among the famous and preferred services (see ARCA, 2018). The disparity problem in the developmental disability system was complex and influenced by layers of factors including budget deficits, low service rates, cultural and linguistic barriers, lack of providers, and lack of culturally and linguistically diverse materials and services. There remains a need to understand the disparity trends in the developmental disability system. ARCA strongly recommended allowing the regional center system to implement its diversity efforts and measure their progress accordingly. ARCA (2018) advocated for the state to consider external factors such as rate insufficiency and underfunding to be considered when evaluating progress. Reports of contributing causes of the disparity issue point to systemic problems such as insufficient budget allocation neglectful of individual service needs, restrictions on services and supports that cater to the culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and failure to enact recommendations made by a legislative task force on equity and diversity in 2012 (Public Counsel, 2017a, 2019b).

The disparity debate was not unique to the developmental disability system. There was an abundance of research related to health disparities among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the disparities trend was ongoing despite efforts to mitigate them. Magaña et al. (2016) found that Latino and Black adults have worse health outcomes than White individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Cardell's (2012) study of health programs and promotion for people with intellectual disabilities (ID) revealed that many recorded health conditions such as obesity and diabetes among people with ID were preventable. However, health promotion interventions were slow to address the concerns. Some clinical guidelines contributed to the health inequities (see Mizen et al., 2012). Lack of medical training regarding people with developmental disabilities' health care needs contributed to ongoing health disparities (see Prokup et al., 2017). Race health outcomes have been documented in many studies (see Brown et al., 2012; Mauricio, 2017), and health status disparities experienced by the IDD population continue to be recognized (see Scheepers et al., 2005).

In California's developmental disabilities system, the gap in service utilization persisted with the population diversification. The enactment of WIC 4519.5, mandating the regional center system and the DDS to collaborate annually to post the expenditure data among various ethnicities on their websites, illuminated and popularized the issue of disparities within the system. The mandate included the solicitation of stakeholders' feedback to better address the discrepancies (California Department of Developmental Services, 2019b). The addition of subsections (f), (g), and (h) (1) mandated regional

centers to report to the department the result of stakeholders meetings, suggestions, and feedback from the public and regional center's plan to address them. Provisions allotted \$11 million annually to fund activities geared toward reducing disparities and promoting equity within the system (California Department of Developmental Services, 2019c).

LDDSA attempted to mitigate social inequalities and minimize social risks (see Leibfried & Mau, 2014). The purpose of the act was to provide treatment and habilitation services to people with developmental disabilities and establish the individual program to determine benefits and supports for a client (see Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2002). California's previous attempt at understanding the disparities explored through a 3-year longitudinal study culminated with the publication of a qualitative investigation showing significant variation in perceptions between the service coordinators and families served in the system (see Blacher & Widaman, n.d.). The resurrection of the debate on disparities was triggered in 2012 by investigating the plight of Hispanic families with children diagnosed with autism (see Steinberg, 2012). The discussion precipitated from the publication of a series of articles outlining Hispanic parents' struggle with children with autism in the Los Angeles areas (see Zarembo, 2011). In 2012, Senate Pro tempore, Darryl Steinberg, a Democrat, launched an investigation that eventually led to enacting a law to promote equity and reduce disparities in 2016 (see DDS, 2017d). The state's efforts remain fragmented and implemented activities have not resulted from the analysis of the system's needs but anecdotal reports of the causes of disparities (see ARCA, 2017).

The document analysis included the social construction frameworks of Schneider and Ingram (2005), who analyzed the impact of grantmaking activities, and the shift of the social construction of the target population and public administration of Jun (2005) in understanding the interpretive nature of the strategies employed in the implementation process of the grant activities. Berger and Luckmann (2011) noted the importance of multiple realities among individuals' consciousness in the community. This premise supported the concept that cultural consideration was essential in the social construction of public policies designed to address the disparity among the culturally and linguistically diverse populations within the developmental disability system.

Schneider and Ingram (1993, 2005) emphasized the importance of a policy's benefits and burdens to the target populations. Their participation and social construction must be essential in the policymaking designed to benefit them. Jun (2005) accepted and understood the traditional functionalist-positivistic, top-down approach to policymaking, which was the norm. However, Jun noted the need for meaningful engagement of stakeholders and incorporated the social construction of those supposed to be burdened or benefitted from the policy. Jun argued that social problems continue to exist despite the many government reforms, and Angervil (2015) observed that new ones emerge.

Purpose of the Study

I investigated the policy implementation related to the Lanterman Act with emphasis on WIC 4519.5 Section (h) to glean the positive social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse populations and their promotion from a politically weak to a powerful group. I analyzed the reports of grantmaking by bureaucratic agencies

in response to the disparity law mandate WIC 4519.5 Section (h) to determine whether positive social construction of the target populations was evident in the reports submitted by the implementing agencies. I attempted to understand the impact of implementing the law on culturally and linguistically diverse individuals' social construction.

I also investigated the bureaucratic agencies' grantmaking strategies and their depiction of the stakeholders' social reality. I analyzed the effectiveness of the interpretive approach by the implementing agencies, as evidenced by the project's types during the proposal stage. The central phenomenon that this study focused on was the effectiveness of the implementation of the disparity law designed to augment the social construction of the target populations. This law acknowledged that a successful implementation hinged on an accurate interpretation of the target populations' desire and their social situation in bureaucratic agencies' grantmaking activities. I examined all of the approved 2-year grant proposals for fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. An analysis of the final reports of the approved 2-year proposals was intended to answer the question of impact to the social construction of the populations targeted by the disparity law. I dug deeper into the policy implementation process and analyzed the target populations' social construction and public administrators as implementing agencies. The analysis began from the premise that all policies, including the developmental disability system, undergo a construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction process as the policy evolves to continue to respond to changing systems within the guidelines.

Research Questions

This qualitative study addressed the impact of the disparity law on the social construction of the target population and highlighted the social construction of public administration (bureaucratic agencies) in implementing the stakeholders' recommendations. I explored two research questions:

1. How did the disparity grant reports from fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 account for shifts in the social construction of the culturally diverse individuals with developmental disabilities under the LDDSA?
2. How effectively did the grant proposals show the bureaucratic agencies' interpretive perspectives in strategizing for grant activities?

Theoretical Framework

I used the social construction theory to anchor the investigation. The primary theories used in this study were Schneider and Ingram's (1993, 2005) social construction of target populations and Jun's (2005) social construction of public administration. I reviewed the relevance of understanding the social construction of reality by Berger and Luckmann (1990, 2011). The background review provided contexts for the early history of the social construction theory.

Different objects in everyday life present themselves to an individual's consciousness as constituents of various spheres of reality (see Berger & Luckmann, 2011). An individual's truth is mostly dependent on their meaning making of the events and circumstances that affect them. Berger and Luckmann (2011) emphasized that not

everyone in society philosophizes or theorizes the meaning of events in everyday life.

However, everyone deals with the facticity of everyday reality.

Society must admit that with the diversity of ethnicities in the developmental disability population, a natural consequence of multiple realities also exists. Policies always have intended beneficiaries. Understanding the social construction of the target populations is essential in the policy discourse as the benefits or burdens of an enacted policy could be maximized or minimized when unloaded into the target populations (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Individuals with developmental disabilities remain positively constructed but politically powerless, as represented in Schneider and Ingram's (1993) target populations' typology. Individuals with developmental disabilities belong to the advantaged group but are dependents with weak political power, as shown in Kreitzer and Candis (2018). Kreitzer and Candis employed the crowdsourcing method in appraising the social construction of 73 groups of people and disabled placed in the quadrant of the advantaged but politically powerless group. This group of the target population was mainly dependent on their positive social construction through the stakeholders' advocacy, such as advocacy groups and bureaucratic agencies, for policies that advance their general welfare.

In the current study, examining the social construction of individuals with developmental disabilities through the implementation of the law would be instrumental in ascertaining the law's effectiveness and the achievement of its intent. Because the law aims to reduce the disparity and promote equity (WIC 4519.5) among the culturally and linguistically diverse populations, discerning the maintenance of the positive social

construction of individuals with developmental disabilities and improvement of their political power may ensure favorable outcomes toward increasing their propensity to receive needed services and supports. Continued augmentation of status within the developmental disability system may reduce disparity and promote equity within the system.

Finally, the exploration of public administration's social construction was intended to answer the effectiveness of the interpretive approach to strategies. The social construction of public administration promotes a democratic process grounded in the idea of multiple actors such as legislators, street-level bureaucrats, and public interest groups sharing, learning, deliberating, and contesting public policies (see Jun, 2005). Jun (2005) stated that the old ways of administrative efficiencies, functional rationality, hierarchical governing, and role of experts, while responsive to the needs of industrial and economic development, are now constraints to the democratization of new public service. The new way of governing involves working with people, realizing their values and needs, and helping them to self-govern.

The scholarship of policymaking provides many venues in which to glean the process through many theoretical lenses. In the last 5 years, scholars have analyzed policymaking through a social construction lens (see Gstrein, 2018), arguing that this approach explores how policy is constructed and investigates the setting and delineation of dominant frames and narratives. Many policy analyses were conducted under the social construction theory (see Bertrand et al., 2018; Marier et al. 2014; Wagner & Morris, 2018). Many of them addressed the benefits and burdens to the target

populations. These studies attempted to understand value-laden legislation based on the dominant construction that birthed the policies.

The social construction of public administration (see Jun, 2005) provided a framework to analyze the role of the administrative agencies in the ongoing disparities and ascertain the existence or absence of effective stakeholder engagement and promotion of democratic social construction through sharing, learning, and deliberating from appropriate stakeholders. The rise of the social constructionist approach also means the employment of an interpretive and critical perspective in the meaning making and sharing of social reality (see Jun, 2005). Discerning the social constructionist direction in policy implementation processes remains crucial to understanding the responsiveness of a policy to both stakeholders and the intended target population.

The success or failure of policy goals could stem from setting high and expensive standards of proof or sabotaging the law by underfunding essential functions necessary to implementation (see Barnhizer, 2013). The investigation of the presence or absence of a social constructionist approach to policy implementation of public administration as represented by the bureaucratic agencies and the CBOs was critical to understanding policy gaps and whether disparities policies respond to the population designed as beneficiaries. An investigation of the existence or nonexistence of a gap in formulation and implementation could also provide a window to the policy's likelihood to succeed. If a gap existed, then the current study may provide the necessary recommendations essential to moving the disparity policymaking forward.

Construction, Deconstruction, and Reconstruction: The Evolution of Developmental Disabilities and Disparities Laws

Social policies and societal processes can be viewed through a sociological lens of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction (see Aymard, 2004; Petrov, 2008; Wang & Shao, 2017; Zulfiqar, 2014). Examining the construction of policy was critical if deconstruction was to be understood and utilized to evolve a system in a reconstruction process. This social policy evolution cycle was a necessary response to changing conditions of a state's political, social, cultural, economic, and environmental climate. Cook-Martin and Fitzgerald (2015) demonstrated this phenomenon in their analysis of immigration policies of countries that consciously or unconsciously discriminated against a race/ethnicity through the evolution of race-related policies.

The LDDSA provided an alternative system in which people with developmental disabilities received nonmedical services, vocational rehabilitation, sheltered workshops, and residential services (see Braun, 2000). More than 50 years later, the system burgeoned into a population of 320,000 from its humble beginnings of 1,800 clients (see Braun, 2000). The community diversified, and the effects of diversification were apparent in the way services were accessed and utilized and the spending of POS. The differences in use and expenditures among various ethnic groups, as opposed to their White counterparts, fueled speculation of system bias and discrimination. Changes in legislation highlighted the disparities through the scrutiny of POS data that the regional center system compiled annually (see California Department of Developmental Services, 2019c).

The population diversification propelled the system to a period of deconstruction. The differences in service access and utilization catalyzed advocates, the media, and families to question the responsiveness of existing policies to diverse populations' needs. It was worth examining the developmental disability system's policy design and investigating whether it strengthened or disempowered (see Schneider & Ingram, 2005) the ethnically diverse populations. The same examination and investigation of the government agencies were warranted to discern the policymaking processes and the presence or absence of citizen participation in such activities. Traditional policymaking often involves a positivistic and fundamentalist approach to policymaking (see Jun, 2005). The social construction of public administration, as forwarded by Jun (2005), acknowledged that members of an organization create organizational realities through interaction, dialogue, and discourse. Members work on a sense of themselves and their surroundings in their everyday business and can construct alternative solutions based on this understanding. The presence or absence of this social constructionist approach in strategizing for grantmaking activities was expected to be discernible in the reports submitted by bureaucratic agencies relative to their projects.

Conceptual Model of the Study

My employment as a policy analyst sparked my interest in the regional center system's disparity issue. Hours of research and the ensuing knowledge created a desire to understand why the case persisted. I learned that the problem was systemic and did not point to one reason, and it did not lend credibility to the accusation of racism. Previous studies suggested an entitlement system that catered to clients' individual needs with no

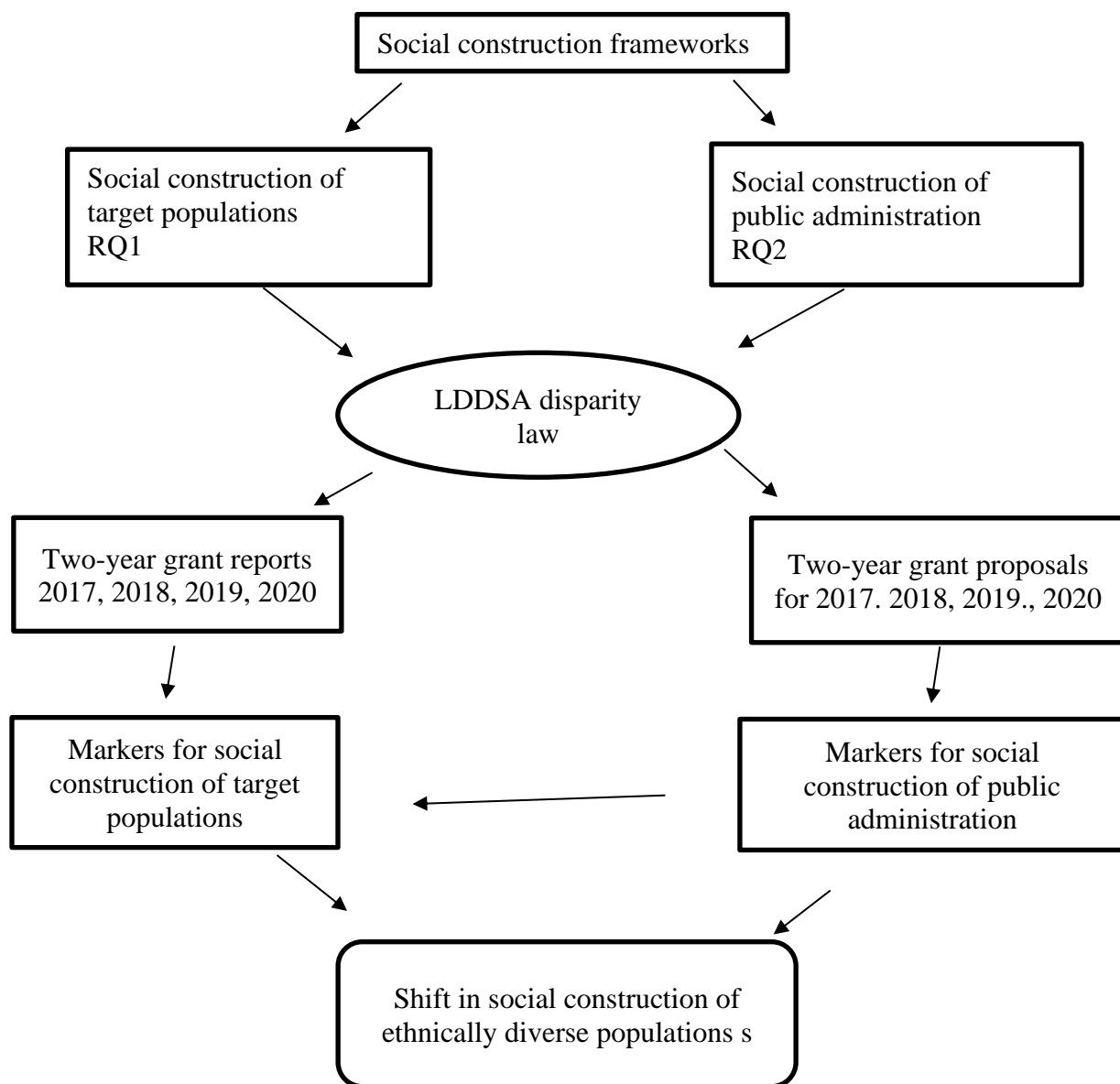
specified limitations regarding costs (see Citygate Associates, 1999). The disparity law resulted from a task force recommendation and sought to benefit the system's ethnically diverse populations. Of great interest to me was the exploration of the social construction theory on how effective the law was in achieving the desired benefits for the target population. I was also interested in the investigation of the representativeness of the target population's reality and social situations in the grantmaking projects conceptualized by the bureaucratic agencies.

The conceptual model began with the social construction framework as the foundation for examining the LDDSA disparity law. The research question of looking at the impact of the disparity law on target populations' social construction addressed the grant reports of the 2-year projects approved for fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. The second research question of discerning the interpretive approach employed by the bureaucratic agencies in the grantmaking strategies addressed the 2-year proposals submitted for fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. This conceptual model included the social construction frameworks of target populations (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993) and public administration (see Jun, 2005). This conceptual framework's importance was emphasized as making a case for why a study was significant and relevant and how it appropriately and rigorously answered the research questions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The conceptual framework provided a clear path to investigating a research question. Markers for an interpretive approach to grantmaking were analyzed from the grant proposals for 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Markers for the impact of the

disparity law on target populations' social construction were analyzed from the grant reports for 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of the LDDSA Disparity Law Study



Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative, and the design was a content analysis of documents related to existing proposals and reports of those proposals of grant activities resultant to the enactment of WIC 4519.5 Section (h), which aimed to reduce the disparities and promote equity in California's developmental disability system. The content analysis involved assessing the predominant themes related to the interpretation of the bureaucratic agencies in the target populations' social situations and the law's influence on the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse population in the California system.

Political power remains a powerful driving force in shaping the negative or positive social constructions in policy design. Political power can offset a negative social construction or combine with a positive social construction to increase the group's influence on the policy process (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Wagner & Morris, 2018). I examined an interpretive perspective implemented by the bureaucratic agencies in their grantmaking strategies. Jun (2005) insisted that the interpretive perspective sought to understand and explain the social world, primarily from the actors' viewpoint in a social situation. Jun clarified that there must be an understanding of that which was interpreted. The disparity law mandated that the stakeholders' plans and recommendations during an annual meeting should guide the bureaucratic agencies' grantmaking processes.

The California Department of Developmental Services leads as an agency managing the disparity law grant funding. The grantees were the regional centers for 2016–2017 and were expanded to the CBOs in 2017–2018. The discernment of the

representation of the social realities and the impact of the disparity law in the target populations' social construction was completed through analyses of the grant proposals and the final reports of those proposals. I analyzed all 2-year grant proposals and final reports of the 19 regional centers in the fiscal year 2016–2017. For the fiscal year 2017–2018, the CBOs were included as grant recipients, and 35 2-year grant projects were approved. For the fiscal year 2018–2019, 44 2-year grant projects were approved, and in 2019–2020, 36 2-year grant projects were approved. The 2-year grant proposals and their reports were the subject of this study's investigation. However, I exempted the approved projects of the regional center that I worked for. The documents analyzed for the final reports included tabulated data, video materials, and written and oral testimonies. Any other supporting documentation that accompanied the final reports was included in the document analysis. The system had significantly diversified, shifting the populations to majority Hispanic groups. The disparity law aimed to address the existing gap in the expenditures in the regional center system. This study was intended to reveal the achievement of the intended benefits to the target populations.

The document analysis included the exploration of the goals of developmental disability policies. Exploration of resource allocation toward the realization of the policy goals was one of the study's objectives. This investigation addressed the challenges, barriers, successes, and solutions-based approaches employed by the implementing agencies in their grantmaking activities. The culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the California developmental disability system experienced disparity compared to their White counterparts. The enactment of WIC 4519.5 (h) was intended to

propel the system into an equitable institution and reduce existing disparities. I investigated implemented activities under the grant to discern their positive impact on the culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Improved access to social services and maximizing community participation remain as goal-worthy aspirations of the disparity law. This study focused on understanding the impact of grantmaking activities on target populations' propulsion into a positively constructed and politically powerful group (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Wagner & Morris, 2018). I examined the grant-making strategies of implementing agencies from an interpretive perspective. Ascertaining that social knowledge was grounded in the situation (see Jun, 2005) of the target populations would ensure the policy's responsiveness.

The reports submitted by the bureaucratic agencies (CBOs and regional centers) to the DDS were examined. I hoped to answer the overarching research question of the impact of the disparity law on the social construction of the target population and highlighted the social construction of public administration (bureaucratic agencies) in implementing the stakeholders' recommendations. I examined whether a gap existed in the policy formulation and implementation process. The study results may inform the system of suggestions for more effective ways to implement the grant activities and provide feedback to the legislature on necessary policy changes for a more responsive disparity policy.

Definitions

Some common terms used throughout this study included those agencies responsible for operationalizing the developmental disability system in California:

Advocacy agencies: Agencies that promote issues related to individuals with developmental disabilities. The agencies include entities such as the Disability Rights of California, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and nonprofit organizations providing advocacy for the populations (see US DOH: HHs.gov, 2017)

Bureaucratic agencies: Both the regional center system and the CBOs. Regional centers are nonprofit agencies that contract with California to coordinate services for the developmentally disabled population. CBOs represent agencies that serve a culturally and linguistically diverse community with a developmental disability. A bureaucracy is a government unit established to accomplish a specific set of goals and objectives as authorized by a legislative body (see Lumen, 2016).

Codes: A word or short phrase that assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (see Saldaña, 2016)

Content dictionaries: Computer-based word categories or themes based on a set of rules (see Bernard et al., 2017). The words in the dictionaries are assigned in the categories based on the preliminary coding framework

Department of Developmental Services (DDS): A state agency in California that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities. This service provision is done through the 21 nonprofit agencies in the state that are called regional centers (see DDS, 2021i).

Keywords: In a qualitative study, context refers to the word lists identifying all unique words in a text and then counting the number of times each word occurs (see Bernard et al., 2017)

Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (LDDSA): An act codified in the Welfare and Institutions Code that is unique to California. LDDSA is a law that outlines the entitlement and services available to individuals with developmental disabilities. The state agency that administers the law is the DDS (2021i)

Purchase of service (POS): The authorization, utilization, and expenditures by regional centers (see California Legislative Information, 2017). POS is the cost of services that clients received that are paid for by the regional center (ACRC, 2020).

Regional centers: A network of 21 nonprofit organizations that help individuals with developmental disabilities and their families plan, access, and coordinate services (ARCA, 2017). The state of California contracts regional centers to implement the state's services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities (see DDS, 2021i).

Supervising agencies: Agencies such as the DDS, which provide oversight to California's developmental disability system. Operationally, supervising agencies are private or public agencies that develop and implement full-time service projects in which enrollees agree to participate (see Law Insider, 2013)

Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC): A set of laws for California about health and human services (see FindLaw, 2021).

Assumptions

I took a naturalistic constructionist approach as a research paradigm (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I recognized that all meaning was sifted through people's prior experience and biases and that this was how people built or constructed their understanding of the external world. This approach involved accepting that researchers and subjects make interpretations and that it is neither possible nor desirable for the researcher to eliminate all biases or expectations (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Simon (2011) explained that the critical assumption of qualitative research is that reality is constructed by individuals interacting in their social worlds. Simon emphasized that people embed meaning in their experiences, and the key concern is for a need to understand meaning making from the participants' perspectives and not the researchers'.

I assumed that the influence of advocacy groups and the media in the social construction of the legislatures responsible for drafting the disparities law would show in the law's implementation. Policy implementers were assumed to have had a correct interpretation of the policy as intended by policy advocates. The intended beneficiaries of the disparity law should show the system's benefits designed to augment their services. Therefore, grantmaking's reported outcomes in the last four fiscal years were worth investigating.

Scope and Delimitations

I analyzed the implementation of disparity policy in California to understand the social construction of those targeted by the law and those implementing the law. I investigated whether a gap existed in the formulation and the intended implementation as

planned by bureaucratic agencies. The study hinged on the understanding that for policies to be successfully carried out, a bottom-up approach to policymaking is necessary to account for the perspectives of individuals affected by the law. I used the constructionism frameworks as understood from Berger and Luckmann's (2011) social construction of reality and used the social construction of the public policy and target populations by Schneider and Ingram's (1993, 2005) and Jun's (2005) social construction of public administration. The goal was to ascertain the existence or nonexistence of meaningful discourse with those who understand the regional center system in its entirety.

A strong force influencing the decision to analyze policymaking at the implementation stage was the understanding that the perceptions of the social reality of those voting for the law were critical to the success or failure of the law. The social constructionist approach to analysis was appropriate for this purpose. Other theoretical frameworks could have been used to examine the policy implementation stage. However, the cultural contexts of the ethnically diverse populations and the premise of multiple realities was best addressed by the social construction framework. I employed document analysis (also known as content analysis) of pertinent data from entities responsible for the disparity policymaking. The data represented all of the final reports submitted for all of the grants approved in 2016–2017, 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020 fiscal years. This period was selected because the state agency (DDS) was mandated to have all of the reports collected by May of every year of grant conclusion per WIC 4519.5 (h) (6) (D).

Limitations

I acknowledged that documents available for review and analysis might have been limited to those classified for public consumption. To ensure the cooperation of identified agencies who could be sources for the study, I respected some written materials/documents' confidentiality. Because I investigated the disparity policymaking implementation process, its generalizability was limited to investigations of similar methods. I did not address other issues related to disparities in service access and utilization.

I am an employee of one of the 21 regional centers in the state. The dismissal of the developmental disability system may arise from my familiarity with the disparity issue and my direct involvement in addressing it. An objective finding could be questioned with the subjective contexts in which I operated. Although this circumstance was outside of my control, I addressed this by working closely with my committee. I engaged in extensive journaling and bracketing during the study. The journaling and bracketing activities allowed me to check against personal perceptions and preferences. In addition, my committee checks allowed for professional analysis of the assumptions and interpretations that I made.

Significance

California's developmental disabilities law has been in existence for 50 years (Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2016). It sprang from the advocacy made by the middle-class White parents of individuals who resided in state institutions. Although the law has evolved over the years, the essential services provided under it have remained the

same. The California population continues to diversify every year. The developmental disability populations throughout the state have shifted regarding race and ethnicity. It appeared that a 50-year-old system tailored to meet the needs of a White middle-class family was no longer responsive to the new Hispanic and other ethnicities' majority populations that the system now served. Little was understood about the ongoing disparities in the system, and scholars had focused much of their efforts in understanding health care disparities (see Brown et al., 2012; Cardell, 2012; Magaña et al., 2016; Mauricio, 2017; Mizen et al., 2012; Prokup et al., 2017; Scheepers et al., 2005). I investigated the implementation of disparities law through a public policy lens. An investigation of a policy formulation and implementation gap was a new way of addressing the disparity within the developmental disability system. This study could provide a qualitative method of discerning policy outcomes. The study could provide a path toward a more meaningful conversation between policymakers and bureaucratic agencies responsible for carrying out policy goals and the target populations. I sought to strengthen the scholarship in the social services field, encourage change in the system's thinking, invigorate advocacy, foster collaboration among the players, and support civic and political engagement to effect the evolution of practices in the field (see Yob et al., 2014) through changes in legislation.

Summary

The LDDSA is an individual entitlement that exists only in California. From its humble beginnings to its massive expansion of over 300,000 clients came the inevitable consequence of extreme diversification. The system is under scrutiny, and the response of

the legislature and those tasked with implementing the policy could mean the survival or the demise of the system. Meaningful engagement between the legislature, bureaucratic agencies, and stakeholders should manifest in implementing a policy. The outcomes of policy implementation should show evidence of policy design's grounding in the social reality and situations of those for whom the policy was designed. The study could show the consideration of an appropriate social construction in the policymaking process and resulting policy goals realized and met. If disparity laws did not reflect the experiences of those directly engaged in the implementation of plans, this would manifest during the execution of these goals. Eloquent formulation of policies may abound, but the more in-depth analysis could contain qualifications that could serve as an impediment to performance (see Barnhizer, 2013). A more recent review of the regional center system's expenditures data showed that POS disparities persisted and worsened as the system continued to expand and diversify (see Public Counsel, 2017a, 2019b).

I aimed to engage in a qualitative investigation and used the concepts that policies go through: an evolution process of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction. I used the social construction framework to investigate public administrators' role as bureaucratic agencies and the outcomes for the target populations (in this context, the culturally and linguistically diverse) to glean the effectiveness of the disparity law. This study's results could provide recommendations on effective implementation strategies for bureaucratic agencies through feedback from stakeholders and could advocate for necessary changes in the disparity policy. The study was significant because I aimed to investigate the issue from a policymaking standpoint. The disparities issue could have

been studied using the social work and health care disparities approach. However, the developmental disabilities services law and the resulting funding, services, and supports provided under it were public policy issues. Policy trajectory remains influenced by the operationalization of the law by bureaucratic agencies. However, understanding policymaking's social construction presented as an essential component to the determination of policy outcomes.

In Chapter 2, the literature review addresses the social construction frameworks illuminating the utility of the social construction of target populations and public administration in understanding the benefits of the disparity law to culturally and linguistically diverse people. I explore the history of the regional center system, the historical data on expenditure disparities, health care disparities, policy process, its influences, what policy formulation and implementation gap were, and the utility of social construction framework in understanding the consequences of the disparity policymaking.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Efforts to address the disparities in California's developmental disability system resulted in the implementation of grant activities designed to address the disparity issue. These grant activities were a direct consequence of WIC 4519.5 (h) (1), allowing regional centers and CBOs with department oversight to conduct activities designed to address the disparities and promote equity (see California Legislative Information, 2017). However, little was known about whether the activities implemented under the disparity grants augmented service provision to the culturally and linguistically diverse population or whether the disparity law's intent was met through the grantmaking process. In this study, I used the social construction frameworks by Schneider and Ingram (1993) and Jun (2005) to investigate the effects of the implementation of the LDDSA concerning the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse population of California. I also explored the presence or absence of an interpretive approach to grantmaking strategies.

An exploration of potential changes in the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse population was essential in understanding the disparity law's trajectory and the achievement of its intent. A favorable outcome in the social construction of the target populations could increase benefits, which would eventually eliminate the existing disparities and promote equity within the system. There were no known studies conducted on the results of the disparity grantmaking in California. Also, there were no known studies that included the social construction frameworks in the investigation of the disparity issue. Studies on disparities using social construction

theories primarily focused on health care issues. Chapter 2 includes a discussion of the history of the LDDSA, the search strategy used in the literature review, the social construction frameworks, the evolution of policy, and a review of the studies related to social construction theory and disparities involving individuals with developmental disabilities.

Literature Search Strategy

Most of the literature on health disparities reflected in this review were searched through the Thoreau Multi-Database Search, AB Search Complete, and ProQuest to locate articles and journals as well as relevant published dissertations. Published articles related to health and developmental disabilities disparities were also searched from Sage Journals. Keyword searches throughout the databases included *disparities*, *developmental disabilities and disparities*, *health disparities*, *diverse populations' health disparities*, *multi-ethnic health*, *social construction*, *the social construction of public administration*, *the social construction of the target population*, *the social construction of reality*, *street-level bureaucrats*, and *street-level bureaucracy*. Websites used in the search for relevant literature included the Association of Regional Center Agencies, the Department of Developmental Services, the Legislative Analyst's Office, Public Policy Institute, *Los Angeles Times*, California State Assembly, California State Senate, and Lucille Packard Foundation. Primary keyword searches conducted with these websites included *regional centers*, *the Lanterman Act*, *the history of the regional centers*, *the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act*, *disparities*, *culturally and linguistically diverse populations*, *promotion of equity reduction of inequalities and disparities*, and *disparity*

laws. I also used each of the 21 regional centers' websites to search for relevant data; however, most of the information I found from the individual websites was found from either the ARCA or DDS websites. The exception was the Lanterman Regional Center website's Koch library, which housed considerable historical data about the regional center system.

Social Construction of Reality

One of the seminal works in social constructionism emerged from Berger and Luckmann's (2011) social construction of reality. Berger and Luckmann asserted that consciousness was always intentional and was always directed toward an object. Different objects presented themselves to consciousness as distinct spheres of reality. The realities experienced by consciousness during dream time were different from the reality experienced by a person's consciousness in everyday life. The authors noted that there was one paramount reality among the multiple facts: the reality of everyday life. This reality of daily life was the reality that was normal and self-evident and constituted a natural attitude (see Berger & Luckmann, 2011). Berger and Luckmann argued that society's objective nature in that social order was a product of human activity. Its beginning was a product of previous human activity. Its existence in any instant of time depended on the continued human action that produced it.

The social reality of everyday life consisted of intensely interacting with those in the inner circle or those characterized by highly anonymous abstractions due to the unavailability of face-to-face interactions. Berger and Luckmann (2011) further reiterated that the reality of everyday life was not only full of objectivations, that reality was

possible only because of them. People are surrounded by objects that declare other people's subjective intention. It is difficult to be sure what the object is declaring, especially if people do not have a face-to-face interaction with those producing it. Berger and Luckmann noted that even ethnologists or archaeologists will testify to the difficulties of objectivations. Still, ethnologists or archaeologists can overcome the challenges by reconstructing from the artifact the subjective intentions of people whose society may have been extinct for millennia. This was eloquent proof of the enduring power of human objectivations.

Social Construction of Target Populations

Schneider and Ingram (2005) discussed the role of social construction in public policy and policymaking. Their discussion of the military veterans as a deserving category of citizens highlighted the overt nature of citizens' social construction as deserving and entitled. This ascription was evident in the passing of the program pension through the Fifteenth Congress's American Revolution in 1818. Before discussing the deserving and entitled, Schneider and Ingram forwarded the target population's social construction theory. People could be categorized into different typologies when lawmakers deliver legislation involving a target population. The types of target populations were represented by those in the advantaged category, contenders, dependents, and deviants (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The advantaged and dependents were viewed positively, while the contenders and deviants were presented negatively in social construction. The advantaged and the contender groups showed as powerful while the dependents and deviants were considered weak in power. This

discussion was vital because, according to Schneider and Ingram, social construction determined who became burdened or benefitted from policymaking. Schneider and Ingram noted that social construction becomes embedded in policy as messages absorbed by citizens that affect their orientation and participation patterns.

The target population's conceptualization from the policy design literature pointed out that policy is purposeful and attempts to achieve goals by changing people's behavior (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Policies specify eligibility criteria and create boundaries for target populations. The target population's social construction referred to recognizing the shared characteristics that distinguish a target population as socially meaningful and attributed specific, valence-oriented values, symbols, and images to the characteristics (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

A consideration of the social construction in the policymaking process was critical because public officials were sensitive to the power of social construction and the pressure from the public and professionals in making public policies. A balanced social construction remained an essential consideration during policymaking to ensure a successful implementation of a policy. This balance also guarantees the allocation of enough resources proportional to the goals of the policy. From the consideration of the social construction of reality and target populations, another social construction was public administrators' roles and processes in the policymaking process. Jun (2005) discussed the social construction of public administration as applied to the policymaking in California's disparity issues in the developmental disability field.

Social Construction and Public Policy Design

Many studies have shown that policy designs are socially constructed (see Kreitzer & Candis, 2018; Pierce et al., 2014; Wagner & Morris, 2018). Schneider and Sidney (2009) stated that policy design or the content of a policy and its importance was akin to acknowledging that policies contain an architecture, which is a text and set of practices that can be observed. Schneider and Ingram (1993, as cited in Pierce et al., 2014) explained how policy designs shape the policy's targeted population's social construction, the role of power in the relationships, and the role that policy designs play in shaping politics and democracy. Policy design is vital in understanding why policies succeed or fail and the consequences of a policy or its feed-forward effects (see Schneider & Sidney, 2009). In the current study, the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse population by those advocating for the disparity law and the lawmakers should be gleaned from the implementation through its reported impacts.

Social Construction of Public Administration

The social construction of public administration is critical to examining the relationship between bureaucratic agencies and the stakeholders. The WIC 4519.5 (h) emphasized that bureaucratic agencies must implement the stakeholders' plans and recommendations during an annual POS meeting in conceptualizing grant activities. Jun (2005) reiterated that the public administration's current norm continued as a functionalist (positivist) approach to governing. Jun argued that the traditional government system is a complex public bureaucracy designed to maintain organizational order and suppress disruptive activities to organizational policies and goals. Agencies

must coordinate operational activities to ensure productivity. Public administration of today continued to govern, which means that administration in every country is hierarchically organized to manage the agency's basic function and enforce rules and regulations relative to an organization's policies and goals vertically. Authority and power reside at the top of organizational echelons, and executive management makes important decisions without consulting the people below them.

Jun (2005) proposed a social constructionist approach to public administration. Jun proposed a collective system to problem-solving to serve as an alternative means of resolving age-old societal ills and preventing policies that do not benefit society. Jun clarified the necessity of grassroots involvement in policies in which they were to benefit. Jun proposed an interpretive perspective that presented ideas and methods that helped people understand social practices at various organizational analysis. Jun emphasized that the interpretive approach to public administration allowed for an understanding of meanings in terms of values, purposes, assumptions, common sense, and objects from historical contexts that condition them. Jun's approach promoted the grassroots; in this case, the target populations' input for ideas became laws or policies. Jun emphasized the value of social knowledge and asserted that it was grounded in social situations and shaped our realities. This social knowledge should be acknowledged as valuable compared to scientific theories that govern modern public administration. Jun also emphasized the need to be aware of diverse cultures and multiple realities, particularly in a society like the United States that enjoys tremendous diversity. There needs to be a critical assessment of a vertical form of governing in today's modern bureaucracy.

Angervil (2015) presented a counterargument to Jun's proposal. Angervil's counterargument focused on Jun's assertion that integrating a social constructionist system procures *grounded solutions* to problems. Angervil claimed these do not represent the reality of governance. Angervil argued that Jun's proposition may not work as employees were not always interested in participative management. Employees were interested in knowing their benefits, protecting their workers' rights, and organizing as a unionized workforce. A combination of social constructionist and functionalist/positivist approach would be difficult because not all stakeholders can participate in policy debate. Angervil asserted that public members lack the knowledge in policymaking and may thus, be uninterested in participating in policy discourse. Angervil also contended that a dialectical process could not be accomplished in emergencies like hurricanes, terrorist attacks, or other security situations. The author insisted that the U.S. government's international relations dictate the reliance on political and economic professionals and experts and limits citizen participation in trade and foreign relations matters.

The validity of Angervil's arguments was not in question, especially for the situations he enumerated. However, Jun's assertions for the need for public administrators and institutions to create opportunities for learning and sharing among members rings true given the public's apparent discontent on the lack of input and participation in government policymaking. Other scholars have used the social construction approach to examine the Public Management System in England (see Döring et al.,2015). The Performance Management System was examined on how managers perceived it in English government agencies as an external assessment tool.

The researchers found that external performance assessments were portrayed as an instrument of bureaucratic control). The researchers recommended a hybrid approach to performance assessments that consider traditional practices representing the managers' social construction within the governmental institutions and newly introduced methods resulting from the modernization of public services. In the same context, the social construction of public administration was a theoretical framework appropriate for investigating the role of the California legislature, interest groups that drove policies, and the state agency that monitored the regional center system as bureaucratic agencies.

Policy Formulation and Implementation Gap of the California Developmental Disabilities and Disparities Law

In 2011, a journalist ran a 4-part article on the autism boom and the struggle of Hispanic families in the Los Angeles area experienced with access and use of services offered by the regional centers in Southern California (see Zarembo, 2011). The articles eventually led to the creation of the "Taskforce on Equity and Diversity for Regional Center Autism Services" (see Steinberg, 2012) and in which dozens of recommendations were arrived at but never acted upon by the legislature (see Public Counsel, 2019b). This event would represent one example of a legislative action that convened a committee to examine a topic popularized through the media or advocacy groups. But after receipt of investigative results, the recommendations were rarely acted upon. If tackled, selective legislation was put in place to address a little part of the concern to appease those who demanded remediation of an issue popularized by the media and advocacy groups. In 2012 a legislation enacted was Welfare and Institutions Code 4519.5 mandating the

regional centers and the Department of Developmental Services to collaborate annually and post on their respective websites the annual expenditures of regional center clients by ethnicity, diagnoses, language, and primary residences. This mandate also asked that the annual per capita expenditures of different ethnicities served by the system be published. The law asked that the number of clients not utilizing regional center services is reflected on regional centers and the Department of Developmental Services' websites (see California Legislative Information, 2017). In 2016, subsections (f), (g), and (h) were added to WIC 4519.4, mandating that regional centers meet with stakeholders and gather feedback from the community, and report to the department the plans for addressing the disparities. The new law also allotted \$11 million annually to the regional center system and CBOs to reduce inequalities and promote equity (California Department of Developmental Services, 2019c).

An article considered for the legislation that funded regional center activities to promote equity and reduce disparities in 2016 was a study by Harrington and Kang (2016), which started in 2008 and revisited in 2013. This study conducted a quantitative analysis of POS data as early as 2007 and then compared the results for that year to the investigation results in 2012, five years after completion of the initial analysis. The results showed that the disparities have gotten worse over the years. The gap in per capita expenditures between the White clients versus the ethnically and linguistically diverse populations widened over time. The White people showed a very high total utilization of regional center POS. dollars compared to their Hispanic and Asian counterparts. This publication constituted as one of the many documents about the disparities in the regional

center system that helped pushed for the funding of regional center activities to increase outreach to the system's culturally and linguistically diverse populations. While some of these factors helped facilitate favorable legislation, other issues such as unfunded mandates and underfunding continued to plague the system. There was little dialogue between the regional center system and the California legislature to discuss the limitations and barriers imposed by a lack of funding to an ever-expanding and ever-growing entitlement system in the state. By analyzing the effectiveness of an enacted legislation, examination of social construction frameworks justified understanding its impact on the target populations. The bill's assessment should include its grounding in social reality, the classification of the culturally and linguistically diverse community, understanding the social construction of bureaucratic agencies as public administrators and implementing agencies, and discerning the presence or absence of policy formulation and implementation gap.

Construction, Deconstruction, and Reconstruction: Developmental Disabilities and Disparities Laws

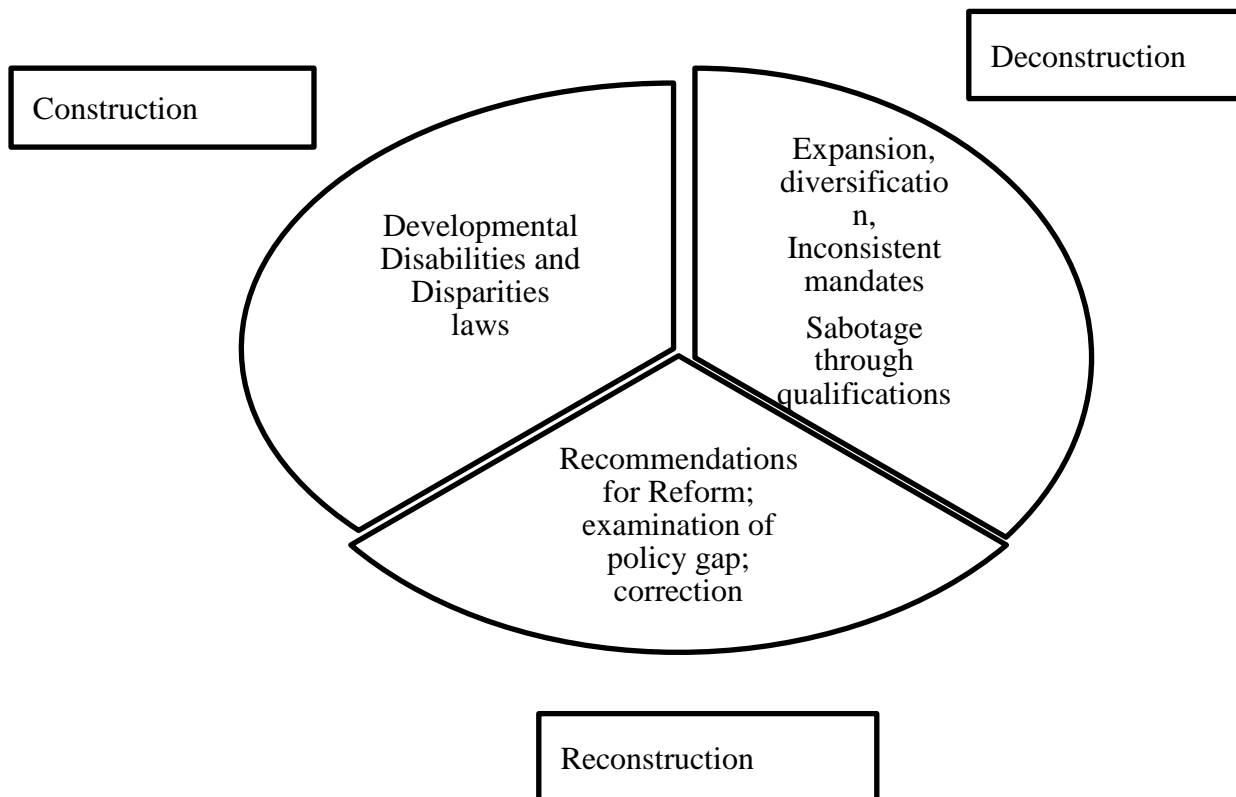
The defining norms, values, and ideas of a policy were shaped by the ideology of those enacting the policies, also shaped by their social construction (see Horejes, 2013). The conversation on social construction as it influenced policymaking cannot be understated. The evolution of society is continually dependent on the policies enacted to promote or decrepit a society. The shaping of the developmental disabilities' laws determined whether those affected by it will benefit or suffer from it. In the Soviet Union, the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction involved the restoration, renewal,

and restructuring of socialism (see Petrov, 2008). The centralistic and authoritarian character of Soviet socialism had to undergo deformation, which made possible the reconstruction to allow it to progress to where it is now in the global setting. The construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of immigration laws define the movement and trajectory of different groups of people based on their statuses (see Cook-Martin & Fitzgerald, 2015). The United States, for example, makes immigration laws based on which masses it wants to cull or allow to flourish within its government system and the country

The same conceptual framework of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction could be used to analyze the developmental disabilities disparities law to determine the steps necessary to reconstruct and mitigate existing gaps in policymaking. The hope I have for this study involved attaining meaningful ways to implement effective policies and reach the law's constituency. This policy evolution constituted a necessary process to address the ever-expanding constituencies affected by the law. Issues identified as necessitating deconstruction are addressed during the reconstruction process. The response to the problems may influence new legislation to provide a path for more evolved and responsive services.

Figure 2

Schematic Presentation of the Evolution of the Developmental Disabilities Laws (Neri, 2020)



An investigation of the developmental disabilities disparity law and its implementation explored the law's social construction and its effects on the target populations that it proposed to serve. The change in the social construction of those targeted as beneficiaries of the law was one focus of the study. Evidence of the changes in the social construction of target populations should be gleaned from the grantmakers' reported outcomes. I explored any evidence of policy evolution resulting from system expansion and diversification. Evidence of gaps and differences between the intent and

interpretation constituted another focus for the study. The outcomes reported of project implementation should provide a glimpse of policy formulation and implementation gap through the state's funding and budgeting system in the grant determination process. Policy goals were often sabotaged through multiple qualifications that make the goals extremely difficult to realize. I hoped to arrive at meaningful recommendations intended to correct policy gaps and establish effective dialogue and stakeholder engagement between the policy formulators, the advocacy group, and the bureaucratic agencies tasked to carry out the laws.

Conceptual Model of the Study

The importance of a conceptual framework cannot be understated. For example, the conceptual framework for opioid prescribing and pain treatment for surgery (see Bicket et al., 2019) allowed the professional clinical researchers to contextualize all involved players in the pain management of a patient that underwent surgery. The results allowed for outcomes responsive to the patient's quality and safety, enhanced organizational performance for the pain management team and prevented the overuse and misuse of opioids. Another study that demonstrated the essential role of a conceptual framework in scientific investigations was Schillinger et al. (2020). These researchers laid out social media's role in health promotion and health misinformation for events like the covid-19. The researchers presented the Social Media and Public Health Epidemic and Response (SPHERE) continuum and showed the influences of social media on the general population's health. They effectively showed the immediate impact of social media on individual health outcomes and the many roles social media played in the

public's health. The researchers' conceptual framework should enhance public health's response to the growing influence of social media and plan ways to counteract misinformation detrimental to the health of the public.

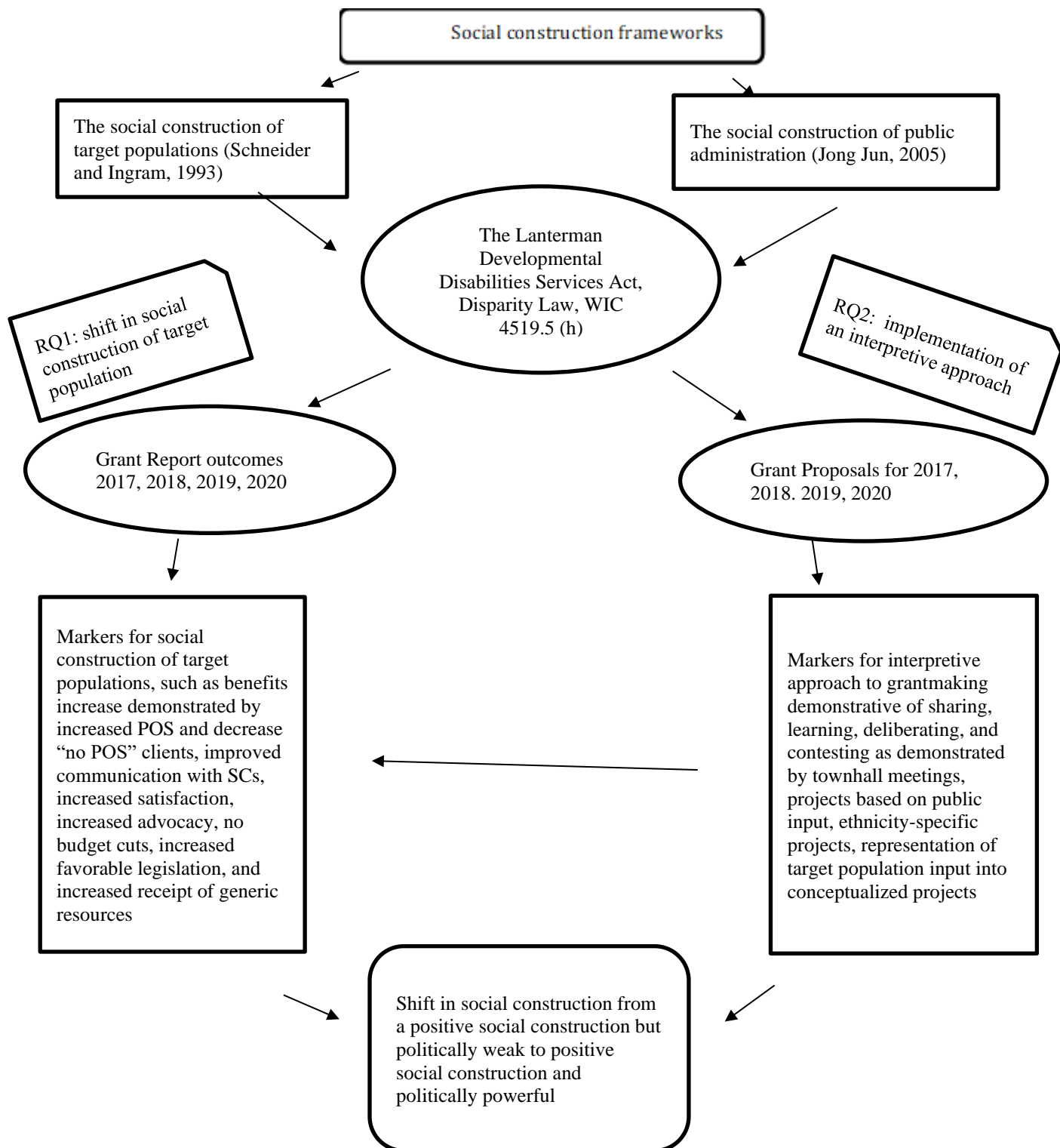
A conceptual framework allows for a clear path to the investigation of a research question. This study's conceptual model provided a transparent methodology for a meaningful exploration of the research questions. This study's conceptual model started with using the social construction frameworks by Schneider and Ingram (1993) and Jong Jun (2005). The examination of the LDDSA Disparity law of 2016 was gleaned from these theoretical lenses. At one end of the spectrum, Jun's emphasis on integrating an interpretive approach to grantmaking was discerned through the grant proposals submitted for 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Markers for an interpretive approach to grantmaking was analyzed from the proposals submitted from these years. The markers would represent collaboration, sharing, learning together, deliberating, and contesting. The characteristics, shown through townhall meetings, projects based on public input, ethnicity-based projects, and evidence of target population representation in the projects during the preceding mentioned years. The markers' analysis should indicate influences in the shift of the social construction of the target populations, as shown in Figure 1.

Exploration of markers representing the shift in the social construction of the target populations, evidenced by the outcomes reported for grant years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 was undertaken. These markers represented the categorization of the ethnically diverse populations in the developmental disability system as dependents, weak, immigrants, and acculturation were deficient. The shift in social construction should

manifest as increased POS and decreased “no POS” clients, improved communication with service coordinators, increased satisfaction of regional center services, increased advocacy, increased favorable legislation, no budget cuts, and increased receipt of generic resources. These markers will demonstrate the ethnically diverse population’s benefits and their categorization as dependent but deserving (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The markers would show that the disparity law categorized the target population as a positively constructed and politically powerful group within this conceptual framework. Figure 1.a below graphically represented the relationship between the different concepts examined.

Figure 3

Conceptual Model of the LDDSA, Disparity Law Study (An Elaboration)



Strength of the Social Construction Frameworks

Since the publication of Schneider and Ingram's social construction of target population theory in the early 1990s, numerous studies have been conducted using their social construction frameworks. Schneider and Sidney (2009) went on to publish their studies on social construction and the design of policy in the American political landscape. Their research was instrumental in making the public comprehend the United States' political system that produced certain kinds of policy designs rather than others and the consequences that policy designs have for democracy. Understanding policy designs through a social construction lens have gathered many students' and researchers' attention in their policy analysis processes.

Examination of the homeownership policy pushed in the 1990s by the federal government revealed the influence of the banks and mortgage industry's social construction in the development and implementation of the law (see Drew, 2013). Although low-income families benefitted in the beginning as the target population, the law ultimately failed in allowing families to maintain homeownership due to the lack of regulations of the bank allowing scrupulous lending practices and overborrowing by homeowners. This examination of homeownership policy design showed the social construction of both banks and mortgage industry and homeowners as target populations. The advantage of the banking and mortgage industry assigned them the benefits, although the policy design push was supposed to benefit the homeowners.

A study of the school principals' social construction of parents of color and working-class parents indicated their social construction as deficient and need to learn to

better support school goals (see Bertrand et al., 2018). A social construction framework that categorized HIV positive individuals as minimally powerful and negatively constructed was utilized to investigate the state's criminalization laws relative to HIV. Kay and Smith (2017) studied the presence of HIV criminalization laws in states with social marginalization issues, high HIV/AIDS incidence, poverty rate, incarceration rate, percentage without health insurance, and an increased number of African American populations. The study aimed to understand if these factors were associated with the presence of HIV criminalization laws. Unfortunately, their study suggested a strong indication of HIV/AIDS criminalization laws in states with many African American populations. The authors recommended further research due to the implication of race equity in their findings.

Content Analysis as a Methodology

Content Analysis as a methodology in qualitative investigations has had a long history as a scientific method. The US Department of Justice in 1942 sued William Dudley Pelley for sedition, claiming that he was publishing pro-Nazi propaganda in the US while the country was at war with Germany (see Bernard et al., 2017). The US Department of Justice relied on content analysis of 1240 items in Pellet's publication as belonging or not belonging to one of the 14 Nazi propaganda themes. Pellet was convicted, and the admissibility of content analysis as evidence in court was established. The utilization of content analysis as a methodology for analysis remains evident mainly in clinical studies. In Hamilton, Canada, organ donation documents policies, protocols, and sets were analyzed for essential themes that could streamline the organ donation

processes (see Oczkowski et al., 2018). Williams and Moser (2019) presented the importance of the role of coding in enabling a researcher to identify, organize, and build theory. The authors discussed open, axial, and selective coding as critical components to achieving the study's goals, allowing researchers to immerse themselves in the data.

The grant proposals' review was expected to reveal the presence or absence of an interpretive approach to grantmaking through content analysis employed in this study. Content analysis was a preferred method for analyzing the grant reports submitted that represented outcomes of the grant projects submitted under the developmental disability law. The elements considered in the exploration of documents include those reiterated by Tim Rapley (2018). The author expressed that exploring what was said and not said in the papers, how specific issues were structured and organized, and the history of the issues raised within a document comprised essential document analysis components. This secondary data analysis was a necessary component of open science (see O'Sullivan et al., 2017) and allows others to scrutinize a researcher's work. The scrutiny in public policy often aimed to challenge and improved research that affected policy decisions. I aim to shed light on the success or failure of the disparity law to augment the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse populations to a positive construction and politically influential group. The next section discussed the previous studies on disparities within the California developmental disability system and future efforts necessary to understanding the inequality within the system.

The social construction framework is an appropriate approach to studying the impact of the developmental disability disparity law on the culturally and linguistically

diverse populations in the California system. Many of the studies conducted on the regional center system disparity issue involved a quantitative analysis and emphasized the system's spending. Very few were completed on the disparity law and its impact on the target population to my knowledge and research. The discussion on the methodology chosen for this study follows in detail in the next section. The grant proposals were analyzed for an interpretive approach to grantmaking, while the grant reports analyzed the shift in the target populations' social construction through content analysis.

History of the California Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act

The LDDSA of 1966 (see DDS, 2018e) emerged from the discontent and frustration of middle-class White parents of individuals with mental retardation housed in the State's hospital institutions. The hospitals were overcrowded, unhygienic, and largely unmonitored (see Braun, 2000). Parents that strongly advocated for the California developmental disabilities law comprised those professional vocal advocates for their children for whom, they argue, society would have forgotten if not for their tireless efforts in getting the issue heard at the California legislature. The LDDSA of 1966 (also known as "The Lanterman Act") is a policy that resulted from the endeavors of a select middle-class White segment of the population with children confined in state institutions.

California is unique among the states in the U.S. due to this entitlement system for the developmental disability populations. While the rest of the United States rely on Home and Community Based Services Waiver to fund their services for those with developmental disabilities, California supports its system through the state general fund. The Lanterman Mental Retardation Services Act (AB 225) passed in 1969 as legislation

to provide a dynamic framework to build a comprehensive system to ensure that people with mental retardation develop to their fullest extent (Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2002b). Assemblyman Frank D. Lanterman authored the bill, and the law was named after him. To honor the Assemblyman's legacy, a regional center in Southern California was also named after him. The law was later renamed the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (LDDSA). The scope of diagnoses expanded to include autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and the fifth category representing diagnoses that require the same services as those with intellectual disability. In its entirety, the law provided for the coordination and provision of services and supports to enable people with developmental disabilities to live more independent, productive, and integrated lives (see DDS, 2019c).

The law's operationalization went through the regional center system, which now serves over 320,000 and continues to grow at a fast rate every year (see ARCA, 2018c). The population within the regional center system has tremendously diversified. From its predominantly White population at 51.5% in December of 1993 (see DDS, 1998b) to majority Hispanic-Latino communities at 37.8 % in January of 2017 (see DDS, 2018e). The State's White developmental disabilities population has reduced to 32.4% in January of 2017. The change in the ethnic makeup of the regional center's communities was addressed in 1992 by adding a section in the Lanterman Act, Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 4646.5 (a). The law mandated that regional centers create Person-Centered Individual Program Plans (I.P.P.s) that were aware and sensitive to the consumer's

cultural background and his/her family (see Department of Developmental Services – Culturally Responsive, 1997a).

California's developmental disability system remained bifurcated until 1999. Regional Center system provided community-based alternatives to clients and their families. In contrast, the State Developmental Centers provided direct care services to clients requiring closed and isolated living arrangements due to the complexity of their level of care (see ARCA, 2001a). The developmental centers are State-funded and operated, while the regional center system contracted 21 non-profits in the State. In 1999, a U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Olmstead v. L.C.* (119 S. Ct 2176) emphasized that states without community-based services for individuals with developmental disabilities violate Americans' Disabilities Act (see ARCA, 2001a). This decision placed the responsibility of clients' service coordination in the developmental center to the regional center system. Additionally, *Coffelt vs. Department of Developmental Services'* settlement mandated the availability of quality, stable, normalized, and integrated community living arrangements (see Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2003c) for people with developmental disabilities. This settlement further mandated the reduction of the populations housed in the State Developmental Centers and placed the responsibility of procuring services through the regional center system.

Throughout the regional center system's existence, it has suffered from unfunded mandates and debilitating cuts resulting from state budget deficits (see ARCA, 2001a; California State Auditor, 1999; Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2003c). Various legal decisions and Trailer bill languages often resulted in the system's underfunding (see

ARCA, 2001; Citygate Associates, I-4, 1999), making it challenging to continue providing mandated services. State budget cuts, legal suits, and federal mandates created an undue burden to an already ailing system. Additionally, the system must grapple with contraction with no way to handle an excessive number of new clients. In the laws passing in 1969, 21 regional centers were contracted around the State, with one local center for every one million residents (see Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2003c). Today, California has 39 million residents, yet the number of regional centers has not increased.

Previous Disparities Studies

Problems contributory to the disparities within the regional center system have been in existence for a long time. Archived documents such as ARCA's (2001a) *Planning for a Unified Developmental Disabilities Service System* enumerated the system's underfunding and expansion of services resulting from many lawsuits that the system faced in the 1990s. Underfunding has always been a determining factor in barriers to resources. It limited the development and maintenance of community resources necessary to fulfill the requirements of the LDDSA and the court decisions such as that of the Olmstead Act. Several cost-saving measures implemented by the State of California in response to the budget crises in the late 1990s and early 2000s presented profound impacts to the regional center system (see Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2003c). These impacts continued to haunt the system today. Much good-intentioned legislation such as SB 1383 allowed clients to live independently with supports later showed the unintended consequence of expensive services such as independent living and supported

living services. The system's struggle for optimum performance and provision of needed services to its constituencies has been documented by the California State Auditor (1999) when it published its audit of the Department of Development Services. The study found that insufficient state funding and budget cuts undermined service providers' ability to compete for qualified direct staff and obstructed quality services delivery.

Disparity studies focusing on the system's spending relative to the different ethnicities served within the system include those of Harrington and Kang (2005–2013), analyzing the differences in expenditures by those clients' race in a residential setting. Braddock and Hemp (2004) published the results of their analysis of California's commitment to the developmental disabilities services concluding that California ranked significantly below the average state in fiscal efforts for developmental disabilities services. Blacher and Widaman (2004) published their two-part quantitative and qualitative study of the developmental disability system, indicating that the quantitative data did not show race and ethnicity as factors influencing the system's differences in service provision. Their qualitative study demonstrated significant differences in service coordinators and family's perceptions of support and resource availability. Service coordinators reported that families have lower needs for help, and resources and families said the opposite.

The enactment of WIC 4519.5 prompted the publication of regional centers' spending every year regarding ethnicity, age, diagnosis, and living arrangement of the clients. The law propelled examination of the system, such as that of the Public Counsel (2017a, 2019b, 2020c), scrutinizing the differences in spending for children from

different ethnicities in the developmental disability system. The disparity in the California system was not a unique phenomenon. Burke and Heller (2016) published their study results in disparities of unmet service needs among adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Their research on IDD clients' conditions nationwide revealed that clients in poor health, from minority backgrounds and non-verbal, were significantly more likely to have a more significant number of unmet service needs. The issue of disparities was not limited to the developmental disability system. The next section highlights some of the discrepancies in the healthcare system and ongoing efforts to understand and mitigate them

Disparities Experiences in the Health Care System

There abounds extensive research on health disparities among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Cheak-Zamora et al., (2016) found that children with developmental disabilities and multiple conditions experience disparities in quality and healthcare services access. Prokup et al., (2017) discovered significant inequality between people with developmental disabilities and those without in health status, quality, utilization, access, and unmet healthcare needs. This study proposed training and education for healthcare professionals as one of the solutions to mitigate the gap. Krahn et al., (2015) insisted that 12% of the U.S. population has a disability, and they are generally unrecognized as a health disparity population. However, they experience more chronic diseases and conditions and share them at a young age. Research in autism showed that children from racially and ethnically diverse groups experience a lower diagnosis of A.S.D. than their White counterparts (see Mandell et al.,

2009), while practitioner bias was cited in a study involving mental health disparities in children (see Staudt, 2011). Another study claimed that pediatricians more often refer to autism institutions when judging clinical vignettes of European majority cases (see Begeer et al., 2009), and this study recommended utilizing structured ratings as a possibility of reducing the likelihood of ethnic bias. Disparities is a documented phenomenon, and it exists not just in healthcare or the developmental disabilities system; it is an issue in education and the widely known wealth inequalities. The next section will examine in detail the disparities in the California developmental disability system.

Disparities in Service Access and Utilization in the California Developmental Disabilities System

Early History of Disparities

Disparities studies in the regional center system started as early as 1992 (see Public Counsel, 2017a). Earlier studies showed that non-white clients were less likely to receive residential services, and youth and children living at home whose primary language is not English received fewer benefits than those who speak English. Subsequent studies funded by the Department of Developmental Services continued to show variation in service access and utilization. The studies included an investigation conducted by the California State University in Sacramento in 1999 (see Public Counsel, 2017a,) and the three-year study undertaken by Blacher and Widaman (2000–2004). Blacher and Widaman’s study outlined quantitative data analysis and the qualitative outcomes of focus group discussions, surveys, and regional center service coordinators’ interviews. Hispanic-Latino mothers expressed more significant unmet service needs than

their Asian counterparts. In contrast, service coordinators and parents differed in their perceptions as to the amount of information needed by families and the rate that information was provided by regional center staff (see Blacher & Widaman, 2004).

Reinvigoration of the Disparities Debate

The disparities issue was highlighted again in 2011 by a Los Angeles Times newspaper article chronicling Hispanic families' struggle in procuring services for their children in the Los Angeles area (see Zarembo, 2011). These articles precipitated a taskforce on equity and diversity for Regional Center Autism services (see Steinberg, 2012). One of the landmark legislations resulting from this task force was the enactment of the Welfare and Institutions Code 4519.5 mandating the regional center system to publish its expenditures data by categories identified as age, race/ethnicity, diagnoses, language, and living arrangement (see CA DDS, 2019b,). Additionally, the regional centers were to hold annual meetings regarding the data and the activities conducted to address the disparities and report to the Legislature the sessions' outcome.

In 2016, the California Legislature enacted ABX 2 1, which allocated \$11 million to help regional centers implement strategies to reduce disparities. This mandate also included CBOs as implementers of grant activities (see California DDS, 2019c). The seed money is in its four-year cycle, and annually the Senate Human Services Committee checks on the progress made by the regional centers in their efforts to promote equity and reduce disparities. On March 12, 2019, DDS. presented to the Senate Committee their background information on the measurements developed to track the reduction of inequalities in the regional center system (see DDS, 2019c). As the debate rages on, more

and more institutions weighed in on the issue. More recently, the Public Counsel Law Center released in 2017 its first installment of several reports on the disparities POS. dollars among children of the culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the regional center system. The study found that substantial differences persist among regional centers citing overwhelming evidence that low POS. utilization was associated with the minority populations (Public Counsel, 2017a). The same agency recently published a second report indicating that regional centers that spend the lowest amount of POS. dollars accounted for those with the largest Hispanic and Black populations (Public Counsel, 2019b). The study also criticized the Department of Developmental Services for its ineffective budget allocation of regional center funds, noncompliance of both DDS. and regional centers to the statutory requirement through incomplete, inaccurate, and inaccurate reporting of inaccessible data on their websites. The report demanded the correction of these inaccuracies and accessibility issues reported.

Factors Influencing Disparities in Service Access and Utilization in the Regional Center System

The Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA), founded in 1979, promotes statewide, regional center issue resolution, advocacy, and coordination (Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2001). It is an agency that represents the regional centers in the disparities issue both through discussions and negotiations with DDS. and advocacy during Senate and Assembly hearings by providing testimonies. In ARCA'S 2018c publication, they cited extreme diversity in the regional center populations expressing that the system serves 23 ethnicities, growing, and 45 spoken languages. The

growth of California's developmental disability system was 40%, with Hispanic and multiethnic populations rising to over 70% and Asian people at 67%. Adequately serving the rising community within the regional center system continued as a challenge and magnified by the barriers experienced in serving the culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The need for cultural and linguistic competence in staff, service providers, and all the system's processes were ever-present.

ARCA (2018c) also emphasized the need to meet diverse communities' unique needs based on their traditions, attitudes, values, and ideas. They proposed the restoration of social and recreational activities and camp, suspended during the State's fiscal crisis in 2009. Public Counsel (2017a) pointed out that DDS.' Budget and Allocation Methodology was flawed as it did not allocate funds based on the clients' needs within a catchment area. This budgeting system did not ensure that all clients within the system will have equal access to regional center services. Public Counsel's report agreed with the ARCA's disposition that ethnically diverse families utilize more social and recreation and camp services in a more significant proportion than their White counterparts. The suspension of these services in 2009 disallowed various families from using a service that was responsive to their cultures and values. Many restrictions imposed by state laws, such as using generic and natural supports, parent participation requirements before providing behavioral intervention services, posed significant barriers to minority families. They struggled with daycare and transportation issues in a household where the fathers work and were the only ones with a driver's license, and the home comprised a large

family with many children. Understanding disparity policymaking required an understanding of the policy process discussed in the next section.

Policy and Policymaking

A dictionary definition of policy indicated prudence or wisdom in the management of affairs, or management or procedure based primarily on material interest (Policy, 2019), or a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable methods governmental body. Schneider and Ingram (2005) asserted that policy is the dynamic element through which governments anchor, legitimize, or change social constructions. Schneider and Ingram also insisted that public policy is the primary tool through which government acts to exploit, inscribe, entrench, institutionalize, perpetuate, or change social constructions. Sabatier and Weible (2014) stated that public policy involved the decisions, either action or non-action, of a government or an equivalent authority. Policymaking is the act of creating laws or setting standards for a government or business.

Policymaking Process in California

Much like the U.S. federal government, California subscribes to its State Constitution as the state's highest law. The California Legislative body comprised two houses, the Senate, and the Assembly, just like the federal government. There are 40 Senators and 80 Assembly members (Branches of Government: California, 2019). A law always starts as an idea or concept. This idea or notion must be presented to a member or members of the legislature, and one of them decides to author a bill. Once written, the bill either goes to the Senate or Assembly Rules Committee and is assigned to the first

reading Policy Committee. If the bill requires an appropriation of funds, the bill goes to both houses' Fiscal and Appropriations Committee. The Committees can vote to pass the bill, pass the bill with amendments, or defeat the bill. Bills that are passed are submitted for second and third reading and voted on. Bills with appropriation require 27 votes in the Senate and 54 votes in the Assembly, and bills passed with amendments are returned to the originating house for concurrence to the amendments or resolution of the differences if both houses cannot reach an agreement. A bill passed by both houses goes to the governor for signing into law. The governor can sign the bill, become a law, or not sign the bill and let it become law or veto the bill. However, the governor's veto can be overridden by two-thirds of votes from both houses (Legislative Process, 2014). Investigating the influences of policymaking will provide context to the argument of benefits and burdens in the policymaking process. It will shed light on the various social constructions influencing the policymaking process.

Influences in the California Policymaking Process

The Capitol Weekly (2017) published an article discussing influences in the California law-making process. It emphasized that lawmakers often have very little knowledge about a pending measure, making caucus recommendations very important (Mizelli & Frazier, 2017). The influences that affect lawmakers' decision-making include deliberation, political bargaining, and individual legislators' motivations. The legislator's political party is one of the most significant predictors of how a legislator will vote. The district of the legislator is a substantial consideration of whether he/she will vote legislation. The legislative leadership may have the most influence on a legislator.

Interest groups could be a source of power for the legislators. A legislator may be friendly with one or more interest groups based on personal trust or raw, political realities. The legislator may want to know who supports and who opposes the bill. Other influences include personal philosophy, colleagues, rules, the governor, and public opinion.

Interest Groups and Public Opinion

I chose to discuss the role of interest groups and public opinion in examining the policymaking regarding California disparities. Holyoke (2016) discussed interest groups as they appear in the national scene, particularly with forwarding political interests through legislative actions. In his book, he emphasized that interest groups focus on a particular interest or very few closely related needs or desire held by a few people. In the national scene, interest groups send Washington representatives to pressure legislators to vote on a bill favorable to them. They engage in lobbying to gather votes for a bill that they support or put forward. Interest groups could be a powerful influence on a legislative body. In California, the primary interest groups that monitor the system include the Disability Rights of California (D.R.C.), State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), and non-profit academic organizations Lucille Packard Foundation and the UCLA Center for Health Policy. Both the D.R.C. and SCDD are authorized under “The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000” (see Administration for Community Living, 2017). Both organizations powerfully influenced the developmental disability policymaking in the state.

Public opinion was another factor that affected legislation. Legislators pay attention to issues forwarded in the newspapers and the public's majority opinion about a proposed bill (see Mizelli & Frazier, 2017). Public opinion served as a powerful political actor. General opinion's power, according to Krippendorff (2005), was derived from the ability to think (influence a decision), was concerned with, favors decided, opposed, and acted on. Thus, public opinion favors one candidate over another, is concerned with an issue, opposes the legislation, and works by voting. The 2011 Los Angeles Times report on the disparities in receipt of autism-related services in the Southern California region precipitated the ongoing debate on the disparities issue (see Zarembo, 2011). Since then, several studies, policy briefs, and investigations into the system have increased. Harrington and Kang (2016) compared the survey they did in 2005 regarding the disparities in service use and expenditures among the ethnically diverse populations in the regional center system to the analysis conducted in 2013. Harrington and Kang found that the disparities have gotten worse. The Lucille Packard Foundation published a study (see Public Counsel, 2017a), pointing out the large differences in the distribution of authorized services among ethnic groups served in the system. A follow-up analysis released in May of 2019 further analyzed the disparities in POS. expenditures by reviewing the POS. data for 2016-17 and 2017-18 fiscal years and reiterated that Blacks and Latinos receive significantly less in per capita spending compared to their White counterparts (see Public Counsel, 2019b). Mager-Mardeusz & Kominski (2016), the University of California Los Angeles published a policy brief indicating that many individuals with developmental disabilities were still outside of the Safety Net program.

All these public briefs served as constant reminders of an issue perpetuating in the developmental disability service system.

Policy Formulation and Implementation Gap

The policy formulation process involved the initiation, research, projection, and development of a plan to address a public need or problem (see Hacker, 2006). The passage of policy goes through this phase and often includes partisanship. The policy formulation process involved the government or lawmakers' aspirations, and the instruments available to carry out the implementation of the policy do not always match the intention, which then results in a gap (see Rosli & Rossi, 2014). Explication by Barnhizer (2013) stressed that policy implementation requires effective systems to carry out the law and policy mandates. Barnhizer asserted that, more often, laws were poorly designed or deliberately sabotaged in their creation. A common strategy in policymaking was to phrase the language to appear powerful and eloquent while containing qualifications that dilute and impede implementation's actual effects. Several other studies that pointed to policy formulation and implementation gap were those conducted on other governments, particularly some African countries. A content analysis on policies in Nigeria resulted in the determination that although policies may be well-intentioned, its implementation often challenged by the presence of corrupt community collaborators and the tendency of the bureaucrats to give special favors sabotaging the performance of the law (see Ugwuanyi, & Chukwuemeka, 2013). Critical issues in policy implementation include a top-down approach to policymaking, which assumed that policymakers alone can fully formulate policy goals and their successful implementation by setting up

appropriate instruments at the implementation level (see Rosli & Rossi, 2014). This approach assumed that the actors can be controlled through coercive and normative means. It has been suggested that this leads to policy failure due to unrealistic expectations that the implementation actors will behave as prescribed when, in practice, a top-down approach often leads to resistance, disregard, or proforma compliance on the part of the local actors (see Rossi & Rossi, 2014). The opposite of this approach is bottom-up, which pays attention to the objectives, strategies, activities, and formal and informal relationships between the actors tasked with implementing the policy and seek to exploit them to structure actions at the local level. However, allowing too much autonomy at the local level may lead actors to pursue individual goals at the overall policy objective (see Rosli & Rossi, 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

In this literature review, I presented the evolution of the California developmental disability system, which started with 13,000 clients early in the mid-1960s and expanded to a population of over 320,000, most recently. The population growth also meant diversification of a system that primarily started with an almost homogenous White population. California is the most diverse state in the country, reflecting the existing community within the developmental disability system. The system's diversification prompted legislative mandates designed to monitor the disparities in service access and utilization of regional center services. The disparity policymaking process was a step in the right direction. Whether the law achieved its intent in changing the trajectory of spending within the system will be answered by investigating how the disparity law

affected the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse population. The significant dialogue between bureaucratic agencies and stakeholders should manifest in the agencies' interpretation of stakeholders' input during public meetings. The literature review outlined the utility of the social construction theoretical frameworks for conducting public policy studies and Jun's interpretive approach to public information.

In this study, I used the social construction of the target population (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993) to understand the impact of the disparity law to the culturally and linguistically diverse community and the social construction of public administration theory by Jun (2005) in analyzing the implementation of the policy by the bureaucratic agencies for the presence or absence of an interpretive approach. The study verified content analysis as an appropriate method for investigating public documents. The review showed early attempts at understanding the disparity issues in the developmental disability system and situated it within the healthcare system's disparities.

Chapter 3 will address the research design and rationale, discuss the researcher's role, and the data collection methodology, and the text analysis process employing a deductive code-based approach in the content analysis as a research modality that I will engage in completing this study. Chapter 3 will address trustworthiness, discussing in detail issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and describes ethical procedures to protect the study's integrity.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate policy implementation related to the Lanterman Act with emphasis on WIC 4519.5 Section (h) to glean the positive social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse populations and their promotion from a politically weak to a powerful group. This chapter includes a discussion of the research design and the rationale for the study. This chapter also presents my role as the researcher and the measures I was prepared to implement to ensure reflexivity was upheld to check against my personal biases and prejudices. Finally, this chapter includes the methodology, data collection/sampling, data analysis plan, coding process, and trustworthiness of the study.

Discernment of the disparity law's impact on service recipients entailed analyses of both grant proposals and grant reports for 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Examination of the grant proposals was expected to inform me whether grantmaking strategies represented the social reality of the culturally and linguistically diverse population, which were examined for their role in shifting the target population's social construction. In this policy analysis, Schneider and Ingram's (1993, 2005) and Jun's (2005) social construction frameworks were used to anchor the investigation. Constructs from these theoretical frameworks were defined and validated against the literature (see Wutich, 2016). From the constructs, an exhaustive list of preliminary codes was assembled for each construct. The keywords were then inputted into computer software, and I created dictionaries for each.

In analyzing the disparities issue, I considered how equity was regarded within the regional center system. The term equity meant two things within the system. First, it meant fairness across regional centers, and second, it meant fairness across consumers within the regional center system (see Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2003c). Consumers with the same needs should receive the same level and types of services regardless of which regional center coordinated the service. Second, consumers within a regional center with the same level of needs should receive the same level and types of services within the regional center system. This premise represented a critical distinction in how equity was applied in the regional center system context.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study, I explored the overarching research question of the impact of the disparity law on the social construction of the target population and highlighted the social construction of public administration (bureaucratic agencies) in implementing the stakeholders' recommendations. I specifically explored two research questions. First, how did the disparity grant reports from fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 account for shifts in the social construction of the culturally diverse individuals with developmental disabilities under the LDDSA? Second, how effectively did the grant proposals show the bureaucratic agencies' interpretive perspectives in strategizing for grant activities? This study was a naturalistic constructionist approach to a research paradigm (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I recognized that all meaning was sifted through people's prior experience and biases and that this was how people constructed their understanding of the external world. This approach implied that researchers and subjects

made interpretations and that it was neither possible nor desirable for the researcher to eliminate all biases or expectations (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I considered how the law's target populations' social construction was considered and implemented in grantmaking activities. I also explored how bureaucratic agencies interpreted the recommendations of the advocates of the regional center.

The analysis involved the assumption that the bureaucratic agencies worked closely with the advocacy groups and considered the media and public opinion in the disparity grantmaking processes. I also assumed that the disparity law augmented the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse populations from a positive construction that was politically weak to a positive construction that was politically powerful. This shift in social construction would allow them to maintain their political status and would elevate their standing so they would benefit from the disparity laws. Accomplishing the study's goal required a document analysis or content analysis of the grant reports submitted by the bureaucratic agencies to the state agency responsible for monitoring the disparity grants. The reports analyzed were the final reports submitted for each project conducted in 2016–2017, 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020.

Role of the Researcher

In this qualitative study, my role as the researcher included an extensive review of the literature regarding disparities in the developmental disability system and formulation of the research questions relative to the social construction theory of Schneider and Ingram (1993) and Jun (2005). I examined the grant proposals to discern the presence or absence of an interpretive approach to grantmaking strategies employed by the

bureaucratic agencies in the process of conceptualizing grant projects. Grant projects representing the social situations of the target populations should be impactful to the shift in the target population's social construction. Conceptualized projects representing the desires, wants, and needs of the target population should manifest their success through project outcomes by shifting the target populations. Analysis of the grant proposals and reports for fiscal years 2016–2017, 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020 was intended to accomplish this.

I work as a cultural diversity specialist at one of the 21 regional centers in California. I did not include my regional center in the analysis for this study. I am engaged in understanding the root causes of disparities in the system and am involved in grant writing and project management of approved grants. The existing inequalities and inequities in the system remained the issue that the grant should address. I decided to conduct a content/document analysis with the assumption that the disparity law impacted the target populations. The choice to conduct a document analysis was to avoid being involved in interviews, which could have been biased by my affiliation with the regional center system. I journaled my personal feelings and experiences for bracketing purposes and coding. These activities allowed me to separate my personal feelings and my interpretation relative to the data that were analyzed.

To ensure that I was in constant check of my biases as the researcher in this study, I engaged in criticality, reflexivity, collaboration, and rigor (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Maccarella (2019) recommended a three-step process that involved summarizing, analyzing, and critiquing documents, emphasizing an understanding of the whole

document context, when they were written, the era in which they were conceptualized, and the belief systems of the authors who wrote them. Reflexivity involved a systematic assessment of my identity, positionality, and subjectivities (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Collaboration entailed closely working with my committee members and checking on my assumptions. Lastly, I ensured rigor in the process by ensuring that the design's quality was aligned with the research questions, and I maintained the fidelity of the process through criticality by allowing the meanings to emerge absent the normative narratives that circulate in everyday life (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Methodology

In this study, I analyzed the grant proposals and reports submitted to the California Department of Developmental Services related to the LDDSA, focusing on implemented grant activities and strategies employed in designing the projects. The data were obtained through the California Public Records Act (California Public Records Act, Title 1, Division 7, Chapter 3.5, 1968) if the reports were not readily available through the department's website. In determining the appropriate documents for analysis, I first reviewed all grants approved between 2016 and 2020. Nineteen grants were approved for 2016–2017, with only regional centers as grantees. Eighteen of these grants were included in the analysis; I excluded grants from the regional center where I worked. Thirty-five grants were included for 2017–2018, 44 grants were included for 2018–2019, and 36 grants were included for 2019–2020. This proposed study only reviewed grant proposals approved for a 2-year increment and the final reports of each 2-year approved projects. The grant approval was legislatively mandated to be listed online by the

department on the first of January of every grant year. However, delays have been observed relative to the publication of approved grants. By May of the following year, all 1-year grant increments were expected to submit the final evaluation of projects, and on May 1 of the next year, and 2-year increment final reports were expected per WIC 4519.5 (h) (6) (D).

The project grant proposals were obtained from the California Department of Developmental Services on their website, <https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/disparities/disparity-funds-program/awarded-projects/>. The Department's Records Unit released the reports to me as the online publication was delayed. At this time, only the approved grant projects were posted online. The grant reports obtained through the California Public Records Act, as mandated by Title 1 Division 7, Chapter 3.5 of the Government Code § 6253.5 (see California Public Records Act, 1968). Part of the preliminary phase of document review was the determination of how many two-year projects were approved in each fiscal year. Only projects approved as a two-year grant were subject to analysis in this study. The decision to utilize two-year grant projects was influenced by the initial review of the 2016–17 submitted grant proposals. Most of the administrative portion of the grants, such as contract setting, hiring of personnel, and negotiating on the deliverables dominated the first year's activities. The second-year plan showed the most active in the conduct of activities, the data collection, analysis of the outcomes through quarterly reports, and the project's conclusion. A longer timeframe for grant projects also allowed for an extended observation period.

The content analysis was anticipated to include ancillary documents submitted by the grantee as supporting documentation for the projects' outcome. The documentation would consist of tabulated data, video materials, written and oral testimonies, and any other supporting documentation that accompanied a final report submitted to the department. The final reports provided by the Department consisted only of the final written reports submitted by the grantees. Ancillary documents were excluded from the final data collected. The documents were uploaded to computer software, sorted, and coded according to the content dictionaries specification.

The impacts of the disparity law on the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse population was analyzed using the deductive code-based content method (see Bernard et al., 2017). The application of interpretive perspectives was also gleaned from the grantmaking strategies employed by the bureaucratic agencies. I had hoped to discern if grant activities and the reported outcomes improved the target populations' social construction into a positively constructed and politically influential group. Schneider and Ingram (1993) emphasized that benefits for dependents were left to the lower levels of government or the private sector. Other agents pass down the benefits that the dependents received, and they have little control over the design of the policies. It becomes crucial to evaluate the impact of the disparity law as implemented by the bureaucratic agencies. The qualitative content analysis represented a research method that involved a subjective interpretation of text data contents through the classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns from the codes (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Data Collection/Sampling

This study analyzed existing documentation available from the California Department of Developmental Services as the approved grant proposals and the corresponding final evaluation reports submitted by the disparity grantees around California. The samples will include only those grants approved for two years and their final reports, including supporting documentation related to the final reports. The investigation of the impact of the disparity law on the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse populations is the focus of this study. Therefore, it was essential that relevant documentation allowing an understanding of the issue was included as samples to be analyzed. Examples of these supporting documentation include testimonies from grant recipients, audio and video productions, tabulated data collection, and written reports related to the desired outcomes and the projects' actual outcomes. However, the California Department of Developmental Services only received limited documentation as final reports of the grantees. In the end I received a total of 17 final reports for grant years 2017 and 2018. In the initial data collection phase, the legislative mandates for the disparity policymaking were analyzed to ensure alignment of the grant proposals to the specifications of the law. Second, all two-year approved grant proposals were reviewed to determine designed benefits to the target populations.

Coding and analysis of the texts was completed by me, and online software, delvetool.com, was utilized to organize and manage the collected data. The use of software allowed for the entire corpus of materials gathered from the two-year approved grant proposals to their final reports beginning 2017 and until May of 2020 to be inputted

into the system to be organized. This process occurred after a list of content dictionaries were built, and keywords were created for each theory-driven code identified. Individual dictionaries made with the preliminary codes and all keywords related to the codes were entered into the software (see Wutich, 2016). The preliminary codes came from the literature review. New codes emerged after performing the initial manual coding or descriptive coding of the documents (see Saldaña, 2016). The documents were uploaded for coding in the program and later checked for themes and organized into categories for further analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

The analysis focused on the impact of the policymaking disparities relevant to the culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The impact was to be accomplished through content analysis in which documents related to the implementation of WIC 4519.5 (h) were reviewed for the influences and changes it afforded into the target populations' social construction. An analysis of the interpretive perspective by the bureaucratic agencies tasked to distribute the disparity policy's benefits to the target population was essential in determining the effectiveness of a collaborative approach as mandated by the disparity law. The analysis of the policy's impact on those designed to benefit from it were to inform the study if the grantmaking activities resulting from the passing of the law enhanced the positive social construction of the target populations and if it helped promote them into a politically powerful group. People with a developmental disability have very little control over enacting the policies designed to benefit them. The issue of non-control over the policies was magnified for those belonging to culturally and

linguistically diverse populations. Their social reality and their daily experiences must be accurately considered in the implementation of activities for them. Bureaucratic agencies funded to implement the grants were expected to strive for grant activities that were responsive to the target populations' social realities. The investigation of disparities law's impacts and effects and the bureaucratic agencies approach in their grantmaking processes was expected to answer the study's research questions.

The analysis followed a three-step process. First, I engaged in document review by summarizing identified documents, analyzing them, and then engaging in critically analyzing the source of the documents (see Maccarella, 2019). The next step in the process was the content analysis, in which both conceptual and relational analysis (see Ungvarsky, 2019) were employed. The conceptual analysis involved the identification of various concepts and ideas expressed in the documents being analyzed. The relational analysis compared the identified concepts and looked for similarities and differences and how they were interconnected. Saldaña (2016) noted that a concept generally consists of constituents, and related elements, and therefore concept codes tend to be applied to a larger unit or stanzas of data. This process represented an analytic *lumping* task that harmonized with the bigger picture suggested by a concept. This process was necessary to identify interpretive grantmaking and the social construction impacts of the documents being submitted after the implementation of projects for the disparity policy law.

Identifying related documents to be analyzed was straightforward as they comprised all the approved two-year proposals for an interpretive approach analysis—the next set of documents consisting of the evaluation reports submitted for those approved

two-year grants. Ancillary documentation was expected but not obtained for reasons such as the extension of grant proposals and the disruption caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Manual inspection was employed to ensure that submitted reports correspond to the approved grants listed on the DDS website.

As mentioned in the Data Collection section, I will conduct the coding and analysis of texts with the computer software delvetool.com. The documents will go through an initial review by myself, and I will perform a First Cycle coding, which at this point in the research would involve Elemental Methods, specifically Descriptive Coding and Concept Coding (see Saldaña, 2016). Since the research questions point to an exploratory investigation, these coding methodologies are appropriate for the study's initial phase. When the preliminary coding is completed, and preliminary codes are identified, these codes can be added to the identified constructs. The content dictionaries can be created at this point in the computer software. The documents can now be uploaded into the computer software to conduct a thorough word-search and organize them to complete a secondary coding and analysis. The documents will then be coded and arranged into themes. An exhaustive list of keywords for each construct will be put together and entered into the software to compose content dictionaries (see Wutich, 2016). The constructs and corresponding keywords will be evaluated against the literature review, research questions, and dictionaries applied to the texts in the coding process.

Coding

Coding is a key data organizing structure in qualitative analysis. It is a way of organizing data to create, define, and refine information to generate essential categories

in data analysis (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Approaches to coding include inductive coding from the data generated or deductive coding involving other sources such as theory or prior research (see Williams & Moser, 2019). This study used deductive coding methodology.

In this study, I used the documentation from the department on the 2year grant proposals and the reports of the proposals submitted after the conclusion of their grant projects. The intended data to be collected included the archival data containing all supporting documentation relevant to the projects' outcomes, including written and oral testimonies in the form of audio and video recordings, any video modules, publications, and any other related materials. However, the final data collected only included the final 17 grant reports for years 2017 and 2018. DDS informed me that what they have provided were those that were submitted by the grantees. The documents were evaluated and the accuracy of the interpretation of perspectives ascertained through the analysis. The history, authorship, intent, the grant author's goals, their biases, and the existence of other documents with the same context (see Bernard et al., 2017) were evaluated. This study utilized deductive coding primarily anchored to the social construction frameworks.

Preliminary Coding Framework

In the initial phase of data collection, I engaged in a priori coding system based on the preliminary coding framework found in Table 1

Table 1*Theory-Driven Preliminary Codes*

Social construction of target populations	Social construction of public administration
Weak and dependent/strong and self-sustaining	Sharing
Politically powerless	Learning
Beneficial policy	Deliberating
Positively constructed target population	Meaning making
Oppressed population	Capacity for making and communicating meaning
Illegal aliens/migrant population	Intersubjective relationships
Lack of or enhancement of political power	Understanding social world from the subjects' point of view
Eligibility requirements	Working with people
Justice-oriented rationales such as equity, equality, needs, and rights	Values and needs

Note. These are preliminary codes were subject to additions as the data analysis may result in other emerging codes and categories.

It was expected that as the data was sorted and relevant codes were generated, I would engage in a combination of descriptive and process coding (see Saldaña, 2016) to understand the experiences of the grantees and their actions precipitated by community input. The secondary phase of coding which was pattern coding was used to group the summaries that resulted in the first cycle of coding. These groups of summaries will be analyzed for themes and concepts (see Saldaña, 2016) to glean the interpretive perspectives of the bureaucratic agencies and the impacts of the disparity law on the social construction of the target populations. The preliminary codes were generated from

the social constructions of the target population and public administration, thus aiding in the study's alignment.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The strength of a research study lies in its reliability and validity (see Amankwaa, 2016). Guba and Lincoln (1981) insisted that reliable and valid research must exhibit rigor and trustworthiness. The research's trustworthiness must be established by its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (as cited in Amankwaa, 2016).

Credibility

One method of promoting trustworthiness is employing different triangulation processes (see Stahl & King, 2020). However, the triangulation processes will not be supported in this research as this was completed by one member of the research team. Methodological and data triangulation use different methodologies to collect data and have multiple data sources to analyze for the same outcome. Investigator triangulation entails having various coders, and I am the only coder in this study. A few of the processes that was used to promote this study's credibility were peer debriefing (see Stahl & King, 2020), where I enlisted the assistance of few peers familiar with the disparity issues with a review of my research. Credibility also represented the finding's truth (see Amankwaa, 2016), and member-checking was utilized by engaging a few of the organizations that submitted and whose grant proposals were approved.

Transferability

Establishing trustworthiness entailed findings of the research applicable to other contexts and the expansion of understanding by transferring one context to another (see Amankwaa, 2016; Stahl & King, 2020). The methods employed in this study can be transferred to a study of public health laws designed to reduce the healthcare system's disparities. The social construction framework and the results of this study can be used in any disparity study that involves policy systems. Content analysis, as a methodology, is widely used. This study followed other studies conducted on the impact of policies implemented to benefit different target populations.

Dependability

The consistency of the findings of a study and its repeatability represents dependability (see Amankwaa, 2016). Stahl and King (2020) insisted that bracketing presents an excellent way to separate the researcher's biases from the data, and having peers review the journaled personal experiences establishes dependability of findings. If I consciously journal my values and feelings about my research finding, I can engage in reflexive bracketing and establish my research's dependability.

Confirmability

The fourth perspective in trustworthiness is confirmability, which means getting to objective reality as close as qualitative research can get (see Stahl & King, 2016). My role as a researcher should ensure that the investigation is conducted as precisely and accurately as possible. When observers audit my study, they can confirm the processes conducted, and the accuracy of the study can be confirmed by an audit trail (see Shento,

2004). The readers of my research should be able to discern the study's progression and confirm the step-by-step process in which the analysis and conclusion have been conducted.

Ethical Considerations

I ensured that the data utilized in this study was valid by cross-referencing the contents through search in peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reliable online sources. Any confidential data that I accessed was referred to anonymously in the research. Only the researcher had access to confidential documents. The data retention and destruction followed the allowed timeframe set through federal regulations five years after completing the research (Walden-IRB, n.d.)

In this study, I did not use any names mentioned in the grant proposals or reports for those proposals. Additionally, DDS ensured that any names were redacted from the proposals and reports prior to release. Any accompanying documentation to the proposals' final reports was treated confidentially and stored in a secured and protected electronic device. There was no personal information collected in this study. I only used publicly available information that came from the DDS website. As an employee of one of the regional centers, I minimized conflict of interest by excluding the regional center that I work for in the data collected for analysis. I used my regional center data as practice data for coding and analysis. The outcome of the practice was not part of the data presented in the study.

Summary

This study employed a naturalistic constructionist approach to qualitative research. It recognized that all meaning is sifted through people's prior experience and biases. It acknowledged that people built or constructed their understanding of the external world. This approach accepted that researchers and subjects made interpretations that were neither possible nor desirable for the researcher to eliminate all biases or expectations. The success or failure of policy goals relies heavily on how well the policies are implemented. However, the successful implementation of policy goals can be hindered by sabotaging the law through unreasonable qualifications. Policy goals implementation can be hampered through ambiguous laws and improperly formulated laws resulting from non-engagement with the appropriate stakeholders. Effective performance of policy goals can also be hindered by ignoring bureaucratic agencies tasked to implement the laws. I reviewed the grant proposals submitted in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 to investigate the absence or presence of an interpretive approach to grantmaking strategies. I also reviewed relevant documents that reported the outcomes of the activities implemented in response to the disparity law. The data analysis aimed to investigate the impact of the disparity law on the social construction of the target populations and ascertain that the grantmaking strategies represented an accurate interpretation of their social reality and situation expressed by the stakeholders.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the analysis of the data and the study's findings. The disparities in the developmental disability system in California have gone on for decades. Magnification of the disparities issues resulted in a four-part article in the *Los Angeles Times* in 2011. The disparity conversation in the developmental disability system emerged in the legislative chambers and resulted in the enactment of WIC 4519.5 (a) to (h) to track and report the disparities in service access among the different ethnicities served by the system. The law mandated implementing diversity-related activities designed to mitigate the differences. The infusion of \$11 million in grant funding every year allowed the regional center system and the CBOs to conceptualize activities intended to minimize the existing disparities and promote service access and equity.

I investigated an interpretive perspective supposedly employed by bureaucratic agencies in implementing grantmaking strategies. I also examined whether the social construction of ethnically diverse communities had improved because of the disparity law. This chapter includes a discussion of the setting of the study, the demographics of the populations studied, the data collection methodology, the analysis of the data, the trustworthiness of the study, and a summary for the chapter.

Study Setting

The Walden University Institutional Review Board approved the study on June 10, 2021, approval number 06-10-21-0318635, and the data analysis commenced. All documents reviewed were covered under the California Public Records Act, Title 1 Division 7, Chapter 3.5 of the Government Code § 6253 5 (California Public Records

Act, 1968). Some documents were available online, but the DDS released the rest upon request. Appendix B lists all of the documents used in this study along with their origin. The proposals analyzed amounted to 59 for 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. The reports analyzed for this study equaled 17 final reports for grant years 2016–2017 and 2017–2018. There were no reports for 2018–2019 and 2019–2020. DDS informed me that they received only the reports they released to me. DDS indicated that only two grant years' worth of data for the final reports were collected. While the data analysis was ongoing, the 2021–2022 budget year for the State of California showed tremendous recognition of the developmental disability populations. The May 2021 budget revision highlights delivered an infusion of significant money for hiring and training of bilingual care providers, and implicit-bias training focusing on staff that determines eligibility to the system and enhances service coordination to clients with low to no POS (Newsom et al., 2021).

Data Collection

The demographics of this study were the culturally and linguistically diverse populations served in the California developmental disability system. The grantees served the ethnically diverse people of the developmental disability system who qualified for their program as specified in their grant proposals. I collected 12 2-year proposals for grant years 2016 and 2017. These proposals came from the regional centers in the state. There were 10 2-year proposals for the grant year 2017–2018, including submissions from CBOs. There were 23 2-year proposals for the grant year 2018–2019 from both CBOs and regional centers, and there were 14 2-year proposals for 2019–2020 from both

CBOs and regional centers. The analysis involved a total of 59 grant proposals. Some proposals started in 2016–2017 and continued until 2019–2020 due to an extension provided by DDS to the grantees. All of the submissions were uploaded on delvetool.com as one group of documents to answer the second research question.

I also collected eight final reports for the grant year 2016–2017 and 10 final reports for the grant year 2017–2018. These documents were the only ones released by DDS, and these were the documents coded and analyzed to answer the first research question. Planned initial data collection included the collection of any accompanying documentation submitted to the department by the grantees. However, I received only the final reports from the department. I also anticipated the availability of the final reports for the 2018–2019 grant year. DDS informed me that no final reports were available for the grant year 2018–2019. The department only released documents that were not available on the website. The documents available on the website were downloaded separately by me. The website's .is listed in Appendix B. All of the records provided by DDS and all of the downloaded documents from DDS's website were reviewed, coded, and analyzed.

The proposals were coded and analyzed to answer the second research question. To answer the first research question, I coded the grant reports for 2016–2017 and 2017–2018. The coding results were further analyzed as elaborated in the data analysis section.

Data Analysis

The data analysis first involved the conversion of all PDF files given by DDS into Word documents utilizing the Adobe.com conversion software. The converted files were then copied and pasted into qualitative data analysis software. The data coding was done

on a grant year basis, beginning with the 2016–2017 grant proposals. Coding of the 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020 grant proposals ensued. Before I analyzed the grant proposals, the preliminary coding frameworks started as initial codes. I derived the preliminary codes from public administration’s social construction, which anchored the second research question. I also used preliminary codes to analyze the grant reports derived from the social construction of target populations by Schneider and Ingram (1993). The delvetool software allowed me to engage in a process that Saldaña (2016) referred to as splitting proposals into snippets, an automatic function of the software. I coded each snippet based on the important event discussed in a sentence or paragraph. I engaged in exploratory coding (see Saldaña, 2016) to answer the research questions addressing the interpretive perspectives of the bureaucratic agencies in designing their grant activities and the change in the social construction of the target populations that occurred or did not occur with the implementation of the disparity law.

The first stage of coding of the 59 grant proposals generated a total of 302 codewords across all grant proposals. I rearranged the sentences into codes and categorized them into one of the preliminary coding frameworks to develop the main themes. This recategorization tracked the dominant themes. The first cycle of coding showed an overarching theme, such as barriers in many forms. Grantees discussed the existence of language barriers, sociocultural barriers, and cultural barriers in the form of stigma and shame, and religious beliefs such as developmental disability being a supernatural cause. Another dominant theme was education in many different forms. Grantees promoted the education of families about the regional center processes,

educating families about generic resources, the diagnoses of their children, autism, and education of professionals (doctors, nurses, therapists) about the existence of the developmental disability system.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) asserted that themes describe and/or explain what the researcher thinks is occurring in the research setting. Themes are brief summaries and conclusions about what is happening. Saldaña (2016) stated that a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection and not something that is coded. According to Saldaña, a theme is an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about or what it means. The theming process in the current study involved putting together related codes and organizing them as a theme or concept. The theme of barriers appeared in almost all of the proposals and was represented by codes such as cultural barriers, lack of trusting relationships, language barriers, socioeconomic barriers, experiencing barriers, culture of distrust, stigma, shame, and geographical challenges. All these codes represent a common concept of theme which is barriers. The same process has been applied to the other themes in this study.

The second cycle coding resulted in the generation of similar codes that emphasized examining the data against the interpretive perspectives (see Jun, 2006). The grantmaking activities were reviewed from the grant proposals to ascertain the grant-makers' attempts to represent the target populations' social reality and lived experiences. The theme that represented the social reality and lived experiences of the target populations is stakeholder engagement. The theme of stakeholder engagement is represented by the codes of engagement, collaboration and collaborative partnerships,

partnership with the community, public input, aligning to participants' needs and interests, sharing, deliberating with input from stakeholders, and informed strategies. The grant proposals elucidated the efforts of the grantmakers to engage the communities that are beneficiaries of their projects.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Ravitch and Carl (2016) insisted that validity refers to how the researchers affirm that their findings are faithful to the participants' experiences. This researcher analyzed grant proposals submitted to comply with the Lanterman Act WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) mandating the bureaucratic agencies and the stakeholders through collaborative activities, identifying the barriers to service access and equity, and implementing best practices to address them. The Lanterman Act WIC 4519.5 (h) mandated the agencies and the stakeholders to implement activities that promote equity among the populations served by the developmental disability system and reduce the existing disparities. To assure the validity of the process, the coding and data analysis engaged in an iterative process. The constant submission of documents to the chair ensures the credibility of the research. I will also enlist a co-worker with long-standing involvement in the disparity issue. Two cultural specialists from two neighboring regional centers will provide their input on the approved and analyzed projects.

As I had mentioned in Chapter 3, the transferability of this study is possible for a policy review in healthcare disparities. The study's dependability was assured by bracketing my personal feelings and experiences while coding. Bracketing is a way to examine my personal biases and separate myself from the issues discussed in the data.

The study's confirmability is assured by saving the coding and analysis documents as excel files and attaching them to the survey as appendices. The appendices will serve as an audit trail that allows the reviewers to discern the processes explored during the analysis.

I coded and analyzed the 59 grant proposals against the codes for the Lanterman Act WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) to ensure that the proposals aligned with the provisions of the law. This process allowed for the familiarity of the data, which was helpful in my second cycle process coding to answer the second research question on the interpretive perspectives. I also journaled my animosity towards politically powerful entities that seemed to get funding year after year. To bracket my feelings and experiences, I stopped coding and took breaks to re-center and examine my biases.

I coded the 17 grant reports against the Lanterman Act, WIC 4519.5 (h) to ensure that the provisions of the law were complied with in the outcomes of the grant activities as reported at the end of the grant period. The same grant reports were coded and analyzed against the social construction of the target populations to answer the first research question—the coding and analysis of the documents to the point of saturation employed to assure an iterative process.

Results

I examined the impact of the disparity law on the target populations of ethnically diverse clients in the developmental disability system. Specifically, I asked, *how the disparity grant report from fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 accounted for shifts in the social construction of the culturally diverse individuals with developmental*

disabilities under the LDDSA. The second research question asked *how effectively the grant proposals showed the bureaucratic agencies' interpretive perspectives in strategizing for grant activities*. The examination of the grant reports should address the first research question through markers for an evolved perception of the target populations from being dependent and politically weak (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993) to dependent but politically strong. Although the intended documents to be analyzed were for four years' worth of data, this researcher only gathered two years of records for grant years 2016-7 and 2017-18 for 17 reports. The analysis of the 17 grant reports begins with the preliminary coding frameworks, which provided this researcher with initial codes to analyze the reports. The initial codes were the markers for the shift in the social construction of dependent and politically weak (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993) to dependent but politically strong.

The grant proposals strongly represent a stakeholder engagement ($f = 51$) as demonstrated by the mention of various public meetings, focus groups, collaborative discussions, and partnerships. The dominance of the codes for collaborating and collaborative partnerships ($f = 25$), partnerships with the community ($f = 27$), public input ($f = 22$), build trust ($f = 10$), and sharing ($f = 10$) further support the theme of engagement. Another strong theme is training, education, and workshops. Grant proposals were written for providing training ($f = 50$), parent education ($f = 29$), training for staff ($f = 29$), education about regional center services ($f = 20$); and training parent mentors ($f = 12$) were all dominant codes under the theme training. The training was also a dominant theme during the first cycle of coding. Another prevalent theme is the family

support and empowerment of families through assisting families ($f = 26$), *building capacity* ($f = 16$), parent support groups ($f = 15$), navigation program for families ($f = 14$), parent to parent support ($f = 14$), and navigation or navigator ($f = 14$).

I also created criteria for the Lanterman Act (WIC 4519.5 (a) to (h) and analyzed the proposals and reports against it. I also did this with WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) and explored the grant proposals to examine the unity of the proposals to the law. Finally, I analyzed the grant reports to ensure alignment with WIC 4519.5 (h) goals. The analysis generated a total of 13 codes from WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) and 11 codes from WIC 4519.5 (h). Discussion of the analysis conducted in the results section.

The analysis of the reports resulted in eight themes: trusting relationships, experiencing barriers, engagement with the system, increase, collaboration and partnerships, outreach, advocacy, training, education, information, and empowerment. I will present each theme along with the data that supports them.

The theme of trusting relationships represents the codes building trust ($f = 2$), building relationships ($f = 2$), and trust and personal connections ($f = 6$). The reports underscored the need for a trusting relationship between regional center staff, the communities, and those who care for the diverse communities.

Establishing trusted relationships within the community is essential, with both families and local organizations. Staff develop long-term relationships with families, and families come back to them for ongoing needs (Grant rep: 17-C12; Snippet 535161)

In their reports, the grant makers insisted that for the ethnically diverse communities to utilize services, they must have a trusting relationship with their service coordinators.

Experiencing barriers represented the second theme of the grant reports. These showed as the codes' barriers, barriers to accessing services ($f = 6$), and a lack of access. Throughout the reviewed reports, the grant makers identified barriers as cultural, socioeconomic, logistical (such as lack of access to transportation), geographical (Hispanic clients living in isolated rural communities), inability to speak English or speak very limited English, and not understanding any English. These barriers presented as factors mitigated by the grant activities. The geographical barriers involved unavailability of services in a rural community in which a family financially struggling is unable to afford transportation to the therapy services:

Lastly, there is a limitation regarding vendor availability in our communities, and some families face a barrier of being offered therapies far from home and are unable to pay for transportation to access those therapies (Grant rep: 17-C10, Snippet #707467)

The third theme is engagement with the system supported by the codes engaging families ($f = 14$) and assisting families ($f = 12$). These represented as necessary activities completed during the grant period to encourage families to utilize services offered by the regional centers. The engagement also involved access to other public resources. The example below represents the families' achievement with advocacy and engagement with the care of their children with developmental disabilities:

Those graduates represent a vital voice in the Los Angeles County disability community. As a result of PAM training, collectively these parent advocates have secured thousands of hours of regional center and school district services for their own children, created parent support groups, and developed lasting friendships and networks vital to the social and emotional growth of their children (Grant rep:17-C47, snippet #:539363)

The fourth theme is increasing, which came in many forms. The word increase is associated with increased participation, access to services ($f = 14$), and increasing service ($f = 16$). The two are differentiated by having received services and utilizing them (increasing services) and being provided information and referred to the services. However, families still refuse to use the service (increasing access to services). This theme also represents increasing referrals ($f = 6$) which could be referrals to the disparity grant projects and the school district. In contrast, increased referrals to the regional centers ($f = 10$) pertain only to regional center referrals. Increasing services received from a regional center is represented in this report by a grantee:

Increasing the number of Hispanic and Asian individuals requesting POS from Regional Center: We referred 297 individuals to request purchase of services through the regional center (Grant rep: 17-C42, snippet #: 537474)

Increased supports also seemed to benefit the families tremendously, especially the ones that are technologically deficient and needed handholding in understanding what services and supports are available to them: especially for people who are unfamiliar with technology; fear requesting services because of legal status, and the fact that not all of the

information about regional services is giving to them when their children first become clients. In serving this population, we have learned that these families require a lot of support. PHP was able to provide them with information in their own languages. We taught them about the services that their children are entitled to under the Lanterman Act. We have seen them become increasingly empowered to request services for their children and adults with disabilities. It is incredibly important that we continue reaching out to these communities, so they fully understand the services that are available to their children (Grant rep: 17-C42, snippet #710839)

The fifth theme is collaboration and partnerships, represented by collaborating ($f = 24$) and partnering with other organizations ($f = 17$). The first cycle coded this as collaborative partnerships ($f = 22$). The grantees underscore those collaborative partnerships with the regional centers, the culturally based organizations, and education agencies allowed the provision of services that reach out to the diverse communities:

Over the course of this project, we have worked closely with Regional Center of Orange County, Family Support Network, Public Law Center, Satori Law Firm, and Legal Aid of Orange County. Family Support Network was very helpful in the initial start of this project as we partnered with them to provide the community with free health screening and early diagnosis of developmental disability. Public Law Center (PLC) has been especially helpful in providing our families with legal support services for conservatorship. This is extremely helpful as legal conservatorship assistance is usually very costly, but with PLC, services are

provided either for free (for eligible low-income families) or at a low cost (Grant rep: 17-C7, snippet #539812)

The sixth theme is outreach and advocacy represented by such codes as advocating ($f = 9$), outreaching ($f = 19$) times, and social media advocacy ($f = 6$). The grants frequently reported outreach events as the primary activities of their projects. The grantees see outreach as a tool to reach out to entities, organizations, and families and educate them about voluntary services available from the developmental disability system. Outreach served as an effective mechanism to spreading the word and informing those that are geographically isolated or those that fear government systems due to immigration issues:

RCOC hired Vietnamese Service Coordinator on January 17th, 2017. The goals were to provide education and outreach to the Vietnamese community. These efforts were designed to break down barriers and the social stigma surrounding developmental disabilities in the Vietnamese and the Asian community here in Orange County. Outreach efforts would include workshop participation, continuation of the weekly talk show on the local Vietnamese television station, and outreach activities at local community centers including developmental screenings (Grant rep: RCOC-01; snippet #710939)

The seventh theme is training, education, and information, represented as providing training ($f = 15$), giving information ($f = 10$), educating parents ($f = 12$), education through workshops ($f = 10$). The types of training included training for parents, professionals, regional center staff, and providing workshops regarding processes of the

regional centers and generic resource agencies such as Medi-Cal, In-Home Supportive Services, and many others. The below-report encapsulates the importance of training to staff, parents, and service providers.

A disparity grant for cultural competency and implicit bias training for staff, vendors, and community partners is essential to disparity efforts. The need for this type of training has been mentioned by consumer parents, community partners, and internally from Service Coordinators (Grant rep: IRC. Final report; snippet #543032)

Consequently, the legislature in 2021 codified the Implicit bias training in AB 136 WIC 4511.1 (a) (2) as a funded and ongoing event for the regional center system (see California Legislative Information, 2021).

The eighth theme is empowerment supported by such codes as empowering (f = 10), client and family empowerment (f = 6), and building capacity (f = 11). The code empowerment showed up nine times during the first coding cycle. The grantees indicated that families that feel supported, engaged, educated, and informed on available services and support are empowered to request services and feel confident about asking for what they need.

FRN made a huge impact on the lives of these families, helping them become eligible for RCEB services, assisting them in advocating for new or additional services, and connecting them with generic and community services. These one-on-one services (a partnership with a peer who was from a family's culture and spoke their language) were supplemented by group trainings, support groups and

playgroups. Group activities helped families become more knowledgeable about available services, learn how to navigate and change those systems themselves and become more empowered to advocate for their child and family (Grant rep: 17-C20; snippet #: 535178)

The limited number of reports analyzed pointed to favorable results for the target populations. The data showed that recognizing the barriers experienced by the target populations was one of the priorities for mitigation. There was also a recognition that for a meaningful engagement of the ethnically diverse communities, a trusting relationship and connection had to be established, leading to the prioritization of engagement and outreach. A campaign involving training, education, and information about the families came from focus group discussions. Families expressed that they were confused about what services were available and how to access them. Families were also overwhelmed with the complexity of the processes for acquiring services, may it be through the regional center or generic resource agencies. Advocacy and outreach were some of the frequent activities implemented. They all seemed to increase services, access, participation, and referrals to regional centers and other safety-net agencies. The reports also showed that clients and their families felt empowered by the new knowledge they acquired and their support through parent navigation, peer parent supports, workshops, and information events attended.

The second research question examines the strategies employed by the grant makers in their proposals. It asks, “How effectively do the grant proposals show the bureaucratic agencies’ interpretive perspectives in strategizing for grant activities.” The

grant proposals analyzed for this research question are approved two-year projects resulting in the examination of 59 submissions. The analysis resulted in six themes: stakeholder engagement/collaboration, Training, education/workshops, information, Outreach and advocacy, addressing barriers, underutilization of services, family support/empowerment. The stakeholder engagement/collaboration theme showed up the most in the proposals represented by the code engagement ($f = 50$). Among the cluster of codes belonging to this theme, the word partnerships ($f = 27$); Collaborating/collaborative partnerships ($f = 25$) public input ($f = 22$); followed by alignment representing the statement aligning with participants' needs and interests ($f = 21$). Other less significant words belonging to this theme means building trust, sharing, deliberating with input from stakeholders, and informed strategies. Appendix F hosts the table showing the hierarchy of the codes. The theme engagement dominated the grant proposals analyzed in this study. Stakeholder engagement in the proposals pointed to all activities of the grantmakers that involved consultation with the public, particularly the ethnically diverse communities, about what they need from the regional centers in terms of services and support for their son/daughter with developmental disabilities. Many of the regional centers solicited the feedback of their stakeholders during their Annual POS meeting for projects they should prioritize in their grantmaking. Other regional centers and CBOs held focus group discussions to solicit input. Yet, others conducted community meetings, and others have always worked with ethnically diverse families and expanded their activities for the developmentally disabled populations. An example of stakeholder

engagement is exemplified by the efforts of the grantee Boat People S.O.S claiming that they are:

positioned and equipped to implement this project due to our deep roots in the local Vietnamese community, our knowledge of Regional Center services, our extensive experience with mitigating disparity, and our competency in service to families (Grant prop #: 17-C17, snippet =682174)

This grantee has had an established relationship with the Vietnamese community in the United States but particularly in the Orange County area where this approved grant project was implemented. The grant proposals showed the most significant emphasis on the engagement of the stakeholders in the proposal-making process. The recommendations indicated strong efforts to engage the community, the professionals, the regional center staff, and, more importantly, the ethnically diverse parents who often were the target populations of the grants.

The second most significant theme is the training, education/workshops, which represents providing training ($f = 50$) in the proposals. This theme encompasses training staff, parents, and professionals, but primarily training families of ethnically diverse communities. Other codes belonging to this theme are educating parents ($f = 29$) training staff ($f = 29$). The grantees proposed education, information, and training, asserting that many ethnically diverse families do not access services because they do not know what is available. Many families deal with more pressing circumstances, such as the need to prioritize food over the needs of their son/daughter with developmental disabilities. Below are examples of grant-makers efforts of training, education, and workshop

provided for families to build capacity and empower them to take charge of the care of their children through requesting services that they need:

Provide small-session awareness and education that will increase the self-efficacy of the participant leading to identifying and garnering appropriate services and resources for their children, adolescents, young adults, and older adults with ASD (Grant prop: 18-C58; snippet#: 490793)

Families said they wanted more information about Autism, Down syndrome and other conditions. They felt more information about how to work with their children, in Spanish, would be most helpful. A number of families related how they either did not know for a long time or still were confused about the role of the regional center in their lives, how the regional center could help and where to ask for help (Grant prop:18-RB-FNRC1; snippet #: 493021).

Interestingly, parent education showed up 29 times in the first coding cycle. Other codes belonging to the same theme are education and guidance about generic services ($f = 10$) and family training ($f = 10$). Any interested parties can find a table summary of the codes and occurrences in Appendix F.

Many of the grantees have emphasized the need to train parents on the processes employed by the regional center system, the intake and eligibility, service procurement, and securing services from generic and other social service agencies. Multiple grants provided training in various languages or allowed for the translation of training in English into Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, and other requested languages by the training recipients or workshops.

Outreach and education campaign using culturally and linguistically appropriate information. Through mass media (VietFaceTV 57.2), we reached to approximately 20,000 Vietnamese residents in Southern California. Through training workshops and at community events, we provided education to 484 people (Grant prop: 19-C07; snippet #: 505566)

Another significant theme is outreach and advocacy, represented by the code outreach ($f = 33$); community outreach, focus groups ($f = 9$); as a tool utilized by the grantees when desiring community input. The emphasis on Outreach to professional organizations and social media advocacy represented the outreach and advocacy theme. Below are some of the activities that grantees were engaged in to gather community input and providing information:

Orange County through a coordinated educational campaign on available resources and on the efficacy, safety, and accessibility of preventive screening. The outreach and education campaign aims to increase community demand (e.g., knowledge, motivation, access, and decision making). We have established an extensive network of mainstream and ethnic media partners that reached to over 220,000 Vietnamese residing in Southern California. In addition to our social media pages (FaceBook,(sic) Twitter), Mach Song (Life Stream) e-news, and online webpage (Grant prop: 17-C7; snippet #: 473815)

The grantees emphasized the need for outreach and advocacy because many ethnically diverse families indicated less familiarity with the regional center system. Community members did not know the existence of the regional center system, and there

was a firm reliance on the health insurance and the Medicaid system in California as providers of health services. Outreach and advocacy also became a primary tool to educate lawmakers and grassroots organizations about the massive gap in expenditures among the populations in the developmental disability system and the difficulties faced by the ethnically diverse communities.

Participants will undertake a minimum of 4 civic engagement activities such as letter writing, testifying at city, county, and State hearings; door-to-door canvassing; meeting with local, state, and federal legislators, drafting simple policy statements, developing simple advocacy plans, creating social media petitions, collecting signatures, organizing other parents and advocates, educating marginalized parents on Regional Center services, speaking at community forums and legislative meetings, and participating in various social action campaigns during the grant period (Grant prop: 17C47; snippet #: 682162)

The next theme is Addressing barriers represented by cultural barriers ($f = 26$) followed by the need for trusting relationships ($f = 20$), which, when absent, cause the non-utilization of offered services. Language barriers ($f = 19$) came in third and the socioeconomic barriers ($f = 17$) as fourth. Some of the grantees referenced the marginalization of the migrant parents because of their socioeconomic status:

Parents/caregivers of these children typically have less than a high school education (41.6%), are low-wage workers (e.g. construction, garment work, cleaning and janitorial work, restaurant/food service work, drivers, mechanics, and home care workers), are poor (73% live below 200% FPL) and spend 30% or

more of their income on housing (62.7%), are food insecure (32.4%), are immigrants (51.9%), and speak mostly Spanish at home (48.8%) (Key Indicators of Health, 2016). Faced with a diagnosis of a disability, these parents/caregivers are particularly challenged to meet their children's special needs due to the complicating factors of language, literacy, and poverty (Grant prop: 17-C48; snippet #: 471614)

These parents need one-to-one assistance and referrals to organizations that can provide economical service. They will not be able to prioritize the need of their developmentally disabled child if they must prioritize food on the table.

Another theme identified in the grant proposals is the underutilization of services. This theme is represented by underutilizing services (f = 26), followed by lack of quality services (f = 6), lack of information (f = 5), and being lost in the regional center system (f = 4). The discussion of this theme primarily emphasized the need to conceptualize diversity activities that address the underutilization of services. Understanding why services are underutilized or not utilized at all manifests in the grant statement below:

Hispanic clients and their families currently represent approximately 40% of HRC's total client population, yet this group is underrepresented as far as POS expenditures and utilization in every category expect when adult clients in supported living. Hispanic clients and their families also account for HRCs largest group with no purchase of service authorizations (Grant prop: 18-RB-HRC1; snippet #: 687102)

The Hispanic population is the largest group in California and in the developmental disability system. They comprised 40.31% of the state's developmental disability populations. Despite being the largest ethnic group, they also have the lowest purchase of service (POS) expenditures among the group at \$10,561 compared to African American at \$21,136 and White clients at \$25,886 (Department of Developmental Services, 2019h).

The last theme group is Family support/support services and empowerment. The codes assisting families/family support ($f = 26$) represent this theme. The following codes also represent the preceding mentioned theme: building capacity ($f = 16$), parent support groups ($f = 15$), navigation for families ($f = 14$), parent to parent support ($f = 14$) times, empowerment ($f = 14$), and navigation services ($f = 10$). The grantees insisted that educating families with available services and support empowers them to take charge of their children's care and be confident about advocating for their needs.

Assist 500 families of existing RC consumers with obtaining additional services through RC (i.e. Respite hours, adaptive skills). With a minimum family size of 2 this can potentially impact 1000 individuals)

Assist 500 families of existing RC consumers with obtaining generic services (i.e. ABA through medical insurance, school-based therapies through the IEP, support hours through IHSS) per year. With a minimum family size of 2 this can potentially impact 1000 individuals) [Grant prop: 19-C10; snippet #: 690652]

These results favored the premise that the Grantmakers engaged their constituencies when they conceptualized their grant proposals. The 59 grant proposals

showed that stakeholder engagement/collaboration has the highest incidence of being mentioned or alluded to in the proposals. Collaboration and partnerships constituted the grant-making, and they solicited the *public's input* in the grant-making activities. Many grantmakers aligned their products to the needs and interests of the target populations. They shared information with their target populations and wrote their grants based on the input of their stakeholders.

The coding of the disparity law, WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f), was conducted to examine the grant proposals' alignment to the law's directive. The preceding referenced law mandated that the regional centers and the DDS consult with community partners to discuss the existing disparities in the developmental disability system. The law also required the regional centers to engage their stakeholders, including consumers and families, in discussing differences and their mitigation. The law mandates regional centers develop recommendations and plans to promote equity and reduce disparities. All the above activities should occur during the required Annual POS meeting and show in the grant-making activities. A table showing the law's analysis results against the proposals is found in Appendix F.

The grant proposals referenced the themes identify best practices and discussion of expenditures data the most in their proposals ($f = 62$) times for both. The grantees enumerated best practices to implement in their grant proposals. The other theme most talked about in the proposals was the expenditures data, which often referenced the expenditure gap between the White populations and the culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The grantees also talked significantly about barriers to accessing

services and supports, referenced 60 times. The plan and recommendations ($f = 58$) of the regional centers to address the disparities have been mentioned frequently in the proposals.

The grant proposals did not address the themes documentation, community partners' consultation, and stakeholders' engagement. The exclusion of these themes precipitated from the law that DDS is mandated to engage the community partners, and regional centers must engage the stakeholders during the Annual POS meeting. Since the proposals are primarily products of the Annual POS meeting discussion, these themes will not appear in the grant proposals.

The analysis of the grant reports was to ensure that the accounts show their alignment with the goals of WIC 4519.5 (h), which allocate \$11 million yearly for diversity-related activities. I analyzed the 17 grant reports. The results are found in Appendix F. The grant reports emphasized the importance of submitting reports to DDS. The department retains the discretion to implement a reporting process appropriate for their monitoring and review. The report's second-most discussed item is reporting priorities that are effective in addressing the disparities ($f = 30$). The mandate about funding allocation to regional centers and CBOs was referenced 29 times in the reports. Culturally appropriate service type and service delivery model referenced 17 times, followed by outreach ($f = 13$) and parent education ($f = 12$). It is difficult to ascertain that these coded data align completely with WIC 4519.5 (h) mandate as two years of grant reports are missing from the data collection. Three of the codes strongly represent the

law's mandates, while another three moderately represent alignment to the law. The study identified five other codes, but they were mentioned less than ten times.

Summary

Chapter 4 discussed the setting of the study, the data collection process comprised of gathering the 59 grant proposals to be analyzed to answer the second research question and the 17 grant reports for the 2017 and 2018 grant cycle and analyzing them with the assistance of the computer software delvetool.com. The grant proposals were also examined against WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) to align with this disparity law's provisions. This analysis will show if grant proposals followed the mandate of the law. The WIC 4519.5 (h) analysis against the grant reports was to ascertain their congruency to the funding goals allocated for diversity-related activities. The analysis results to answer the first research question showed favorable results towards change in perception of the ethnically diverse populations based on the frequently coded words that resulted from the analysis. The grant proposals also showed that engagement with the stakeholders was the most dominant theme. They contain many elements expressed by Jun (2005) necessary for an interpretive perspective in grant-making strategies. The words collaboration, partnerships, sharing, informed strategies represented the grant makers' efforts to engage the target populations in their grantmaking. The next chapter will discuss the introduction to Chapter 5, the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, the recommendations, the implications, and the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

I examined the impact of the disparity law through the LDDSA WIC Section 4519.5 (h) to the social construction of culturally and linguistically diverse populations of the developmental disability system. I also examined the bureaucratic agencies' interpretive perspectives (see Jun, 2005) in strategizing for their grant proposals. The answers to the research questions were obtained through the naturalistic construction approach (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012) to identify the benefits or burdens of the disparity law and interpretive perspectives of bureaucratic agencies. As the researcher, I was interested in finding out whether the infusion of \$11 million annually to the developmental disability system augmented the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse population from dependent but politically weak to dependent and politically powerful constituents of the system. I was also interested in finding out whether the bureaucratic agencies (regional centers and CBOs) engaged their stakeholders to ensure representation of their social reality/situations in the conceptualization of the grant projects.

Summary of Key Findings

The analysis of the 17 grant reports received from the DDS resulted in the discernment of eight themes: trusting relationships; experiencing barriers; engagement with the system; increase; collaboration and partnerships; outreach and advocacy; training, education, and information; and empowerment. These themes dominated the grant reports as outcomes of the activities within the projects. The analysis of the 59 grant proposals received from the DDS and information downloaded from their website

resulted in the following six main themes: stakeholder engagement and collaboration; training, education, and workshops; outreach and advocacy; addressing barriers; underutilization of services; and family support/support services and empowerment. Both theme categories from the grant reports and grant proposals had corresponding codes, which are explained in the next section on the interpretation of the findings.

Interpretation of the Findings

Grant Reports for 2017 and 2018

The literature review established that policy designs are socially constructed (see Schneider & Sidney, 2009) and either benefit or burden a target population (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 2005). The California developmental disability system authorized by the Lanterman Act (W & I Code, § 4500-4905) resulted from the advocacy of White parents and professionals whose loved ones resided in the state hospital system (Braun, 2000). The parents and advocates socially constructed the original Lanterman Act and the services and support offered. The California population in the 1960s was almost homogenous. In 1960, California's population was 15,717,204, and 14,255,230 identified as White comprising 92% of the total California population (1960 Census of Population, 1961). In the 2020 U.S. Census, the Hispanic population was the most prominent race and ethnicity group at 39.4% compared to 34.7% White alone and 15.1% Asian (see US Census Bureau, 2021). This population composition change reflected a tremendous diversification from an almost homogeneous White population at the inception of the law to a populous and highly diverse population at the present time.

The state's efforts to address the diversity resulted in the enactment of WIC 4519.5 (h) to infuse 11 million dollars every year to mitigate the ongoing disparity in service access and utilization of regional center services. This portion of the LDDSA was socially constructed from the struggle of Hispanic families with children with autism in Southern California against the seven regional centers in the area (see Zarembo, 2011). This policy was also a result of 4 years of expenditure data observation, which indicated that funding was necessary to implement diversity-related activities to address the long-standing disparity in the system. The beneficiaries of this policy were intended to be the culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the system. Schneider and Ingram's (1993) social construction theory indicated that this target population was dependent and politically weak. They were a positively constructed population, but their political power was weak, and much advocacy was needed to forward their interests.

The analysis of a little more than a quarter of the reports confirmed a positive shift in the social construction of the culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The analysis results pointed to the importance of trusting relationships being established among the culturally diverse communities for them to use services offered by the regional centers. The code of trust and personal connections ($f = 6$) dominated in this theme of trusting relationships. The culturally diverse communities were experiencing barriers with several different iterations such as socioeconomic barriers, geographic barriers, cultural barriers, and general barriers to accessing services ($f = 6$). The grantees' reports confirmed the absence of ethnically diverse populations' social construction in the conceptualization of the LDDSA law. In over 5 decades of the regional centers'

existence, the services and supports remained unchanged. Several events such as legal suits and California Supreme Court decisions, the implementation of the Home and Community-Based Waivers, and the budget crises that the state experienced (see Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 2010d) were primary contributors to the underfunded mandates in the system. The absence of adequate funding and years of little to no consideration of the need of the ethnically diverse populations in the system perpetuated a long-standing disparity.

Another theme observed from the reports of the grant proposals was engagement with the system in which the dominant codes were engaging families ($f = 14$) and assisting families ($f = 12$). These implemented strategies by the grant holders were instrumental in ensuring that families accessed services from their respective regional centers. The next theme was increased, which translated to several different iterations of which the most dominant were increasing access to services, increasing services, and increasing referrals to the regional center. This theme confirmed one of the markers identified in the literature review as an increased receipt of regional center services and increased utilization of services. The theme of outreach and advocacy was another theme that emerged from the grant reports. The dominant codes under this theme were outreaching ($f = 19$), advocacy and engagement ($f = 10$), advocating ($f = 9$), and social media advocacy ($f = 6$). Outreach and advocacy were necessary components of informing the general population of the availability of services and support for anyone with a developmental disability and informing the state legislature of inequitable access to services. Training, education, and information was a theme that was dominant in the 17

reports submitted for 2017 and 2018. The dominant codes under this theme were providing training ($f = 15$), educating parents ($f = 12$), providing information ($f = 10$), and education through workshops ($f = 10$). These activities were identified as necessary under the disparity law to increase families' knowledge about what services and supports are available to them and dispel some of the stigmas that the ethnically diverse communities held regarding developmental disability. Lastly, the grant reports showed a theme of empowerment represented by the codes of connecting families ($f = 16$), building capacity ($f = 11$), and empowering ($f = 10$). Empowerment was a necessary component of the grant activities to enhance the family's ability to use services and supports offered by the regional centers. The empowerment of families entailed connecting them to generic resources and the regional center and building their capacity by providing education and workshops about regional center processes and through ongoing information sessions designed to educate them about policies and procedures around the use of services and supports.

Grant Proposals for 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020

The a priori codes from the literature review follow the social construction of public administration and characterize the codes of sharing, learning, deliberating, meaning-making, intersubjective relationships, and understanding the social world from the subject's point of view; working with people, values and needs. These a priori codes served as the preliminary coding framework which guided my analysis of the collected data. These codes represented the assertion of Jun (2005) that democratic governance is characterized by decentralization, fragmentation, and autonomy in decision making,

horizontal relationships, networking and collaboration, and others (see Jun, 2005). The analysis of the 59 two-year grant proposals resulted in six significant themes relative to the proposed projects of the grantees. The first theme is stakeholder engagement and collaboration. A dominant code under this theme is engagement ($f = 51$). Many of the grantees indicated that engagement of the culturally and linguistically diverse communities to the developmental disability system is critical in enticing them to utilize the services and supports offered by the regional center system. The second dominant code under this theme is a partnership with the community ($f = 27$) and collaborating/collaborative partnerships ($f = 25$). Most of the grantees believed that community partnerships are essential to convincing the ethnically diverse communities to learn more about the regional center system and participate in workshops involving education about regional center services, supports, and processes. Collaborative partnerships involved the regional centers and CBOs that are culture-based. The next primary theme is training, education/workshop. Under this theme, the grantees underscored providing training ($f = 50$). This training code is represented by cultural competency training to staff, community professionals, and training provided to families. Other codes under this theme included parent education ($f = 29$) and training to staff ($f = 29$). The third theme is outreach and advocacy, and the codes that dominated are outreach ($f = 33$). Community outreach ($f = 19$) pertains to informing culture-based organizations, safety net agencies, hospital institutions, and many others about the existence of the regional center system. Another code under this theme is advocacy ($f = 11$), emphasizing the significant nature of advocacy to promote the cause of the culturally and linguistically

diverse communities and highlighting the barriers they experience in the developmental disability system. The fourth theme of the grant proposals was addressing barriers in which the grantees indicated that the ethnically diverse communities experienced cultural barriers ($f = 26$). That trust/trusting relationship ($f = 20$) is essential to have with their service coordinators to utilize services offered by the regional centers. The grantees also indicated that language barriers ($f = 19$) and socioeconomic barriers ($f = 17$) are among those experienced by diverse populations. The fifth theme in the proposals was the underutilization of services. The grantees discussed the data for expenditures of the culturally and linguistically diverse clients compared to their White counterparts. The dominant code reported is underutilizing services ($f = 24$), lack of quality services ($f = 6$), and families feeling lost in the system ($f = 4$). The last (sixth) theme is about support and empowerment of the families to confidently ask for services they need that are within the POS. guidelines. Under this theme, the grantees indicated that assisting families ($f = 26$) is critical in the family's encouragement to utilize the developmental disabilities services and supports.

The above themes confirmed the involvement of the stakeholders in planning the activities for submission to the Department of proposals to address the disparity experienced by the culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the system. Consideration of the target population's realities in grantmaking activities supports projects that represent the multiple realities of the diverse community (see Jun, 2005). Stakeholder engagement proved consultation with the target populations and involved learning, sharing, and deliberating (see Jun, 2005) with those affected by the grantmaking

activities. The grantees believed that training, education/workshops provide a way for the diverse communities to learn and understand the processes within the regional center and know what to ask for according to their needs. The markers, as mentioned earlier, align with Jun's assertion that a democratic and participatory process espouses sharing and learning together. Outreach and advocacy strengthened partnerships and provided avenues for meaningful inquiry and informed decision-making for those advocating for the population.

The themes of addressing barriers, underutilization of services, and family support/support services and empowerment were identified in the literature review as possible causes of the ongoing disparities in the system. The ARCA insisted that the populations have gone through extreme diversification. The ethnically diverse communities experience barriers in many forms such as socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and educational. These lead to the underutilization of services. In the absence of intensive assistance, families tend to forego benefits and support for their child or sibling with a developmental disability. The grantees agreed that providing intensive support to the families empowered them to navigate and explore available services from the regional center system and other safety-net agencies. The onslaught of budget cuts, Supreme court decisions, and contraction of the system resulted in unfunded responsibilities and underfunded services.

Policy Formulation and Implementation Gap

The policy formulation process involved the initiation, research, projection, and development of a plan to address a public need or problem (see Hacker, 2006). The

disparity in the developmental disabilities system was the identified problem that disparity law intended to address. The social construction of WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) resulted from the advocacy of interest groups and the media after many years of monitoring the expenditures data with no significant changes observed (see DVU, 2020). In 2016, the addition of WIC 4519.5 (h) prompted the implementation of activities identified in Sections (e) to (f) with an allotment of funding. The law also mandated the Department of Developmental Services to oversee the grant activities. The mandates enumerated by WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) primarily apply to the regional center system. The compliance to the provisions of (e) to (f) is unilaterally imposed on the regional centers and not on the CBOs.

Of the grant proposals approved in the first year of implementation, 12 two-year proposals were all granted to the regional centers. Many one-year proposals were approved for the remaining nine regional centers. Only one regional center was approved for continued funding out of the 12 grantees approved for two-year projects in the second year of implementation. In the third year of implementation, 20 2-year grant proposals were approved, and four of the 20 were regional centers. In the fourth year of implementation, DDS approved 14 grantees, and 4 of the 14 were regional centers. This fact is important because the imbalance of funding approval at first glance could result in a policy formulation and implementation gap. Barnhizer (2013) explained that even in the best situation, there is an inevitable falling off between the ‘pure’ act of creating policy and law and the ‘impure’ act of implementation. The creation of the law is mainly a hypothesis of a situation it purports to address. While all the mandates of WIC 4519.5 (a)

to (f) fall on the regional center to comply, their performance hinges on the funding provided by WIC 4519.5 (h) of \$11 million yearly to be shared with CBOs. It stands to reason that the diversion of funds during the implementation of WIC 4519.5 (h) could result in a gap in the performance of law.

, I analyzed the 59 grant proposals against WIC. 4519.5 (e) to (f) because these sections of the law are the driving force of WIC 4519.5 (h) to mitigate or reduce the existing disparities in the system. I came up with 13 themes for WIC. 4519.5 (e) to (f). The analysis showed that only four of the 13 themes as significantly represented in the grant proposals.

Table 2

WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) Significant Themes

Theme	Number
Identify barriers	60
Identify best practices	62
Recommendations to promote equity and reduce disparities	58
Discussion of expenditures data	62

Nine of the thirteen themes applied only to the regional centers, and only their proposals manifested the nine identified themes. The above table represents the compliance of the recommendations to the provisions of the law. They are common themes among the 59 grant proposals reviewed. Nine other themes, legal mandates of Section (e) to (f), did not show significant frequency among the grant proposals. See Table 11 below.

Table 3*WIC 4519.5 (h) Significant Themes*

Theme	Number
Consultation with community partners	2
Engage the stakeholders (consumers and families)	2
High turnout during annual meeting	8
Post meeting information online	18
Accommodate language needs	20
Actions to improve attendance	21
Data improvement	25
Culturally and linguistically appropriate to the discussion	38

The nine identified themes were a mandate for the regional centers, and the fewer grants approved for the centers, the smaller number of times the nine themes showed up. The same phenomenon existed for the grant reports. The 2017 submitted reports came from eight regional centers, and the ten final reports submitted in 2018 all came from the CBOs. I identified ten themes from WIC 4519.5 (h), which I analyzed against the grant reports submitted for 2017 and 2018. The reports showed alignment to the mandates of WIC 4519.5 (h) pending implementation of activities suggested in (e) and (f). The most dominant themes are priorities that may be effective in addressing disparities ($f = 30$), Reporting protocols to the Department (DDS) ($f = 33$), and allocation of funding to regional centers and CBOs ($f = 29$). Three of the ten themes were significantly represented in the grant reports. The two-year proposals analyzed in this study mainly represented the CBOs, and few came from the regional centers. The same is true for the grant reports submitted for 2017 and 2018. This circumstance would show that when the

disparity law is formulated, the law's goals do not seem to match the implementation as an imbalance exists in the approval of the grant proposals.

Limitations of the Study

In conducting this study, I contributed to the literature regarding the disparity in the developmental disability field. When considering my findings, the following limitations should be kept in mind: The limitation of the reports obtained to only 2 years, and some of the grant proposals included in the analysis did not have their corresponding reports. It was anticipated that at least 3 of grant reporting would be obtained as the documents were requested in 2021, allowing the collection of all reports from 2017 to 2019. The purpose of analyzing the grant proposals against WIC 4519.5 (e) to (f) was to ascertain congruence to this section of the law. Some documents supposed to come from DDS were missing. A portion of the law was a mandate for DDS to consult the stakeholders and regional centers regarding mitigation measures to address the disparities. The data obtained by DDS during these consultations were not part of this analysis. The analysis of the grant reports against WIC 4519.5 (h) was limited to the final grant reports obtained. Missing documents were ancillary documents such as summaries of pre-and post-surveys, success stories, and written comments from the families. One should also remember that the findings of this study were limited to the 59 grant proposals and the 17 grant reports. Although this study was anchored on the social construction theoretical frameworks, the social construction theoretical frameworks of the Lanterman Act at its conception cannot be gleaned through this study. The documents analyzed in this study were limited to the period specified for the papers. The study

results only represent the time corresponding to the data obtained. Any uncollected data or new information is not part of the findings of this study.

Social Construction Theories and Their Utility to the Study

The social construction theories of target populations (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993) and public administration (see Jun 2005) proved appropriate as theoretical frameworks to examine the disparity law and its impact on the target populations. Jun's assertion that the social situation and reality of the target populations must form the basis of bureaucratic agencies' grantmaking. The subject of this study is the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (LDDSA) CA Stats. (1977 rev. 2014) https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=WIC§ionNum=4519.5. Welfare and Institutions Code §4519.5 (e) to (f), (g) to (h) mandates that regional centers in California hold an annual meeting to discuss the purchase of service (POS) three months after its publication on its website. The law mandates that regional centers discuss with their stakeholders whether the data indicates a disparity and plan strategies and ways to reduce the disparity and promote equity in the system. The legislature allotted \$11 million annually for diversity-related activities designed to eliminate the disparity in the developmental disabilities field. Since its implementation in 2016, California has poured approximately \$55 million into the regional centers and the community-based organizations. This study premised that the culturally and linguistically diverse populations served by the system belong to the typology of advantage but are politically weak (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The social construction of LDDSA OF 2013 emerged from the struggle of Hispanic parents in the Southern California regional

centers (see Zaremba, 2011). After three years of reviewing the data and no significant changes, the legislature infused the 11 million dollars to commence in the 2016 budget year. This \$11 million is an investment expected to affect the disparity in the system. This study utilized the social construction of target populations to examine the impact of the LDDSA (h) on the culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the system. This study presupposed that the achievement of the goals of the LDDSA would show benefit increases such as the increase in POS and decrease of no POS clients. It would show improved communication with service coordinators, increased satisfaction, increased advocacy, no budget cuts, increased favorable legislation, and increased receipt of generic resources (Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the LDDSA, Disparity Law Study,).

The grant reports that the fourth theme is increasing in many forms. There is increased participation, increased access to services, and increased referrals to the regional center. Themes such as engagement with the system, outreach and advocacy, training, education and information, and empowerment of families support the theme of increasing.

Additionally, in the budget year 2021, the legislature passed Budget Trailer Bill, AB 136 (Chapter 76, Statutes of 2021), which instituted a community navigator program, an offshoot of the service navigator, and promotora programs funded by the disparity grants of 2016. It also instituted an Implicit bias training for all regional centers in the state, the Language Access and Cultural Competencies initiative, the enhanced caseload ratio allotting budget for a 1:40 caseload of low to no purchase of services (POS) clients, and allotted money for a statewide evaluation of disparity grant projects (see Winfield, 2021).

In 2021 and 2022, the developmental disability system did not experience any budget

cuts. The social construction of public administration anchored this study in examining the interpretive perspectives of the Grantmakers composed of the regional center system and CBOs. Examination of the grant proposals showed that stakeholder engagement consistently occurred between Grantmakers and their target populations. The regional centers gathered feedback and input during their annual POS meetings, and the CBOs conducted focus group discussions and town hall meetings to gather the input of their target populations. This study presupposed that marker for an interpretive perspective that account the social reality and situation of the target populations (see Jun 2005) include sharing, learning, deliberating, and contesting, as demonstrated by townhall meetings, ethnicity-specific projects, representation of target population input into conceptualized projects (Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the LDDSA, Disparity Law Study). The themes strongly supporting these markers include stakeholder engagement/collaboration, outreach and advocacy, addressing barriers, and family support/empowerment. These results seem to point to the involvement of the target populations in the grantmaking strategies of the bureaucratic agencies. There seems to exist a deliberation, sharing of ideas and knowledge, and the target populations were active participants in conceptualizing projects to address the barriers they experienced. These theoretical frameworks remained appropriate for the investigations conducted in this study.

Recommendations

This study was limited to the analysis of secondary data written from the perspectives of the grantees. A study involving the target populations on their experiences and views about the disparity law would lend credence to the perceived

change in their social construction. Another study could utilize the same methodology and theoretical frameworks and conduct interviews or case studies to gain a firsthand perspective of the impact of the disparity law on the target populations. The same research could also use the social construction of the public administration framework and analyze the views of the bureaucratic agencies to glean their perceptions of the social reality of the target populations. This study will present a learning opportunity to further the training and education of the service coordinators.

Another study could be conducted on the policy formulation and implementation gap of the LDDSA disparity policy. The goal would be to understand the social construction of those who advocated for the law and those implementing the law. The goals of the disparity policy seemed to be incongruent with the implementation, as represented by the imbalance of grant approvals between the community-based organization and the regional centers. The study should be able to come up with recommendations to close the gap.

Another study could be conducted utilizing the social construction of public administration and analyzing regional center management's interaction with their staff and service coordinators. The same research could discern the exchange of the service coordinators with the clients and families that they serve through the street-level bureaucracy framework. This research will allow the regional center management team and street-level bureaucrats to find a more effective way of providing services and supports that prevent burn-out, overburdened with the burgeoning caseload, and employ participatory management that encourages dialogue and cooperation.

The analysis of the grant reports indicated that the themes: trusting relationships; engagement of the family with the developmental disability system; *collaboration and partnerships*; *outreach and advocacy*; *training, education, and workshops*; all lead to empowerment and increase in services and supports, increased referrals, increased access to services not just the regional center, and increase of family's understanding about regional center processes. The regional center system should establish an internal mechanism to institutionalize grant projects that effectively increase the utilization of services and supports from the agency. For example, workshops in different languages about the different types of developmental disabilities and their impact on the client, ongoing workshops about intake and eligibility, available services, and supports will allow the families to have on-hand information as their developmentally disabled family members move from one developmental phase to another. The regional centers can institutionalize collaborative partnerships, outreach activities, education, workshops, and competency training to strengthen the agency's ability to respond to the ethnically diverse families' needs and build a relationship of mutual respect and trust.

Implications

Social Determinants of Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) assembled a group of policymakers, researchers, and civil society organizations to support tackling the social causes of poor health and avoidable health inequalities or health inequities (see Commission on Social Determinants of Health, n.d.). The overarching recommendations of the commission involved improving daily living conditions, tackling the inequitable distribution of power,

money, and resources, measuring and understanding the problem, and assessing the impact of the action (see World Health Organization, 2008). The United States Department of Health grouped the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) into five domains: economic stability; education access and quality; health care access and quality; neighborhood and built environment; social and community context (see Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d). The inequities in the developmental disabilities system perpetuate the health inequities among the vulnerable populations of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This study aligns with the health care access and quality domain as the goals of the disparity policy are the same goals forwarded by health care access and quality. The target population of the disparity policy is the racially and ethnically diverse communities. The causes of health disparities identified by the WHO present as the same causes existent in the developmental disability field, The examination of the impact of the disparity law can be utilized to examine the existing health care policies. This type of study may be able to discern if participatory processes are employed to evolve policies that are no longer responsive to the constituencies of the present healthcare communities.

Social Change Implications

The analysis of the grant proposals showed that a democratic process and participatory approach to grantmaking were critical in ensuring that the social reality of the people targeted by the disparity policy is the primary consideration of the grantmaking. Underscoring the importance of consultation with the stakeholders allows the projects to address the identified needs of the target populations and address the

barriers they experienced. The social determinants of health identified in the health disparities were the same SDOH that influenced the ongoing gap in the developmental disability system. The social change implication of this study involved the participatory approach to interaction by the bureaucratic agencies with the racially and ethnically diverse communities to find meaningful solutions to the existing disparities.

Another social change implication of this study points to the existence of barriers such as cultural, language, and socioeconomic barriers that the diverse communities have experienced. The study also showed that engagement of the communities, outreach and advocacy, training, and education helped build the parents' skills and paved the way for empowerment, which allowed families to request and advocate for the needs of their son or daughter with developmental disabilities. The creation of services and supports aligned to the activities of the disparity grant projects could result from this study. The resulting services and supports could lead to access and encourage utilization.

Understanding that the disparity policy in California seemed to be a step in the right direction and the grant projects within it allowed for innovation of services and supports that are responsive to the needs of the target populations; this could lead to further exploration of fiscal resources to fund further innovation. The social change implication is improved quality services and supports that are responsive to the needs of the ethnically diverse communities, increasing utilization of services and supports.

Conclusion

The disparities in the developmental disability system in California are a phenomenon that the populations in the system have endured for a long time. The

conceptualization of the developmental disabilities law in the early 1960 occurred when most of the clients served by the system were White, comprising 92% of the population (see 1960 Census of Population, 1961). In 2021, and the client population is 24 times bigger than its original population with a six billion annual budget and highly diverse communities with at least 23 ethnicities and 45 spoken languages (see ARCA, 2018c). The diversification of the system and the disparities did not attract attention until 2011 with the publication of a four-part article in the Los Angeles Times about the struggle of Hispanic families with autism in the Southern California regional centers. The report highlighted the ongoing disparities and led to the creation of the *Taskforce on Equity and Diversity for Regional Center Autism Services* (see Steinberg, 2012). The resulting law is WIC 4519.5 (a) to (f), and in 2016, Sections (g) to (h) were added with allocated funding of 11 million annually for activities identified in Section (g) (1) (A) to (D) and (2). These provisions in the Lanterman Act composed the disparity law in this study.

The LDDSA is a California legislation designed to benefit the population in the state hospital system with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The resulting services and supports offered under the LDDSA provide an alternative to confinement in a state institution. The disparity policy addresses service access issues and promotes equity in the system. The scholarly world has focused its attention on health disparities, and few studied the disparities in the developmental disability system. Available research about the disparities in the developmental disability system concentrates on children's services. My research is the first that focused on the impact of the disparity law on the target populations.

Contrary to the anecdotal belief that the system engaged in intentional discrimination, the LLDSA system throughout its existence has struggled with lawsuits, California Supreme court decisions, HCBSW mandates, budget crises resulting in heavy caseloads, rate insufficiency and inadequacy, unfunded mandates, and budget allocations not responsive to the individually assessed needs of clients. Throughout its history, the role of advocates, interest groups, and the media has always been instrumental in passing legislation designed to evolve services and supports. The same entities will continue to shape the future of the developmental system. The times have changed, and the system's reconstruction is ongoing with the input and participation of diverse families.

Implementation of legislative changes happens as the system evolves, new knowledge is acquired, and successful projects are written into new laws to institutionalize practices that enhance services and support for the ethnically diverse communities. A system continuing to strive to meet clients' individual goals; connects them to community resources, addresses systemic barriers, considers their language and cultural needs, and creates opportunities for learning system processes and navigating them with appropriate assistance. The disparity law is moving in the right direction. The advocates, the interest groups, and the media's advocacy are in the right direction. However, the decision-makers must accommodate the full inclusion of the regional center system in planning and strategizing the disparity policy's implementation because they are on the frontline of service provision. A dialogic engagement of regional center staff, the Department (DDS), and the advocacy group must always be encouraged to ensure that the performance of formulated policies achieves its desired goals as intended by the formulators.

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Appendix A: Acronyms of Organizations

Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA), is an agency that works for the regional centers in the State of California to advocate on behalf of people with developmental disabilities (ARCA, 2014)

Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (CEDD) - serves as a resource in education, research, and service, and providing a link between the university and the community to improve the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities (UC Davis MIND Institute, n.d.).

Department of Developmental Services (DDS)– is a California State agency in which services and supports are provided to individuals with developmental disabilities

Disability Rights of California (DRC) and Office of Client’s Rights and Advocacy (OCRA) – is a state protection agency and advocacy systems authorized under AIDD

Far Northern Regional Center (FNRC) – is one of the 21 non-profit regional centers in California which were established through the California Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act. This regional center serves nine-county areas of Butte, Shasta, Modoc, Trinity, Glenn, Lassen, Plumas, Tehama and Siskiyou

Individual Program Plan (IPP)- is a written contract between the client and the regional center. The IPP outlines the services and supports of the client and where these services will be obtained.

Purchase of Service (POS) represents the authorization, utilization, and expenditures of each client enrolled in the regional center system. It represents the amounts expended for services for regional center consumers.

State Council on Developmental Disability (SCDD) is a state agency authorized by the AIDD to conduct advocacy, systems change, and capacity building efforts that promote self-determination, integration, and inclusion.

Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC) is another one of the 21 non-profit regional centers established through the California Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act. This regional center serves Amador, Calaveras, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tuolumne counties (VMRC, 2016)

Appendix B: Department of Developmental Services

Grant Proposals for 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020

Grant Proposals 2016-17

Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center Reduction of Disparities in Purchase of Services

(POS) Proposal

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center (FDLRC)

Inland Regional Center (IRC)

Kern Regional Center (KRC)

Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB)

Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC)

San Andreas Regional Center (SARC)

South Central Los Angeles Regional Center (SCLARC)

San Diego Regional Center (SDRC)

San Gabriel Pomona Regional Center (SGPRC)

Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC)

Westside Regional Center (WRC)

Grant Proposals 2017-18

17-C7 BPSOS Center for Community Advancement (BPSOS-CCA)

17-C12 Community Gatepath

17-C13 Creativity Explored

17-C20 FRN

17-C27 Houses Choices Coalition

17-C41 New Horizons

17-C42 Parents Helping Parents, Inc

17-C47 Special Needs Network

17-C48 St. John's Well Child and Family Center

17-01 FDLRC

Grant Proposals 2018-19

18-C12 HHEB

18-C13 La Familia
18-C16 Parents CAN
18-C23 Special Needs Network
18-C27 ASLA
18-C29 TriCounty Respite Care
18-C30 Regents of UCR
18-C31 Family Resource Navigators
18-C36 Multi-Ethnic Collaborative
18-C38 Care Parent Network
18-C40 SFCD
18-C42 Public Health Foundation
18-C43 A Better Life Together, Inc
18-C55 Hlub Hmong Center
18-C58 Health African American Families
18-C59 UCP Respite
18-RB-FNRC1
18-RB-HRC1
18-R-NLACRC1
18-R-SGPRC2
18-TCRC1

Grant Proposals for 2019-20

19-C01 HYPUP
19-C03 Ventricular Foundation
19-C07 BPSOS
19-C10 CHLA
19-C12 Community Gatepath
19-C13 La Familia
19-C14 Care Parent Network

19-C15 Diversity in Health Training

19-C16 VPDCA

19-C20 Family Resource Navigators

19-C42 PHP

19-NBRC-05

19-VMRC-07

2019-2020 SCLARC Proposal

Appendix C: Department of Developmental Services

Grant Reports for 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020

Grant Reports 2016-17

East Los Angeles Regional Center Final Report

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center Final Report-04

Inland Regional Center Final Report

Regional Center of the East Bay

Regional Center of Orange County-01

Regional Center of Orange County-06

South Central Los Angeles Regional Center-01

South Central Los Angeles Regional Center-03

Valley Mountain Regional Center

Grant Reports 2017-18

17-C10

17-C48

17-C7

17-C9

17-C12

17-C20

17-C27

17-C41

17-C42

17-C47

Appendix D: Grant Proposals Codes and Themes

THEME	CODES	FREQUENCY
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT/COLLABORATION	engagement	51
	collaborating and collaborative partnerships	25
	partnership with the community	27
	public input	22
	aligning to participants' needs and interests/alignment	21
	build trust	10
	Sharing	10
	deliberating with input from stakeholders	9
	informed strategies	9
THEME	codes	Frequency
TRAINING, EDUCATION/WORKSHOPS	providing training	50
	parent education	29
	training for staff	29
	education about regional center services	20
	Training parent mentors	12
	education and guidance about generic services	10

	family training	10
	workshops in multiple languages	8
	intensive assistance to parents	6
OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY	Outreach	33
	community outreach	19
	Advocating	11
	focus groups	9
	outreach to professional organizations	7
	social media	6
THEME	Codes	Frequency
ADDRESSING BARRIERS	cultural barriers	26
	trust/trusting relationship	20
	language barrier	19
	socioeconomic barriers	17
	experiencing barriers	16
	building trusting relationship	10
	complex social service system	8
	culture of distrust	8
	barriers to service utilization	7
	stigma and shame	7
	geographical challenges	6
THEME	Codes	Frequency

UNDERUTILIZATION OF SERVICES	underutilizing services	24
	lack of quality services	6
	lack of information	5
	“lost” in the regional center system	4
FAMILY SUPPORT/SUPPORT SERVICES AND EMPOWERMENT	assisting families/family support	26
	building capacity	16
	parent support groups	15
	navigation program for families	14
	parent to parent support	14
	empowering	14
	navigator or navigation	10
	hiring bilingual staff	9
	Promotora	8
	supporting families to access services	7
	supporting peer parents	4

Appendix E: Grant Reports Codes and Themes

PRIMARY THEMES	CODES	FREQUENCY
TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS	lacking trust	1
	building trust	4
	building relationships	4
	trust and personal connections	6
	takes time to build trust and credibility	3
EXPERIENCING BARRIERS	geographic barriers	1
	language and literacy barriers	1
	understanding barriers	2
	addressing barriers	2
	experiencing socio-economic barriers	1
	immigration consequences	1
	experiencing barriers	4
	barriers to accessing services	6
	lack of access	3
	stigma and not accepting help	2
ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SYSTEM	increased engagement	1
	engaging families	14
	assisting families	12
	meeting families where they're at	3
INCREASE	increasing skills	2

PRIMARY THEMES	CODES	FREQUENCY
	increasing technology resources	2
	increasing positive perceptions	4
	increasing participation	5
	increasing technology knowledge	2
	increasing access to services	14
	increasing understanding	6
	increasing services	16
	increasing referrals	6
	increased referrals to RC	10
COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS	Partnering	2
	partnering with other organizations	17
	collaborative partnerships	22
	collaborating with regional centers	1
	collaborating	24
OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY	supporting organizations	1
	statewide advocacy	1
	social media advocacy	6
	Sharing	4
	policy hearings engagement	1
	parent advocates	2
	Outreaching	19

PRIMARY THEMES	CODES	FREQUENCY
	Networking and participating	2
	increased engagement	1
	Advocating	9
	advocacy and engagement	10
TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND INFORMATION	providing training	15
	educating parents	12
	providing information	10
	education through workshops	10
	provided information to families and listened	4
	providing education	3
	educating professionals	3
	continuing need for capacity building	2
	equity training	2
	reorienting RC staff	1
	educating RC staff	1
EMPOWERMENT	connecting families	16
	building capacity	11
	empowering	10
	client and family empowerment	9
	Grateful	7
	leadership training	6
	Parent navigators	5
	engaged and empowered	4
	planning for the future	4

PRIMARY THEMES	CODES	FREQUENCY
	feeling supported and competent	3
	parent empowerment	3
	meeting parents where they're at	2
	focusing on whole family	1

Appendix F: Grant Proposals Themes and Codes

Themes	Codes	Frequency
Stakeholder engagement/collaboration	Engagement	51
	collaborating and collaborative partnerships	25
	partnership with the community	27
	public input	22
	aligning to participants' needs and interests/alignment	21
	build trust	10
	Sharing	10
	deliberating with input from stakeholders	9
	informed strategies	9

Theme	Codes	Frequency
Training, education/workshops	providing training	50

Theme	Codes	Frequency
	training for staff	29
	educating parents	29
	education about regional center services	20
	Training parent mentors	12
	education and guidance about generic services	10
	family training	10
	workshops in multiple languages	8
	intensive assistance to parents	6

Theme	Codes	Frequency
outreach and advocacy	Outreach	33
	community outreach	19

	Advocating	11
	focus groups	9
	outreach to professional organizations	7
	social media	6

Theme	Codes	Frequency
Addressing Barriers	cultural barriers	26
	trust/trusting relationship	20
	language barrier	19
	socioeconomic barriers	17
	experiencing barriers	16
	building trusting relationship	10
	complex social service system	8
	culture of distrust	8
	barriers to service utilization	7
	stigma and shame	7
	geographical challenges	6

Theme	Codes	Frequency
underutilization of services	underutilizing services	24
	lack of quality services	6
	lack of information	5
	“lost” in the regional center system	4

Theme	Codes	Frequency
Family support/support services and empowerment	assisting families/family support	26
	building capacity	16

Theme	Codes	Frequency
	parent support groups	15
	navigation program for families	14
	parent to parent support	14
	empowering	14
	navigator or navigation	10
	hiring bilingual staff	9
	Promotora	8
	supporting families to access services	7
	supporting peer parents	4

THEME	CODES	FREQUENCY
IDENTIFY BARRIERS	Identify barriers to equitable access services and supports	60
IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES	Identify best practices to promote access and reduce the disparities	62
CONSULTATION WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS	DDS to consult community partners	2
ENGAGE THE STAKEHOLDERS (CONSUMERS AND FAMILIES)	DDS to consult with stakeholders including consumers and families that reflect the ethnic and language diversity of the regional center consumers	2
RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE EQUITY AND REDUCE DISPARITIES	Regional Centers recommendation and plan to promote equity and reduce disparities in POS	58

THEME	CODES	FREQUENCY
DOCUMENTATION	Record minutes of the meeting and attendance	1
ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE	Report to the department actions taken by RCs to improve attendance Regional centers to report to the department about their stakeholders meeting	21
HIGH TURNOUT DURING ANNUAL MEETING	Schedule a meeting at times and locations designed to result in a high turn-out by the public and the underserved communities Actions taken by RCs to improve participation by underserved communities Provide alternative communication service	8
ACCOMMODATE LANGUAGE NEEDS	Consider the language needs of the community	20
POST MEETING INFORMATION ONLINE	Public meeting notice to be posted on RCs and Department's website Meeting with stakeholders by regional centers	18
CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE TO THE DISCUSSION	Discussion is culturally and linguistically appropriate for the community	38
DISCUSSION OF EXPENDITURES DATA	Discussion of the data Data indicating a need to reduce disparities in the POS	62

THEME	CODES	FREQUENCY
DATA IMPROVEMENT	Provide participants with associated information regarding data improvements to service provision to underserved DD communities provide meeting participants with collated data on POS	25

THEMES	CODES	FREQUENCY
PRIORITIES THAT MAY BE EFFECTIVE IN ADDRESSING DISPARITIES	reports of priorities	30
REPORTING PROTOCOLS TO THE DEPARTMENT (DDS)	Regional centers and CBOs reports to DDS	33
CBO SUBMITTING PROPOSALS TO DDS AND THE REGIONAL CENTER	CBOs submission of proposals	1
REGIONAL CENTERS CONSULTING WITH STAKEHOLDERS	Regional centers consultation with stakeholders	7
CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICE TYPES AND SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL	Culturally appropriate	17
OUTREACH TO UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS	Outreach	13
CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING	Training	2
PARENT OR CAREGIVER'S EDUCATION PROGRAMS	Education	12
PAY DIFFERENTIAL TO CARE PROVIDERS	Pay differential	0

THEMES	CODES	FREQUENCY
ALLOCATION OF FUNDING TO REGIONAL CENTERS AND CBOS	Allocation of funding	29