

Understanding the Influence of Group Work on Coping with Value Conflicts



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Summary

This research looks at the influence of group work on coping with value conflicts. The purpose of this is to become more familiar with the influence of group work for street-level bureaucrats. It is an inductive, small-n case study that looks at how discussing value conflicts with colleagues influences the way these conflicts are being coped with; this is researched within the case study, Jeugdzorg. Thirteen Jeugdzorg professionals were interviewed for this. They were asked about value conflicts, their role conceptions, and which coping mechanisms they used, and about group work.

The four central concepts in the study are: street-level bureaucrats; value conflicts; coping mechanisms; and group work. Those concepts are the foundation of the research, after which the theory is tested with empirical data. The theoretical foundation of the research is written on the base of work of, among others, Zacka (2017); De Graaf et al., (2016); Tummers et al., (2015); Keulemans & van de Walle, (2020); and Maynard-Moody & Musheno, (2003).

The literature, as well as the empirical research, show that street-level bureaucrats have different role conceptions, and that these role conceptions influence the way in which the professional copes with value conflicts as an individual. The professionals find discussing value conflicts with their colleagues useful, and they appreciate the different opinions of colleagues. The major result of the study is that largely; the coping mechanisms change when the value conflict is being discussed in a group. However, this depends on whether it is a homogeneous or a heterogeneous group. The question arises, how does group work influence coping mechanisms?

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1. Introduction

"I am not a blip on a computer screen or a national insurance number, I am a man." (Ken Loach, 2016)

The movie *Daniel Black* shows the life of a man, Daniel Blake, who is unable to work because of problems to his heart, but who is forced to go through humiliating appeals to the government to receive help from the government. During this he encounters several social workers, and one who tries to help him, but is eventually reprimanded for this by her superior. The director of the movie, Ken Loach, is known for his realistic movies that magnify social injustice. 'I, Daniel Blake' shows a dilemma that many street-level bureaucrats face: the tension between providing customized help for the citizen clients and following the official rules and procedures. Street-level bureaucrats are working in challenging situations. They are in direct contact with citizens and must make use of their own discretion. The political academic Michael Lipsky (1980; 2010), called this 'street-level bureaucrat' as an important representative of rules and procedures, they can be seen as a personification of the government.

Street-level bureaucrats face the fundamental challenge of balancing different standards (Kettl, 1993). Think for example about policemen, who are often portrayed as being your best friend, but are also expected to enforce the law: "Friendly when possible, strict when necessary". It is often not clear what the best approach is, therefore they will be confronted with dilemmas. Another example are teachers who are unable to spend the same amount of time and attention on every student. They want to treat everyone equally, but they cannot treat everyone the same. When teachers have a class of 30 students and they have to divide their attention: which students receive the more attention than others? These challenges in the public sector have been studied by many scholars (e.g. Maynard Moody & Musheno, 2003). The work of Lipsky (1980; 2010) is known as a classic work on street-level bureaucracy. He claimed that the exercise of

discretion is a critical dimension of much of the work of street-level bureaucrats. Moreover, street-level bureaucrats cannot perform their jobs with the highest standards of decision making, because they lack the time, information, or other resources necessary to respond to individual cases. In other words, policies are often not 'one-size-fits-all', which requires some level of improvisation and responsiveness to individual cases (Gilson, 2015).

The constant pressure on budgets is often one of the key issues that street-level bureaucrats face (De Graaf et al, 2016). However, due to budget cuts, the quality of work can decrease; working efficiently is not always effective. This is especially worrying in the case of street-level bureaucrats, as they must make decisions about other peoples' lives. In addition, the dilemma between adhering to the rules, and offering customized solutions for citizen clients is also a key issue that street-level bureaucrats face (Lipsky, 1980; De Graaf et al, 2016).

This research focuses specifically on the influence of group work on coping with value conflicts by social workers from Jeugdzorg in the Netherlands. Jeugdzorg is the association for organisations that provide assistance, protection and rehabilitation to Dutch youngsters.

Jeugdzorg has negatively reached the news multiple times in the past years, this is partly due to the major decentralisation of Jeugdzorg in 2015. rules on municipal responsibility for prevention, support, assistance and care for youngsters and parents in the event of growing up and parenting problems, psychological problems and disorders (Youth Act), were decentralized to the municipalities (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). After the decentralisation of Jeugdzorg from state level to the municipalities, it has been organized in a way in which different organizations work together on a local level. The aim of the decentralisation was to bring youth care closer to the people, which is often organized through different teams and networks (NJI, n.d.). This meant that Jeugdzorg professionals work in a dense network with other professionals, which may help

them make diligent decisions about their clients. This decentralization has had many effects on the quality of Jeugdzorg, and on the wellbeing of people working for Jeugdzorg.

This leads to the ambition of this research centralized in this study by means of the following research question:

How does group work influence the way Jeugdzorg professionals cope with value conflicts?

The research consists of three parts: First, the theoretical framework will discuss the role of street-level bureaucrats, the value conflicts they face, how they cope with them, and what the influence of group work is on the coping mechanisms; previous literature is discussed for this. Second, the empirical part of the research presents the perception of Jeugdzorg professionals on value conflicts, coping strategies, and the influence of group work on this. Lastly, the results, which will show that there are two coping strategies that are typically used in group work.

1.1 Social and Academic Relevance

This research aims to add empirical findings to the literature on how group work influences coping with value conflicts, and how this is dealt with in practice at Jeugdzorg. The social relevance of this research is that it shows which mechanisms work best in coping with public value conflicts by providing evidence about the influence of the group in coping with value conflicts and decision making. The research will show which coping mechanisms are most used within group work and if this helps street-level bureaucrats. This research will prove that working in groups fosters the coping strategy of casuistry and helps Jeugdzorg professionals to cope with value conflicts. In this way, the coping mechanisms of government sectors can be used increasingly better. The added value for Jeugdzorg is that this empirical research provides a practical analysis about their coping values and eventually might offer some new insights on

how to make use of group work when coping with value conflicts. For the street-level bureaucrats itself, this research aims to give advice about the use of group work when facing value conflicts. This can contribute to the development of a personal and moral compass, which can be helpful in dealing with value conflicts (Blijswijk, et al., 2004).

The scientific relevance of this research is that it can add valuable empirical knowledge to the literature on group work and its influence on value conflicts. Much theoretical and conceptual research has been done about group work and as well about value conflicts in public administration, however this is mainly done separately from each other. Knowledge on the influences of group work at the frontlines is scarce (Keulemans & Van de Walle, 2020). There is only a limited amount of empirical research on the influence of group work on these value conflicts. The existing knowledge shows that group work may help the socialization process of individuals within an organization (Keulemans & Van de Walle, 2019; Barker, 1993; Feldman, 1981; Zou et al., 2015). Besides this, research has shown that groups generate particular ways to cope with value conflicts (Tatcher & Rein, 2004; De Graaf et al., 2014; Tummers et al., 2013). The empirical evidence about conflicting values faced by street-level bureaucrats is rare, we also do not know a lot about how the bureaucrats deal with value conflict (De Graaf et al., 2014).

This thesis aims to contribute to the existing knowledge about street-level bureaucracy and specifically regarding the influence of group work on coping with value conflicts by street-level bureaucrats. It follows the needs for research into the various influences that determine the actions of street-level bureaucrats (Gilson, 2015). It has been stated that future research should seek to understand street-level bureaucracies from the inside out, which this research will do through qualitative interviews with street-level bureaucrats. Moreover, this research will show the impact of an approach, group work, in delivering public services in people's lives (Gilson,

2015). Especially group work is an interesting component to research, as group work is increasingly being used by street-level bureaucrats (Rutz et al., 2015). However, the impact of the use of group work has not been researched a lot. There is a call for more research on the social dynamics of the work of street-level bureaucrats. The functioning of street-level bureaucrats is largely dependent on a dense web of groups and informal relationships, however, not all organizations provide discretionary room to the bureaucrats (Zacka, 2017).

2. Theoretical Framework

Professionals in public services are in direct contact with citizens and they make use of their discretion (Lipsky, 1980; 2010) It is a challenge for street-level bureaucrats to find a balance between flexibility in judgement and standard procedures. The tension in finding this balance, illustrates that the street-level bureaucrat not only follows rules and procedures, but also tries to take into account the interests of his/her client first (Kjørstad, 2005). The street-level bureaucrat, is an important representative of applicable rules and procedures, and can therefore be seen as a personification of the government (Lipsky, 1980). To gain insight into the way group work influences coping with value conflicts, a theoretical framework must first be outlined. In this theoretical framework, the most significant concepts from the research, as formulated in the introduction, will be further elaborated.

Street-level bureaucrats often have to make decisions about situations when the formal rules that they have at their disposal are not precise enough anymore (Zacka, 2017). In such situations, they develop informal moral classifications that allow them to make a distinction between clients and cases in a way that official rules do not give the opportunity to. Street-level bureaucrats use these classifications to fill the gaps that are created by the official rules. However, it is difficult to come up with such a classification on your own. This is when group work comes into play.

2.1 Street-level Bureaucrats and Discretion

Street-level bureaucrats are front-line workers in policy agencies, examples are social workers, police officers, and educators. who are responsible for delivering public services, enforcing the law and serve as the face of the government for citizen clients (Zacka, 2017; Lipsky, 1980).

They are considered essential players in the public administration, they are de facto policymakers that construct, and sometimes reconstruct, the policies of their organizations (Akosa & Asare, 2017). Street-level bureaucrats directly interact with citizens and have discretion in doing so. Teachers, police officers, and social workers are examples of street-level bureaucrats (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). To define, street-level bureaucrats implement public policy on a daily basis; this is mostly done case-by-case, employing discretion. At the same time, they must respond to the individual needs of citizen clients and handle them with respect. Often, there is not enough information and time to make customized decisions for each individual citizen client (Akosa & Asare, 2017).

Street-level bureaucrats have their own policy preferences as well, and thus can introduce their own bias to the delivery of public policy, which makes their roles ambiguous (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2020; Keiser, 2010). Besides that, there is not a particular way of exercising discretion, it depends on the situation and circumstances (Akosa & Asare, 2017). "A negative aspect of a great deal of autonomy is that similar cases can be treated randomly or differently, when this is not warranted (Kjørstad, 2005 p. 393). According to Lipsky (1980), the working conditions of street-level bureaucrats influence the way in which they "perceive problems and frame solutions" (p. 25). Street-level bureaucrats experience broad discretion in the decisions they make. They are confronted with high degrees of uncertainty stemming from, among others, ambiguous goals, inadequate resources, and a large demand for service with a limited supply (Lipsky, 1980;2010).

Discretion is the right or ability to decide something (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). It can increase the meaningfulness of a policy for citizen clients. Through discretion street-level bureaucrats can treat individual citizen clients differently based on their individual situation (Akosa & Asare, 2017). Discretion can provide opportunities to intervene on the behalf of

citizen clients, however, it can also discriminate among them (Lipsky, 1980). This is due to the ambiguity of the role of street-level bureaucrats, which is exactly the paradox between providing flexibility, but not creating judgement. Street-level bureaucrats need discretion to be able to come to balanced judgements (Sparrow, 2000; Mascini, 2013). Discretion is considered as a feature of street-level bureaucrats who interpret and balance general rules to make a decision, it always brings normative considerations as one has to take a standpoint in a conflicting situation (Snellman, 2018). They have to follow their own 'logic of appropriateness', which may result in unequal treatment (Rutz et al., 2015). Discretion can be exercised through the view of the street-level bureaucrat itself and the situation at hand (Bronnitt & Stenning, 2011). The situations are unique and cannot be generalized, therefore discretion is needed. Street-level bureaucrats must have the time and resources to interpret a situation, before exercising discretion. When this is not the case, it can lead to negative discretion which, for example, can be discrimination or breaking public trust (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014; Akosa & Asare, 2017).

Research has shown that street-level bureaucrats like to involve others in the process of decision-making. "The use of discretion is increasingly considered to be embedded in, and the result of, relations with workers of their organizations, rather than an accomplishment of the individual" (Rutz et al., 2015 p. 83). When street-level bureaucrats are granted a collective space to come to decisions together and to deal with specific encounters with clients, it is called a discretionary room (Rutz et al., 2015). In other words, discretionary room in which grants street-level bureaucrats the flexibility to "make a choice among various courses of action" (Rutz et al., 2015 p. 82). In this research the work group can be seen as a discretionary room, because a work group is a space which allows street-level bureaucrats to discuss about their value conflicts.

2.2 Conflicting Values

“Public programs are structured in such a way that they regularly confront the administrator with difficult value choices” (Wagenaar, 1999 p. 444).

It can happen that a street-level bureaucrat experiences value conflicts. Spicer (2001), argues that value conflicts are especially prevalent in public administration, due to the fact that rules and regulation seek to resolve different values. According to Lipsky (1980), value conflicts by street-level bureaucrats are unavoidable as the decisions that the bureaucrats have to make often involve diverse and conflicting values (De Graaf et al., 2014; Wagenaar, 1999).

Public policies are not a one-size-fits all, therefore street-level bureaucrats have to use their discretion sometimes, while still adhering to the assigned methods or a more efficient way, in other words: they do not just implement, but also constitute public policy. For example, in public policies, equality and efficiency essentially conflict with each other because it is efficient to treat everyone the same, however, treating everyone the same does not lead to equality; every case is unique (Lipsky, 1980).

There are several issues that street-level bureaucrats have to cope with, for example the budget pressure and the care with which they want to perform their profession; the dilemma between efficiency and effectiveness (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). The dilemma between efficiency and effectiveness is a common value conflict, an extreme example is taking place right now; since the beginning of the Coronavirus crisis there are too many patients, and too little health care workers to be able to offer high-quality care. This means that the health care workers have to choose between offering high quality care to a small group of people, or helping more patients while not delivering high-quality care. High quality care or not delivering high-quality care, but helping as many patients as possible. Another example are the value conflicts

between following the assigned methods on one hand, and offering customized solutions on the other hand. Lawfulness, equality, professionalism and other values conflict in these situations. Thus, value conflicts are about acting right on the one hand and getting good results on the other. It is about the tension between process values and output values. Think about a value conflict as a trade-off that a street-level bureaucrat does not want to make, but has to make in order to help the citizen client (De Graaf & Van der Wal, 2010; De Graaf et al, 2016).

The way street-level bureaucrats perceive their role gives them a certain identity on what they do on a daily basis and which can explain their behaviour. Street-level bureaucrats have to make discretionary decisions, which asks them to take multiple aspects into consideration which makes the decision making process complex. The combination of limited resources and rules that are not adequate enough, can therefore result in a value conflict. Discretion asks for flexibility to offer customization (Lipsky, 1980). In other words, street-level bureaucrats shape public policy by balancing between justification and flexibility. This means that the citizen clients should be concerned with the moral dispositions of street-level bureaucrats; what do they value?

Street-level bureaucrats have different ways of perceiving their role. This depends on many factors: age, political convictions, education, moral values, etcetera. Street-level bureaucrats can also be a 'mix' of different role conceptions, this means that they have characteristics of, for example, caregiver and indifference. This research will look at the three role conceptions identified by Zacka (2017): indifference, enforcer, and caregiver. The proposed role conceptions have moral dispositions linked to them (table 1.). Moral disposition refers to the way that the street-level bureaucrat perceives and interprets different situations and how it perceives its role (Zacka, 2017). The Indifferent values efficiency and effectiveness, and is not

involved with the client, not touched by the situation; this role is focused on people processing. The enforcer values honesty and transparency of the client; this role is focused on regulation. The caregiver values the needs of the client; this role is focused on the provision of service (Zacka, 2017). The indifferent is known for its withdrawal from situations, while the enforcer and caregiver are very much involved, therefore the three conceptions can be illustrated in a triangle (fig. 1).

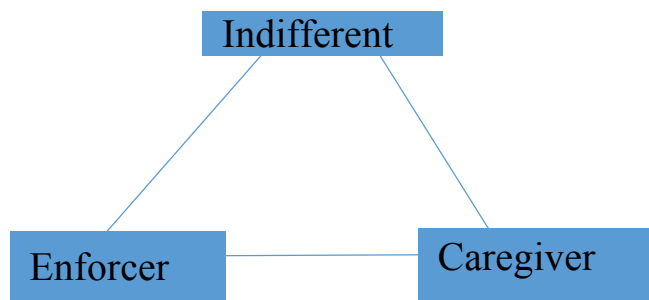


Fig. 1.

Over time, bureaucrats develop a role conception that can be seen as their working style, this is their “general disposition”, which shows regularities in the way the bureaucrat acts among different encounters. It is important to note that the role conception of a street-level bureaucrat can change per case, even in the same case street-level bureaucrats can move from one disposition to another. Moving from one disposition to others within the same encounter is called “local disposition” or “mode of appraisal” (Zacka, 2017 ch. 2, p. 35).

Moreover, the moral disposition of a bureaucrat regulates how he or she makes use of discretion. A danger of moral dispositions is that after a long period, they can become too narrow; street-level bureaucrats then only concentrate on one aspect of their role. The role conceptions of indifferent, enforcer, and caregiver are extremes, meaning that the conceptions

and the linked dispositions are not an ideal that street-level bureaucrats should seek to reach. Therefore, street-level bureaucrats should just be wary of the sketched conceptions and their dispositions and not commit themselves to one of them in particular, it is likely that they rather are a mix of the different dispositions (mode of appraisal). This means for example not too involved nor too withdrawn (Zacka, 2017 ch. 2, p. 22).

Role conceptions	Moral disposition
Indifference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to what is administratively relevant; • Remains unmoved while listening; • Wants to handle the case as fast and efficiently as possible.
Enforcer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks for signs of misuse of the system; • Listens suspicious; • Wants to prevent abuse of the system/street-level bureaucrat.
Caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks for signs of strain; • Moved by the story, feels sympathy for the client; • Wants to meet the particular needs of the client.

Table 1.

2.3 Coping Mechanisms

Street-level bureaucrats can find themselves in value conflicts, which can bring forth change. These conflicts are unavoidable (Lipsky, 1980). To deal with these conflicting values, there are some coping mechanisms to prevent being struck in the conflict. It is argued that coping with value conflicts is seen as either balancing goals or making a trade-off (De Graaf et al., 2016). Coping mechanisms are strategies that can be used by individuals and organisations to prevent being stuck in a value conflict (De Graaf et al., 2016). These mechanisms are important to use;

unsolved value conflicts can lead to stressful situations for street-level bureaucrats. A theoretical framework on how public officials cope with value ambiguity has been developed by Thacher & Rein (2004). The three mechanisms included in this framework are firewalls, cycling and casuistry. Cycling means that over a specific time period, the values that are considered to be important are limited. These values can be overturned by other values (Thacher & Rein, 2004). On the one hand, cycling can offer room for innovation, on the other hand it is not guaranteed that new values will emerge that are indeed better (De Graaf et al., 2016). Cycling will not be included in this paper since this is only possible to study in longitudinal studies.

Firewalls are seen at the organizational level rather than individual level. When organizations use firewalls as a coping mechanism they assign different values to different persons or departments. This means that a person or a department is responsible for the development of that value. All values are shed light on and it is clear on what values one bases its actions. This does not mean that value conflicts do not occur. Especially when working on a similar case with a work group, the different values assigned to individuals can clash and lead to an inconsistent organization (Steward, 2009; De Graaf et al., 2016).

A coping mechanism that is focused on individual and group level is casuistry. This mechanism entails that street-level bureaucrats look at each particular value conflict and base their decision on their experiences in similar cases (De Graaf et al., 2016). Often a customized solution can be found because this mechanism does not reason deductively. Nevertheless, this coping mechanism also has its downsides: the pressure it puts on the street-level bureaucrat is high. Most of the time they do not have enough time or resources to come to a well-balanced decision (De Graaf et al., 2016). Nevertheless, he states that casuistry can be complicated and only

reaches local coherence. For outsiders, it is not clear on what the decisions are based, they might think that it is arbitrary. The decisions reside on unofficial rules, differ per street-level bureaucrat and are not always transparent (Zacka, 2017; Thacher & Rein, 2004). Reviewing each case separately, adjustments to specific situations are made which leads to non-transparency as discretion varies among individual street-level bureaucrats; therefore, casuistry asks for fairness and consistency (Rutz et al., 2015; Raaphorst, 2017). If you look at the bigger picture; casuistry can only find some level of cohesion on a small scale.

Another mechanism that is more focused on the individual bureaucrat is Bias. This mechanism entails that some values are not acknowledged as important anymore, this way, the value conflict between that value and other values is taken away (Stewart, 2009). Bias is often developed after a bureaucrat finds out which values reward their behaviour. Group members can share biases because they work in the same day-to-day situations, which narrow the differences in moral dispositions. In practice this means that bureaucrats have more clarity in knowing which value they adhere to, consequently the clients know what they can expect. However, this does mean that clients and bureaucrats can feel dissatisfaction when the values they favour are abandoned. Besides this, neglecting particular values can lead to not optimal decision making as only a limited number of values is looked at (De Graaf et al., 2016; Thacher & Rein, 2004; Zacka, 2017).

Some coping mechanisms are more seen on the meso level (organizational) and other more on the micro (individual) level. When looking at the creation of firewalls as a coping mechanism it is clear that this occurs on a meso level; bias, on the other hand, is more seen on a micro level. This means that more coping mechanisms can be used in a response on the same encounter. For example, when a street-level bureaucrat experiences bias on an individual level and the

bureaucrat is part of a heterogeneous group which uses casuistry to cope with the same value conflict (De Graaf et al., 2016).

2.4 Group Work

A street-level bureaucrats' individual attitude towards citizen clients can also be shaped in work groups, or at the very least work groups are an important factor in shaping it (Blue, 1990; Keulemans & Van de Walle, 2020). Social processes result in collectively held beliefs and knowledge among street-level bureaucrats (Sandfort, 2000). Besides this, work groups can offer emotional and social support for street-level bureaucrats (Nisar & Maroulis, 2017). In these work groups, street-level bureaucrats "observe, assess and question each other's perception of incoming clients" (Zacka, 2017, p. 187). Thus, groups can offer street-level bureaucrats what they need for their attitudes towards citizen clients and the ways in which they behave towards their citizen clients. The pressure of work groups tempts street-level bureaucrats to change their attitude towards citizen clients to the attitude held by work group colleagues (Keulemans & van de Walle, 2020). The critical role of workgroups in the organizational socialization process has been studied by multiple scholars (e.g. 2000; Keulemans & van de Walle, 2020; Moreland & Levine, 2006; Feldman, 1981).

Overall, individuals tend to primarily interact with their direct colleagues, which puts the work group in a more dominant position to dictate the behaviour they expect from the members of the group, and thus direct colleagues; more than the organization (Keulemans & Van de Walle, 2020; Moreland & Levine, 2006). Nonconforming to the work group norms can lead to isolation, this gives the other members of the group, who are in solidarity with each other, the incentive to ban the divergent practices. Early work on work groups suggest that work groups have a powerful tool to attitudinal assimilation (Blau, 1956). In addition, work groups shape

the individual attitude of street-level bureaucrats towards their citizen clients (Keulemans & Van de Walle, 2020). This indicates that a “group mind” exists, which refers to a collective mental state, shared among the group members, which controls how individuals in the group use the information from the work group in their daily work activities, in which they might face value conflicts (Klimoski & Mohammed, 1994 p. 403; Keulemans & Van de Walle, 2020).

The social representation theory shows that street-level bureaucrats are motivated to have sense-making conversations with colleagues to reduce the complexity of their jobs. An example can be discussing the value conflicts they face and how to cope with them (Siciliano, 2017). “These representations result from the synergy of the individual bureaucrat, the group, and the practice of street-level work (Bruhn, 2009 p. 8-9). This indicates that the extent to which the street-level bureaucrats’ social representations are shared among the other work group members, determines the level of pressure from the work group in, for example, adjusting the client attitude of the individual street-level bureaucrat according to the beliefs of the work group (Keulemans & van de Walle, 2020)

2.5 Street-level Bureaucrats and Group Work

It is assumed that the structure of workgroups matters in how value conflicts are dealt with (Zacka, 2017). There are two ways to look at the structure of a group, meaning the homogeneity or heterogeneity of a group. The external characteristics, such as age, and the internal characteristics, the moral dispositions; this thesis focuses on the latter. It is assumed that the long-seated bureaucrats generally have a less considerate attitude towards their clients than the short-seated bureaucrats in the same group. Besides this, the long-seated and more experienced members are often more dominant within the group (Sandfort, 2000). Another way of looking at the structure of a group, the dispositions mentioned above (table 1.) are used. The expectation is that heterogeneity in group dispositions leads to more casuistry since the presence of a variety

of values results in more discussions about cases. If all members of the group would have the same dispositions (homogeneous), there would be less casuistry since there is not so much to discuss about, rather more to agree about. Another expectation is that a group that consists of homogeneous dispositions, experiences almost no value conflicts due to the bias that the group brings. In a homogeneity in group dispositions, particular dispositions are valued more and some are not acknowledged, which is called bias. Therefore, the group does not conflict in many cases.

Individual street-level bureaucrats can feel isolated from their peers, but they do not work alone (Zacka, 2017). “They exchange greetings, jokes, and stories with one another; they ask each other questions and look to each other for emotional support and advice; they encourage, challenge, and pass judgment on one another; they are each other’s closest confidants and most relentless critics” (Zacka, 2017 ch 4 p.3). These dense patterns of interaction between colleagues in the workplace play an important role in the moral functioning of the bureaucracies (Zacka, 2017). This means that some level of diversity and pluralism in moral positioning within a group is desirable if there is some specialization at the individual level (De Graaf et al., 2014; Zacka, 2017). Zacka (2017), calls this “organized heterogeneity” in moral dispositions of street-level bureaucrats. An “organized heterogeneity” assures that a range of values are being heard if casuistry is used as a coping mechanism. One should note that a group does not work when there is excessive individual specialization and excessive homogeneity at the group level (Zacka, 2017 ch 4 p.3).

Overall, heterogeneous groups serve to show a distinct form of moral reasoning, ‘everyday casuistry’, which is different from the top-down application of rules which is often associated with bureaucracies. Another coping mechanism that heterogeneous groups perhaps make use of is firewalls, which is a form of “organized heterogeneity” created by organizations. However,

firewalls can be used in homogeneous groups as well as different work groups may exist within an organization (Zacka, 2017; Stewart, 2009). I expect that homogenous groups will use bias to cope with value conflicts, since the members of the group are not confronted with other values besides the ones that are the most important according to the group. Consequently, bias occurs less when the group is heterogeneous and thus experiences different values, therefore it is likely that heterogeneous groups experience more value conflicts. Thus, I expect that the influence of group work on how value conflicts are dealt with, comes from the range of values that the different role conceptions bring.

3. Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology of the research and explains which decisions have been made throughout the research. First, the research design and data collection are explained. Hereafter, the validity and reliability of the research is clarified.

Lastly the operationalization of the theoretical concepts will be discussed; the concepts are not measurable; therefore, an operationalization has been made.

3.1 Research Design

This inductive study is a social academic research in which the concept- and theory development of the influence of work groups on the coping mechanisms of street-level bureaucrats facing value conflicts, is being discussed. This research uses a qualitative research design, the reason for this is the importance of the perception of Jeugdzorg professionals for the research. Even though Jeugdzorg is a very broad institution, the goal is to find the most important overarching factors. This can be done by in-depth research which makes it possible to go into an in-depth conversation with the interviewees to understand their perception. The case description will point out why Jeugdzorg has been chosen as a case study. This is a single case study research. Only one case has been chosen as it gives the reader a better idea of Jeugdzorg and its activities (Toshkov, 2016). Jeugdzorg professionals have been chosen as they are the best example of street-level bureaucrats, in the Netherlands, that face value conflicts in their work while operating in groups. This is relevant for the research question as the aim of the research question is to find out more about the influence of group work on coping with value conflicts. This means that a case had to be chosen in which street-level bureaucrats face value conflicts and in which group work is present.

This research includes a thematic analysis to identify patterns within the data, this can be done in an inductive and deductive way; this research includes both (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The inductive approach of this research shows that the themes identified in table 2 are linked to the collected data. The data has been specifically collected for this research via interviews, the interview questions were based on the themes from the theoretical framework, however the coding frame was not pre-existing. This makes this research more theoretical-driven and leads to a more detailed analysis of the data on those specific themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Theme:
Value conflict
Role conception
Coping mechanism
Group work

Table. 2

3.2 Empirical Context: case Jeugdzorg

This empirical study will focus on how street-level bureaucrats cope with the value conflicts that they perceive at work, and how the coping mechanisms are influenced by group. As the research is interested in the value conflicts that occur in public organizations, the Dutch public organization called ‘Jeugdzorg’ has been chosen. It is important to note that the street-level bureaucrats in this thesis are the ones that have personal contact on a regular basis with their citizen clients; as traditionally explained by Lipsky (1980).

In the Netherlands, municipalities are responsible for youth assistance (Jeugdzorg), the Dutch government believes that municipalities can organize care closer to the citizens, which is stated

in the Youth Act (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Municipalities are responsible for the availability and access to youth assistant and support. This ranges from anything between helping with family problems to psychological help for children (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). The Youth Act gives municipalities the freedom of policy to give to youth care in their municipalities. This means that the access to youth care and the type of youth care that one receives will depend on the municipality they live in (Dullaert, 2013).

Group work

In the Netherlands, Jeugdzorg works with local teams. This means that citizens can go to the social neighborhood team and ask questions concerning Jeugdzorg; the neighborhood team will then decide what they think is the best for the child. These teams work together with different organizations for parents and children, like schools, sport clubs, etcetera. The teams consist of professionals in the field of child care and support, and the local teams offer low-threshold help and support. In addition, when it is needed, the team can send citizens to specialists. This dense network of Jeugdzorg professionals working together gives the professionals the opportunity to discuss with colleagues to make diligent decisions. Besides these formal work groups, there might also be informal work groups.

Value conflict

Working in the interest of the clients (minors) and their parents at the same time may lead to tension, which is characteristic for Jeugdzorg as the wishes and needs of the clients often do not run parallel with the wishes of their parents. The Jeugdzorg professionals have to decide whether they should intervene or not (Jeugdzorg werkt! n.d. 1). Even though one can assume that parents often want the best for their child, there are always cases where what the parent

believes is best is not actually in the best interest of the child. For example, what if a parents thinks that school is not good for the child, and they decide to homeschool instead? Or how do you intervene if a parent has an intellectual disability and therefore cannot adequately raise the child on its own, but refuses any form of assistance? On average, children placed out of their homes are relocated six times (RTV Utrecht, 2020), how do you come to the decision to relocate someone? One can understand that these critical situations bring conflict. In these situations, it is up to the Jeugdzorg professional to take a responsible decision within this tens field. Some of the tensions that Jeugdzorg professionals have to deal with are: the desired situation against the limited possibilities or the limited cooperation of clients or their parents; the balance between being involved and distanced; the interest of the client on the one hand and the interest of the parents on the other hand. **Data collection**

In order to gain insight in the different coping mechanisms of Jeugdzorg employees and how these are influenced by group work, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with several Jeugdzorg professionals working at different organisations throughout the Netherlands. In total thirteen interviews with people from ten different organizations were conducted. It was feasible to conduct this number of interviews, looking at a total of nine different organizations. As this study is interested in group work within Jeugdzorg throughout the Netherlands, the choice has been made to study different organizations that operate in different places of the country. This results in a variety of groups, which is needed to answer the research question. The collected empirical data has made it possible to gain insight into the experiences with group work according to Jeugdzorg professionals. This makes it possible to come to a statement about the influence of group work on coping with value conflicts within Jeugdzorg.

In total thirteen in-depth interviews with Jeugdzorg professionals were conducted. The interviews lasted between 42 and 55 minutes. All interviews were recorded through Microsoft

Teams or Zoom, and transcribed literally. The questions that were set up before the interview were based on the theoretical concepts mentioned in the theoretical framework. The interview guide and interview consent form can be found in appendix. 1. This method has been chosen to get a good image of the perception of street-level bureaucrats.

	Organisation	Function	Location
1	Jeugdformaat	Social worker C	The Hague
2	De Hartekamp groep	Behavioural scientist i.t.	Heemstede
3	Trias Groep	Social worker B	Zwolle
4	Veilig Thuis	Social worker C	Drenthe
5	Horizon	Social worker B (Closed group)	Rotterdam
6	Qpido	Behavioral scientist	Amsterdam
7	Jeugdbescherming West	Youth protector	Westland
8	Kenter Jeugdhulp	Social worker B	Santpoort
9	Kenter Jeugdhulp	Social worker C	Santpoort
10	Prokino	Teamcoach	Rotterdam
11	Pactum jeugd- en opvoedhulp	Social worker D	Arnhem
12	Kenter Jeugdhulp	Social worker C	Santpoort
13	Prokino	Teamcoach	Rotterdam
14	Prokino	Teamcoach	Rotterdam

Table 3.

As you can see, the functions of the professionals differ, this has been chosen to have a diverse group of respondents. The main tasks of the functions will be shortly explained: a social worker is a collective name for different functions within Jeugdzorg. Social workers work on the

resident in a group of clients, they take on all the tasks that go with that. This can mean guiding the clients, maintaining the contact with the parents, cook for the clients, and sometimes sleep in the care homes where some children live. this has to do with education and experience, each level (ABCD), has its own tasks and powers (Jeugdzorg werkt! n.d. 1). Team coaches are also social workers, but they have an extra task as a team coach, so they do work in the care homes, but they are given extra hours every week to coach the residential team and consult with the manager. Youth protectors' main task is to ensure the safety of the client; the client is always central. They do this by working together with the child, the parents, their network and the social workers involved. Youth protectors are part of the safety chain and work together with the local teams (Jeugdzorg Nederland, n.d.).

Behavioral scientists set up an individual treatment plan for the client, after which the social workers execute the treatment. Behavioral scientists are often the ones with the ultimate responsibility for the treatment and guidance of the client (Nationale beroepengids, n.d.). Overall, the tasks of all three functions is to make contact with the clients, develop and implement appropriate interventions, coordinating the care involving multiple care providers; and creating a safe environment, which may be in a care home setting.

3.3 Data analysis

At the beginning of the research, a thorough literature review has been done in order to engage with the relevant literature to the analysis and to narrow the analytical field of vision, which points to a more theoretical approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After this, the interviews took place which were transcribed, this will be further explained in the next section. This was the start of the familiarisation with the data. The process of transcribing facilitated the ability to analyse the data before the coding started (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999).

After this, the first codes were produced from the transcribed interviews by categorising the data into different groups. These codes were narrower than the initial themes that came out of the theoretical framework and were covered in the interviews. The themes of analysis are partly data-driven and partly theory-driven, as the themes do depend on the data, but the data has also been approached with the themes, produced in the theoretical framework, in mind. To execute the coding process, Atlas.ti was used. Codes of the interviews were added to certain quotes. Consequently, an overview arose of the different codes and the relevant information about them. After the coding, a list of the different codes was created, these different codes were categorized among different overarching themes and sub-themes. After the themes had been chosen, the representation of the themes was checked on whether they actually represented the data, this has led to the list of themes being changed multiple times. After all the themes were checked, examples were chosen that best represented the story of each theme and clearly link back to the research question; for this, the questions proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006 p. 24) have been used.

3.4 Operationalization

The semi-structured interview included questions on 1. role perceptions; 2. value conflicts; 3. coping mechanisms; 4. group work. These concepts are not measurable, therefore in the following table, the main concepts asked in the interview are operationalized. The choice has been made for these concepts because of the literature covered in the theoretical framework.

Concept	Definition	Indicators	
Role conceptions	The way the street-level bureaucrat perceives its role and the responsibilities attached to the role.	Indifferent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looks for administrative information; Wants to handle the case fast and efficiently.
		Enforcer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is suspicious; Think parents or client are `withholding something
		Caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standing next to the client; e.g. changes the way he/she speaks Focuses on one client for a longer period
Discretion	The right or ability to decide something.	The street-level bureaucrat has the flexibility to make decisions about citizen clients.	
Value conflicts		The street-level bureaucrat is facing a dilemma between following the rules or method of the organizations, and offering customization.	
Group work	All interactions with colleagues about work, formal and informal.	Asking for advice, feedback, support, etcetera. from colleagues.	
Coping mechanisms: Strategies for street-level bureaucrats to deal with value conflicts.			

Firewall: Assigning different values to different persons or departments by the organization.	Directly or indirectly are values assigned to certain professionals which the street-level bureaucrats have to argue from.
Bias: Some values are not acknowledged as important anymore.	The professional personally values some moral dispositions more than others.
Casuistry: Looking at each particular value conflict and base the decision on experiences in similar cases.	Each case is being discussed separately.

Table 4.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The literature review helped by picking the right case study. The coding has partly been designed on the basis of the operationalization, which is linked to the research question. This ensures that the coding forms the basis for the results and conclusions of the research (Silverman, 2011). This is an inductive research, so a part of the codes were developed while coding the interviews.

The choice of respondents was very important for the reliability of the research. The respondents were found by emailing a total of 34 different Jeugdzorg organizations. They have asked the questions among their employees, then the employees could contact me. The aim was to not interview more than three people per organization. Table 3, shows a short description of the different respondents. Many of the organization did not have time for an interview due to the increasing work pressure since the Coronavirus crisis. All the interviews have been recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions have been sent back to the respondents to give them the opportunity to check if there were any factual inaccuracies. After this, the coding could start,

to find patterns. The respondents are anonymized to give them the opportunity to talk as openly as they wish to.

Ensuring reliability and validity is difficult in qualitative research because of the non-quantifiable nature of the research. Therefore, it might be more useful to look at the credibility, consistency, neutrality and the quality of the research (Golafshani, 2003). The credibility is aimed for by searching for a very diverse group of interviewees. This way the research managed to get an insider's view in many different organizations, from people of different ages, men and women, and professionals with different functions within Jeugdzorg. This has made the research more credible as the different professionals might have to deal with different value conflicts, and value group work differently. The neutrality, as well as the consistency, were central in the data collection and data analysis. To foster neutrality, the interviews involved people that were unfamiliar to the researcher before the interviews took place. The interviews took place via Zoom and Teams, which made it possible to interview professionals from places in the whole country. Besides this, all interviews were transcribed literally and sent back to the respondents, therefore the analysis is as close to reality as possible. To reach consistency, the choice has been made to have a very diverse group, this means people from different ages, places, organisations and educational backgrounds; overall the sample can be seen as a good representation of Jeugdzorg in general. The interviews consisted of four men and nine women, which is close to the division of men and women working for Jeugdzorg (Jeugdzorg werkt, n.d. 2)

There is one limitation of this research, namely the generalisability. There was not enough time to do a multiple case study research, which makes it harder to generalise the research to other similar cases. The aim of the research was to find out how group work influences the way

Jeugdzorg professionals cope with value conflicts, which is exactly where the research focuses on. To determine the influence of group work on street-level bureaucrats' coping mechanisms, data has been collected about the way different street-level bureaucrats experience the use of group work while performing their daily job. The qualitative research methodology that is being used in this study pays attention to the way in which individuals working in Jeugdzorg give meaning to group work and how this affects their way of coping with value conflicts. This approach is appropriate because it matches with the research goal of this study.

4. Analysis

This chapter will analyse the data collected through interviews and compare it to the theoretical framework of chapter two. There are some points on which all respondents agreed on, and others on which they vary more. The interviews have shed light on the way Jeugdzorg professionals cope with value conflicts and the influence of group work on these coping mechanisms. The analysis will be structured according to the following variables: value conflicts; coping mechanisms; group work.

To receive insight information into the coping mechanisms of Jeugdzorg professionals, thirteen Jeugdzorg professionals have been interviewed. All professionals were asked to reflect on different value conflicts, and come up with a value conflict themselves. All professionals describe cases in which they had to deal with a moral dilemma and which has been discussed in a work group. The professionals describe several ways in which they deal with value conflicts. Besides this, the professionals have been asked to reflect on their role conception and the moral dispositions they think are linked to their role. Figure 2 shows the codes, and how they are divided per theme. In appendix 3 one can see all the codes and the frequency of mentioning listed in table 5. Because of the demand for unique approaches for unique encounters, I expected value conflicts within Jeugdzorg. Especially since Jeugdzorg professionals must take into account many different values proposed by other people and institutions, like parents, school, and the client of course. This chapter will analyse and discuss the empirical findings of the thirteen interviews held with Jeugdzorg professionals.

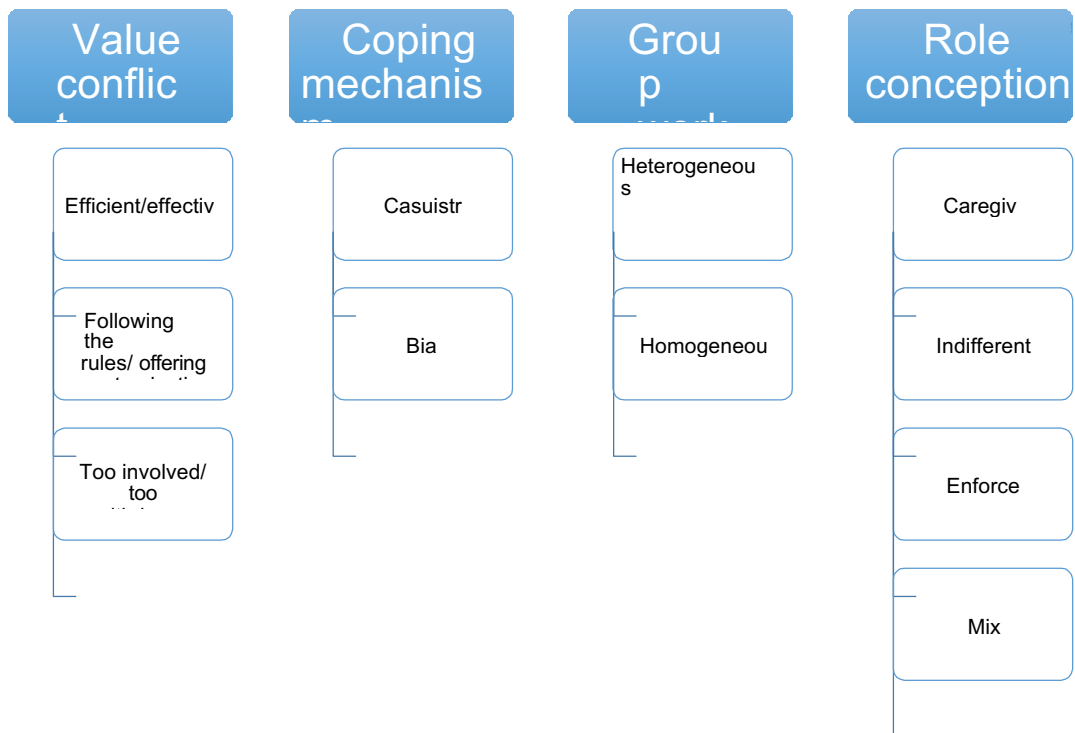


Figure 2.

Moreover, all types of coping mechanisms presented in the theoretical framework, proposed by Thacher & Rein (2004) and Zacka (2017), are used by the respondents in coping with value conflicts. Casuistry is used the most (20), followed by Bias (14), there were no firewalls detected when the interviews were analyzed. Hence, all three coping mechanism expected to be present in a cross-sectional study, as explained in the theoretical framework, are present. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that multiple coping mechanisms are used in the same encounter; this means that the coping mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. Besides this, the respondents tend to change their role conception and the linked moral dispositions, within the same encounter.

4.1 Value Conflicts

There are multiple value conflicts that the respondents mention, which can be placed in three overarching codes: being too involved or too withdrawn; being efficient and effective; and

following the assigned method or offering customization. In situations of value conflicts, the professionals have to make use of their discretion. The reason why most respondents would use their discretionary power is mainly because of the tradeoff between efficiency and effectiveness. First, the same value conflicts have been asked to different professionals, the conflicts have somewhat been adjusted to their profile, for example someone working on a closed group faces different value conflicts as someone working on an open group. After, discussing several value conflicts with them, they were asked to provide a value conflict themselves. Most of the value conflicts the respondents face are about being efficient and effective.

“What I find very difficult is that my organisation expects me to be on the floor as much as possible for the clients and the families, but at the same time I have to do a lot of administrative tasks. So I spend half a day keeping my administration up, and that is difficult, because I actually prefer to talk to the clients and families about the problem and see where I can help them. What I run into is that administrative burden, and that comes from the municipality and the organisation, for me that is a value conflict.” (R1)

Five of the respondents mention the ‘administrative burden’ as a value conflict they face. This is not a value conflict linked to a client, but rather a difficulty of the profession which brings the professional into a value conflict, on the one hand the professional has to write everything down in order to keep up with the administration, but on the other hand the professional wants to help the client instead of sitting behind a desk. It was apparent in the answers of the respondents that they struggle with this. They know that for their own safety it is better to write everything down as clearly as possible, but they simply do not have the time for it. Due to the lack of transparency in judgement, some respondents are afraid that if they do not report

everything clearly, they might get in trouble. The respondents are very aware of their discretion; therefore, they do their best to make informed decisions which might bring them in value conflicts. This is presented in the following story as well:

“We are scared, scared to make mistakes. We are scared that the boy whom I gave the keys to would walk away. We are scared to take responsibility.” (R4)

This is a quote from a respondent who gave the keys to the cell to one of his clients when he was working in a judicial youth institution. This respondent states that it is difficult for Jeugd zorg professionals to make individual decisions. Throughout almost all the interviews, it becomes explicit that the respondents are so aware of their discretion that it prevents them from making quick decisions.

Efficiency and effectiveness

A value conflict which is worth mentioning is the conflict of treating everyone the same which flows out of the ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ conflict. As a street-level bureaucrat it is efficient if you can treat everyone the same, meaning that you can apply the same methods and rules on all clients. The street-level bureaucrats’ work will be limited to applying the same method on all clients. However, treating everyone the same does not always lead to an equality of outcome, which means that it is not always effective to put everyone on the same yardstick.

“We sometimes have clients who need more attention than other clients and that we overcharge. This means you invest more in them than in the clients that can actually already do a lot and need very little, it sounds very logical, but what you actually want is to spend a good time with all the clients, you also want to have a little fun; watch a movie together, play a game. In notice

that those moments are at the expense of those clients whom you often have conversations with, with whom you are more involved guiding. It is not that I feel guilty, because it is the situation and you have to act professional. I do my best to get everyone where they should be eventually, this sometimes means that you give more attention to one than another.” (R8)

Here, it is important to note that often within Jeugdzorg, the professional works with multiple clients at the same time. The professionals ‘live’ in a residential setting with the clients when they are working. Okun (1975) wrote about the ‘big tradeoff’ between equality and efficiency, stating that the efficiency generates inequality (De Graaf et al., 2016). The professionals are responsible for the needs and interests of the individual clients, as well as of the group that the clients live with. The attention given to an individual client might not be efficient for a wider group of clients. This means that the professionals find themselves in a constant tradeoff between treating everyone the same or giving more attention to the ones in need; between efficiency and effectiveness. It is not only about wanting to treat everyone the same, it is also about the limited time that street-level bureaucrats have for their clients, which confirms what Lipsky (1980) stated about the working conditions of street-level bureaucrats. Working in an efficient way, which may be using the same treatment for all clients, might not be effective in terms of the quality of work, meaning that some clients have to drop out.

Following the rules or offering customization

A second value conflict which is frequently visible in the interviews is between following the assigned method or general rules on one side, and offering customization of treatment and solutions on the other side. In this conflict, many conflicting values come together, such as: staying professional, adhering to the rules, and being effective (Lipsky, 1980).

This respondent (8) works on a ‘Kamer trainings centrum’, which means that the clients learn how to live on their own or with just two hours of guidance each day. The clients in this center are generally seventeen years old.

“As I said before, we have a client that is not ready for this step at all, but now that he is here we are over-asking him, we do everything we can, but it is not enough and that is very sad. In the end they turn eighteen and have to go on their own. The organization says, you know, there is little collaboration from the client, and they do not see any reason to extend his stay; now he has two months to look for his own place. I find that very difficult at times because on the one hand the organization has a point, there has to be some kind of cooperation, the client has to be motivated and show some growth; we are not a hotel. On the other hand, I find it very difficult that you take a young person into treatment and you say that we are going to take care of you, knowing that it is too ambitious for that client. You try everything to not leave him to his fate. Those things, I find that very difficult, and it happens more than once.”

This quote shows that the respondent finds it difficult to deal with this conflict. On one hand the respondent has done, and still wants to do, everything for the client and help the client by offering customization. On the other hand, the respondent has to deal with the rules of the organization. All elements of the value conflict between following the rules and offering customization are included in this quote: the respondent has to stay professional by not working with the client if the client does not cooperate, the respondent shows that he has to adhere to the rules, and the respondent knows that in order to be effective for the group the client has to leave. Nonetheless, it is a difficult decision to make, which becomes clear in the following quote of the same respondent:

“I always try to get the client involved when the decision has been taken. We try to find a place for the client and we actually do everything for the sake of the client, if they are relocated we try to land them as softly as possible. I always do my best to prevent negative relocations, but you know, if that does not work out then we have to be honest to ourselves and let it go.” (R8)

Too involved or too withdrawn

The third value conflict that respondents have mentioned to struggle with is the conflict between being too involved and too withdrawn. Respondent 13 states the following:

“We function as a family you know, like a mom and dad, but then with six colleagues.”

As a Jeugdzorg professional your task is to help raise and educate your clients, therefore the professional often lives with the clients on the residence a few days a week. Several respondents, state that this brings difficulties with it. The following quote is from respondent 9 who raises the concern that when you live together with someone, it is difficult to stay neutral when decisions have to be taken about the client.

“If you are scolded twenty times a day by a client, then you look different at that client than someone who has not experienced that. So the emotions sometimes come into play. Then it is easier for me to say that the client can leave, which then is being blocked by the people who are not with the client the whole day. They do not feel the same emotion; they just look at the facts from a helicopter view. Sometimes it is difficult to step out of your emotion and forget that you are scolded twenty times a day.”

This respondent mentions the difficulty of staying natural when you live together with the clients. Respondent 1 also experience this, but then the other way around.

“Some clients have a bigger favor factor than others, even though we all know that we should treat all clients equally, which makes it sometimes difficult to make decisions.” (R1)

The given value conflicts of the respondents say something about which values are important to them. After analysing the value conflicts of the respondents, it is thus significant to look which values are embedded in the conflict and why. The next section will give more clarity about this when it links the value conflicts to role perceptions and moral dispositions, to see which role conceptions and values are connected.

4.2 Role Conceptions

As explained in the theoretical framework, there are three different types of street-level bureaucrats (Zacka, 2017). These three types are extremes and not something to aim for, however, they are useful to explain value conflicts, especially to explain which value conflicts occur more often by some respondents than others. The next section will analyse the value conflicts of the respondents by explaining the conflicts on the basis of the different role conceptions.

Caregiver

“I am actually at home now because of a value conflict. Corona is among us for a while now and sometimes this can be quite complicated for the youngsters. Last week we had a Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas) party, but one of the youngsters was in quarantine because a classmate of his was diagnosed with Corona six days earlier. We agreed that he would keep a minimum distance

of two meters from everyone, so that the chance of infections, in case he has Corona, the other inhabitants would not be infected. However, after six days my colleagues and I had arranged a dinner for, and with, the youngsters. I was working along with a colleague and decided that we could forgo the Corona measures with him. On that evening we did not keep those twometers' distance and we let him eat with the group. For me that was a value conflict, what are you doing? What are you not doing? My opinion was to not let myself be guided by fear, because we have been living in fear for a year now. That does not add up to the feeling of safety, so we have made the decision that he could sit at the table. Well, two days later he got tested positive.”
(R13)

This example is given by a respondent that sees himself as a caregiver, meaning that the client is always central for this person. Caregivers are sometimes blamed for being too involved with the client instead of focusing on being efficient (Zacka, 2017). This quote indeed portrays these characteristics of a caregiver, the professional feels sympathy for the clients' situation; the professional takes a decision to make the client feel good, without following the rules of the organisation or the Dutch national health services.

The quotes presented below show two other examples of respondents that match with the values of caregivers. The first quote is from respondent 2, who is a behavioral scientist, and values one-on-one time with her clients a lot.

“If a client needs it, I am a 100% there for the client. I am the only one on the floor that does a lot of one-on-one guidance. I think my diagnostics and my one-on-one counselor come together very well in my job, and that makes me who I am now as a counselor.”

The second quote is from a social worker who mentions throughout the whole interview that for him the client is always number one. Respondents 7 and 3, mention this as well. Respondent 4 goes a step further; he even values his clients more than the rules of the organisation. The definition of a caregiver is best given by this respondent through the following words:

“The interest of the client is the most important, the rules and legislation of the organization are not.”

Enforcer

It is important to note that the professionals within Jeugdzorg only work with the children, they do not decide on whether the children have the right to receive, for example, money, which other street-level bureaucrats like welfare workers do have. Nonetheless, some respondents 2; 5; 6; 8; and 9 can partly find themselves in the description of the enforcer by Zacka (2017). The respondents mention that they always have to be suspicious due to several reasons. This is not linked to a value conflict.

“I think that as a social worker you should always be on your guard with what information the clients give you, as well as the information you get from the parents or read in the files. You can never assume that it really is like it is told. So I think it is important to me that I continue to search or seek for confirmation if what I have read, seen, heard is correct or not.” (R5)

One of the interviewed behavioral scientists' states that it is her task to always be suspicious as behavioral scientists focus on the behaviour of the children, as well as the parents.

“I always try to find out what is behind every negative behaviour of a client, I try to figure out what causes the negative behaviour. I can see that the treatment of my colleagues (social workers) is not what triggers the negative behaviour. So to speak, it has been shown in research that often the parents play a large role in the negative behaviour of their child. So I have always been aware that the situation at home can be the cause of the behaviour, so I spend a lot of time studying this behaviour, so in that sense yes, I think I am suspicious.” (R2)

According to respondents 4; 8; 10; and 12, this suspicion is mainly caused by the distrust of the clients in the system. The following quote by respondent 4 puts this into words.

“In Jeugdzorg, almost all clients you have to deal with have already been helped many times. They are a bit fed up with all those different professionals, so they themselves are suspicious, they will never show the back of their tongue.”

In total, eight respondents mention that they see themselves as partly an enforcer.

Indifferent

When the respondents hear the description of an indifferent, they almost all immediately laugh and shake their head horizontally when they hear “as quick and effective as possible”. However, throughout the interview the respondents do admit that they are a mix of an indifferent and another role conception, or maybe all three. The following quote is from respondent 1, who explains that sometimes she has to act like an indifferent.

“I want to help a family as good as I possibly can, but at the same time you have frameworks that you have to adhere to. The organisation expects us to help families as best as we can, but

if I spend two hours with a family and let the rest of my caseload go, I will get into trouble. If we do not make it in time, I tell the family to schedule a new appointment.”

There is one respondent that sees herself as mostly an indifferent, this is respondent 9.

“I am someone who likes to keep an overview, I can sit with one client, but other clients are just as important to help. I have seen so many clients in the past years, not many things surprise me anymore. I know what I believe is important for the client, so I know what to listen to.

According to this respondent it is mainly due to her experience that she sees herself as indifferent. She also mentions that she works in a group with other colleagues, where the other colleagues are better in one-on-one time with clients than she is.

Mix

As has been mentioned before, the three role conceptions are three extremes and not something street-level bureaucrats should aspire to reach. Therefore, it is likely that the respondents are a mix of different role conceptions or that they change from role conception within the same encounter.

“A girl who wanted hymen repair surgery because she was dating a boy and it turned out that when she was young, she was actually abused by her brother, in such a case I would inform the police. Because sexual abuse is not allowed, the brother should never have done that. Later I realized that actually in such a case I should put the girl first. What does she want to say? What does she want to do? and what is the chance that this will happen again? I decided to make my client strong enough to do something with it at a certain point if it bothers her.”

The first example of this is given by respondent 9, who started as an indifferent following the rules and wanting to handle the case quickly by informing the police, however later in the conflict she realized that the client is the victim and she should decide what she wants the professional to do. She was pulled from her initial standpoint and became more involved in the case.

The statement by the respondent shows that there is a possibility to change from role conception within the same encounter, and that professionals can be a mix of different role conceptions. Respondent 4; 6; 8; 10; 11; 12, can find themselves in all three role conceptions. Respondent 6 describes her role as follows:

“I am in the middle of the three conceptions, I try to be as neutral as possible. I do not let myself be dismissed easily, I can be suspicious if necessary. I am sympathetic, but there are limits.”

The tenor of this statement is consistent with the response of other respondents.

4.3 Coping Mechanisms

Jeugdzorg professionals are expected to take action in cases where youth care is needed to protect youngsters from harm (Rutz et al., 2015). As explained before, street-level bureaucrats have to exercise judgement which may have far reaching consequences, it is therefore important that street-level bureaucrats are consistent and responsive (Rutz et al., 2015). There are different mechanisms to cope with conflicting values like bias, firewalls and casuistry. These three coping mechanisms are all present in the interviews, but casuistry is used most often (20), followed by bias (14), firewalls were not present in the interviews. In the following sections,

the three coping mechanisms used by the respondents will be explained based on codes from the respondents.

Casuistry

The vast majority of the respondents use casuistry as a mechanism to cope with their value conflicts. The respondents state that they work in groups together and discuss the case with all members of the group. One of the characteristics of casuistry as a coping mechanism, is that experiences from other cases are used to look at the current case. Respondent 3, explains what he does when he is in a value conflict and reaches out to his colleagues. He works at a location with several 'houses' where clients live with the professionals.

“When I know that the neighbors have experienced a similar situation, I ask ‘how did you do this? What is wisdom?’”

The idea of casuistry is mainly case-by-case judgement, and no general ruling. Respondent 10 gives an example of how she and her colleagues coped with a value conflict about a client who wanted to sleep at his grandparents, but due to Corona this would be against the rules of the organisation.

“The rulings from the organisations are that you can only have one place to stay. If you need or want more than one place to stay, we have to consult it with the behavioral scientist and many others to get approval. But this time it was the case that a client had not been to his grandparents for a long time, he consciously chose to not pick his grandparents as an official place to stay because his grandma had been sick and therefore he has not stayed there for a long time. Before Corona, he actually stayed there every weekend. The client had to get a Corona test because of his girlfriend and the test turned out to be negative. He immediately asked us if he could stay with his grandparents that evening because he was negative. This was on a weekday, which is not allowed, besides it was not an official place to stay. But after we

discussed the situation with colleagues we decided that he could go. He behaved very well in the group and he has a good reason, so we fully supported it with the permission for him to go.”

Most of the respondents use casuistry this way as well, namely reviewing a case and considering different options, instead of immediately following the rules and coming with a general decision. Even though it is time consuming to review every case separately (Zacka, 2017), none of the respondents commented about this.

Bias

Out of the interviews it becomes clear that all respondents are biased, and many are aware of that bias. The most mentioned values are safety, empowerment, and clients' needs.

Respondent 9, has a strong bias towards how the client should be treated. When she was asked what value is the most important to her she said “empowerment”. After, she was asked to respond to a value conflict about a client who keeps walking away from the residence, this was her answer:

“We happen to have such a case inside, it concerns a girl who is fourteen and she just will not come back, while all the clients have to stay inside, but we cannot force her to come back either. So, what do we have to do to increase the capacity of the mother and to guarantee safety? I think we should talk to the girl and discuss everything very well. What she thinks is safe, might not be safe to us. (...) when she says ‘my mother sometimes screams when she is angry, but then I get into my room and that makes me calm’, then I believe that she found a good way to deal with that.”

This bias is shared by respondent 4.

The other respondents do not have a clear bias, most of them state that safety is the most important value, always. After this comes motivation, if the client is not motivated to cooperate, then respondent 4; 8; 9, do not want to work with that client.

“What is important, I think, especially when it comes to children with behavioral problems is to ask: can they just not do it differently or do they not want it any other way? I think that is very important to take into account in my decisions. (...) I also think of my own limits. When I get a client home every day at two in the morning, or when a client is simply not motivated in everything, then my motivation to help is also less.”

The last often mentioned bias, is a bias in following the rules. Respondent 1; 5; 6; 10, value rules and methods of the organization.

“I myself am someone who does indeed see the rules a bit more and radiates that too.”

Biases start to become a threat when the professionals are not confronted with other values. Respondent 3, started working at a new organization in March this year, therefore he talks about ‘old guard’. He has been working for Jeugdzorg for fifteen years.

“I more often listen to what I want myself than to the old guard, I no longer have a great urge to perform. I know that I am good at my job and what someone else thinks of that is not so important to me at such moments. Often I got it right.”

The respondent points out what we should be aware of: excessive specialization. Something Zacka (2017) argued we should guard for because it may lead to isolated bureaucrats. On the other hand, if a biased professional works in a diverse group, the bias leads to pluralism.

Firewall

Firewall is the last coping mechanism that can be used to cope with, indicating that the organization would appoint values to professionals or departments to make sure all values are being heard. In the interviews, the respondents mentioned that they are free to choose which values they think are important, the organizations do not direct them into what values are deemed to be important. Meaning that there is no official firewall imposed by the organisations.

4.4 Group Work

All of the respondents mentioned that they value working in groups to discuss conflicts. The respondents state that they are offered a collective discretionary room to address value conflicts and exercise their discretion and thus can discuss judgements (Rutz et al., 2015).

“You get a fresh look on situations which makes you think again. Besides, I check the new insights of my colleague to make sure I have not forgotten anything.” (R5)

“Yes, it helps me a lot in the moment I find myself in a dilemma or if I have doubts. I then go to my colleagues and explain the situation: did I act properly? What would you do? It gives me confirmation that I do not have to be insecure.” (R1)

Respondent 3, states that working in a heterogeneous group asks vulnerability from professionals.

“Dare to ask the members in your group how they do this, you have to be vulnerable to do that.”

It is remarkable that the vast majority of the respondents use their group to stay focused. The respondents are eager to hear the opinions of their group members. Respondent 8, uses his group to stay focused and not become paralyzed on one, initial, thought.

“It is not strange, maybe even natural, that when you have confrontation upon confrontation with a client, and the confrontations include a form of violence, I sometimes catch myself thinking: I do not feel like helping that client anymore, we do it for the client, not for ourselves. We try to help the client but we get negativity back. But I have to remember to cool down first, therefore I reach out to my colleagues to consult together. They ask me what actually happened, what the reason for this could be etc. We then ask ourselves: what can we do to reach the client?”

This is in line with Raaphorst & Loyens (2018), who state that street-level bureaucrats feel that their work is less subjective if they get the opportunity to first discuss it with colleagues in a group. The respondents thus value group work, however the respondents use group work in different manners. There are several reasons why they choose to share their value conflicts in groups. Some choose to talk to colleagues that share the same values, others talk about their value conflicts with more experienced colleagues who tend to have other values than the less experienced bureaucrats. Furthermore, the structure of a group depends on the role conceptions of the group members and say something about the coping mechanisms used by the group.

According to the respondents, the work groups they are in can pressure them to change their minds on value conflicts; as well as the other way around it has happened that other members of the group changed their minds, consistent with Keulemans & Van de Walle (2020). This underlines the critical role of the structure of the group in coping with value conflicts,

specifically which coping mechanisms are used by the group. There are two group structures, based on moral dispositions, a group can be homogenous and heterogeneous.

Heterogeneity

The interviews show that the vast majority of respondents consider it important to be able to discuss with colleagues with different values. This indicates that the respondents are aware of their co-workers and that often group work influences the decision making.

Respondent 13 values the discretionary room in which he discusses with his group.

“That's the nice thing about a field of tension. You meet each other because of a critical situation and your colleague thinks that what you think is absurd for example, then you get a discussion and a weighted decision from several people.”

Moreover, respondent 9 states that it is not always easy for her to discuss with colleagues with a different role conception. She has been working for the same organisation for many years and she has experienced a diverse range of value conflicts.

“Sometimes I think, this is how we have always done this, why do we change it? I am not very flexible; every year we get the same discussions. But then I remind myself that new colleagues bring new insights and qualities with them.”

The current Corona crisis has put a lot of pressure on the professionals, they have to make more decisions and find themselves in more value conflicts. The following, is an example of how discussing conflicts in a group with diverse role conceptions works. The decision is made by

one of the respondents, 13, about whether or not inviting a client to a dinner party, who actually should be in quarantine has been discussed in a group as well. This respondent finds himself in a group with different role conceptions. In the interview he explains how discussing this value conflict in his group went.

“There were colleagues who said that the boy could go to dinner, who stated that we should not live in fear; sometimes you have to take a risk. Other colleagues did not agree, they stated that we should work according to the RIVM rules and the safety agreements we have made with the team. After the conversations with colleagues I made a choice, which resulted in the whole group being in quarantine now. Now we have qualitative conversations with the team about how we work as a team and what our vision and direction is” (R13).

The outcome of talking about it with his group resulted in new agreements around the Corona policy of the organisation. This is an example of why a group should strive to be sufficiently diverse, with a range of moral dispositions.

For the outcome of a value conflict it is interesting if the group is homogenous or heterogeneous. Homogenous groups share the same thought; they acknowledge the same values. Some respondents 8; 11; and 12, mention that they miss some perspectives in their group, which according to them leads to value conflicts. Therefore, the following subsection has been added.

Diversity

This code is a valuable addition to the research since it gives more clarity about the function of group work for Jeugdzorg professionals, and how the respondents feel about a lack of heterogeneity in groups.

Five respondents mentioned that they miss diversity in their groups, especially cultural diversity, as the clients they work with also have a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. The last question of the interview questions whether the respondent would like to share something that I have not asked yet. One responded shared to following:

“I believe that Jeugdzorg is too much anticipated on the Dutch culture, which sounds logical because we are in the Netherlands, but in the meantime we have become such a multicultural society. For example, we have a Surinamese client and he is really keen on cleaning himself. Some colleagues thought that he was pretty psychotic. While I thought, no that is not the case, it is in a culture that was taught to him from an early age. This created a lot of division within the team and the organization. In my opinion that is a very wrong approach. There is too much insufficient ignorance about different cultures and their habits.” (R12)

She is not the only respondent who shared its dissatisfaction about the lack of cultural differences. As respondent 12 shows, this lack can lead to value conflicts. This is acknowledged by the respondent 8.

“I happened to have spoken to two colleagues today with an Antillean background. They can spend a fair amount of time with one client, which I am not able to. I sometimes ask them if some things are normal in the Antillean culture. Those conversations are quite special and very nice, we then talk about all possible efforts to get a better grip on the clients.”

This is in line with several scholars (Levi, 2011; Keulemans & Van de Walle, 2019; Zacka, 2017), who suggest that diversity on group level, may influence making (difficult) decisions and thus coping with the dilemmas that they bring. All respondents stand for a diverse range of values, therefore the level of pluralism within a group can be important to make sure all the values are being taken into consideration.

Homogeneity

Some respondents go to colleagues to confirm that they are doing the right thing. This means that they often go to the colleagues that are close to them, work with them for a longer period and work in the same way as they do. Respondent 5, for example works on a closed residence, in this residence the most 'heavy' clients live together with the professionals.

"I do have the feeling that I can just contribute to the group and that we have a bit of the same view on things, but that also has to do with the fact that we have been working together all this time".

The respondent values the opinion of her colleagues, which is equivalent to what she values.

The most important value for her is safety and following the rules. She continues:

"We are a stabilization group, we are all about structure and time. We do not deviate from that, when a client is longer with us we say that rules are there to be broken sometimes, but in the beginning that is absolutely not the case; we have to get them in line."

Respondents 3 and 4 argue that they have colleagues who as well only talk to colleagues with the same values when they want to discuss a value conflict.

“If they are in conflict with a certain client, they are going to look for sounding boards. The danger is that they are always looking for someone that does agree with them” (R4)

The danger that respondent 4 is talking about is acknowledged by respondents 7; 8; 12. They think it is dangerous that not all values are heard when decisions in value conflicts are taken.

4.5 Conclusion Analysis

This chapter has analysed the interviews collected in order to answer the research question. The chapter started with the different value conflicts that the respondents face, which can be explained by studying the role conceptions of the professionals. Each role conception, caregiver, enforcer, and indifferent, has its own moral dispositions that indicate the values that the professional propagates, and therefore can say something about the value conflicts that the professionals face. The professionals have different strategies by which they can decide to cope with these value conflicts: by bias, casuistry, and firewalls. The question of this research is what the influence of group work is on the use of these coping mechanisms, therefore, group work is also a theme that has been analysed. The interesting finding in the group work section is the distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous groups, and how all the other themes, value conflicts, role conceptions, and coping mechanisms, can be linked to these. In the next chapter, the conclusion, this analysis will be linked with the theoretical framework to give answer to the research question.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis aims to find out how group work influences the way street-level bureaucrats cope with value conflicts. The central question in this research is “How does group work, influence the way Jeugdzorg professionals cope with value conflicts?”

In his book, Zacka (2017) discusses the possible influence of group work on coping with value conflicts, he does this by studying the role conceptions of street-level bureaucrats. His work, in combination with the coping mechanisms proposed by Thatcher & Rein (2004) are used as the building ground for the design of the theoretical expectation of this study.

Based on the research of several scholars (Lipsky, 1980; De Graaf et al., 2016; Zacka, 2017; Spicer, 2001; Wagenaar, 1999), it is assumed that street-level bureaucrats are likely to find themselves in value conflicts due to the decisions that they have to make, which involve diverse and conflicting values. Besides that, most of the situations they work with are unique and cannot be generalized. Street-level bureaucrats have a leeway to make judgements about their clients, meaning that they can treat their clients differently, based on the clients' situation (Akosa & Asare, 2017). The bureaucrats can use their discretion to come to balanced judgements (Sparrow, 2000). This means that the implementation of policy is dependent on the capacity of individual street-level bureaucrats to act as moral agents that know how to deal with competing values.

This study considered different value conflicts: efficiency and effectiveness; following the rules and offering customization; involved and withdrawn. According to Zacka (2017), these value conflicts can be explained by uncovering the role conception of the street-level bureaucrat. There are three role conceptions which all have their underlying moral dispositions, these

dispositions make the street-level bureaucrat look at situations in a certain way, it can determine the way the bureaucrat acts. The three role conceptions are extremes; therefore, it is likely that most street-level bureaucrats are a mix of different role conceptions, in line with Zacka (2017). The role conceptions are the indifferent, the enforcer, and the caregiver.

There are different ways street-level bureaucrats cope with value conflicts. The ones most used by individual street-level bureaucrats and organizations, and that have been measured in a cross-sectional study, are Firewall, Bias and Casuistry. Apart from uncovering which coping mechanisms are linked to which role conception and value conflict, the main goal of this study is to reveal the influence of group work on these coping mechanisms. This study builds upon several pieces of literature (e.g. Zacka, 2017; De Graaf et al., 2016; Rutz et al., 2015) in order to establish a theoretical framework which could possibly explain the influence of group work on coping mechanisms. Rutz et al. (2015) embody group work as a collective discretionary room; a space where the bureaucrats get the opportunity to come to a decision together. To conclude, these theoretical findings are empirically tested through interviews with Jeugdzorg professionals. The decision for Jeugdzorg professionals has been made because Jeugdzorg employees are often working in groups, however, the influence of this group work for Jeugdzorg has not been researched a lot. Besides this, Jeugdzorg is a very diverse and influential organisation, getting into contact with many parts of Dutch society and with many different people. This allows this study to have a broad scope and a wide array of diversity that will help strengthen the findings.

The interviews show that most Jeugdzorg professionals face value conflicts about efficiency and effectiveness, and between following the rules or offering customization. To give meaning to this information, it is important to look at the role conceptions of the professionals and which

conflicts they face. Most of the professionals that have faced a value conflict about following the rules or offering customization a combination between a caregiver and an indifferent. This means that on the one hand they want to apply the general rules (indifferent), but on the other hand they want to offer the client customization, which means that the professional has to take time out for the client (caregiver). This is almost the same for the value conflict between efficiency and effectiveness. The difference here is that the professionals who are more like an indifferent do not find themselves in this conflict as much as the others. This can be explained by the moral dispositions of the indifferent, namely: not moved by ones' story and helping everyone as efficiently as possible. The other role conceptions, have more difficulty with working efficiently and fast. The caregiver values one-on-one time with the clients, and is moved by the stories of the clients. The role conception of the enforcer as described in the interviews is not in line as it is described by Zacka (2017), this is due to the fact that, while Jeugdzorg professionals work with the clients, they cannot offer the clients any money or rights; most Jeugdzorg professionals see themselves standing next to the client, not above.

In the interviews, it emerged that most interviewed professionals are aware of their bias, they know that they acknowledge one or two values more than other values; safety, empowerment and rules are mentioned most frequently. The interviews show that the professionals use this bias to cope with value conflicts in their individual discretion. The other two coping mechanisms, casuistry and firewalls, are not mentioned by the professionals as a mechanism they use when they make decisions on their own. However, the vast majority of the respondents argue that they almost never take decisions on their own, they prefer to take decisions in cooperation with their colleagues. The interviews show that the coping mechanisms change when the individual bureaucrat decides to share the conflict in a group; indicating that group work influences the use of coping mechanisms. It became clear throughout the interviews that

most of the decisions are taken in a group, and it is interesting to see that there is a shift visible from bias towards casuistry as a coping mechanism. Furthermore, casuistry is used in groups more than the other coping mechanisms. The main characteristic of casuistry is looking at each case independently and drawing upon experiences from the same kind of cases. The last coping mechanism, which was not present in the interviews, is 'firewalls'. This coping mechanism was not present in the interviews as it was not applicable to the respondents. By using this mechanism, the organization would appoint values to professionals or departments to create an 'organized heterogeneity' (Zacka, 2017; Thacher & Rein, 2004; De Graaf et al., 2016), all the respondents mentioned that their organizations let the professionals free in what they value. It is understandable that bias is not often used in groups, as the individuals in the group all bring their own bias, meaning that only if all the members of the group have the same values, the group can use bias as a coping mechanism. This means that bias as a coping mechanism of a group is only possible in homogenous groups.

In summary, Jeugdzorg professionals build on collective reasoning to use their discretion as best as possible. The professionals like to engage their colleagues to find support, knowledge, and other perspectives. Besides this, Jeugdzorg is built on different formal groups consisting of for example, social workers, youth protectors, and behavioral scientists, meaning that Jeugdzorg has formalized the use of group work by granting them collective discretionary room. In this discretionary room, each group member can give its opinion. If the group happens to be homogeneous, then they use bias to cope with that value conflict. The members of the group are uniform and they acknowledge the same values. These groups are efficient and can work quickly. On the other side is a heterogeneous group, which consist of members with a diverse range of values, also known as pluralism. Pluralistic groups make use of casuistry to cope with their value conflicts. According to several scholars (i.e. Zacka, 2017; Lipsky, 1980)

heterogeneity in groups is what is desired, as a diverse range of values are heard and a diligent, considered, and balanced decision can be taken. A homogenous group uses bias as a coping mechanism, there is not one role conception that is particularly seen in homogenous groups, as long as all the members of the group acknowledge the same values. A heterogeneous group uses casuistry to cope with value conflicts, meaning that each case is being reviewed separately and the members of the group can bring their own bias to take part in the decision making. This means that it is a time-consuming work which is often preferred by a caregiver and enforcer, and not by an indifferent.

5.1 Limitations

There are several limitations regarding researching the influence of group work on coping mechanisms in Jeugdzorg. Only thirteen respondents expressed their willingness to participate in this study. Due to the time constraint in the conducting of this study, thirteen respondents are regarded as sufficient for a cross-sectional, small-n design case study. The benefit of this was that this research was able to carry out in-depth interviews. The disadvantage is that with a small n-study, the generalization of the results is at best debatable. A second disadvantage is using one method to collect data. For example, a survey together with in-depth interviews would have increased the reliability of the research. Nonetheless, the findings from this thesis do provide insights into how Jeugdzorg professionals cope with value conflicts and how this is influenced by groups.

Another limitation is that, although this study has explored the important elements (i.e. role conceptions and group work) of coping with value conflicts, the cross-sectional character of this study and the small-n study, prevents drawing strong conclusions, about the differences of

role conceptions between the different functions within Jeugdzorg for example. Besides this, one should bear in mind that this study was conducted while the Jeugdzorg professionals experienced pressure from the Coronavirus crisis. This may have influenced the answers given by the respondents.

5.2 Future Research

Drawing on the limitations, future research on the role conceptions of the different functions could provide more insights on vertical group work. This could, for instance, focus on pointing out multi-level group work, which is in line with Noordegraaf (2011). Moreover, future research could dive deeper in the reasons behind someone's role conception- for instance using the concepts of experience, education, and gender.

Another interesting future research would be if more respondents were interviewed over a longer period of time. That way, the effects of the decisions made through group work could be analyzed as well. Besides this, the results would be better generalizable and the triangulation would increase the validity of the research. Then it would be interesting to compare those results to other professions, like teachers or any other street-level bureaucrats. Please keep in mind that this study was conducted in the Netherlands, so the generalizability to other cultural spheres is not possible.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Allereerst, bedankt dat ik u mag interviewen. Ik zal kort wat over mijzelf vertellen. Ik ben Mijke 23 jaar oud en ik studeer op dit moment de Master Public Administration aan de Universiteit Leiden. Voor mijn Master scriptie, doe onderzoek naar de invloed van werken in groepen op het omgaan met waardenconflicten binnen Jeugdzorg. Om dit te onderzoeken interview ik meerdere Jeugdzorg professionals, waarvan u er een bent. Zoals u ook op het toestemminsformulier kon lezen, zal het interview worden opgenomen en mag u het interview stoppen wanneer u wil. Al uw antwoorden worden vanzelfsprekend geanonimiseerd. Heeft u nog vragen?

1. Bij welke Jeugdzorg organisatie werkt u?
2. Hoelang werkt u al bij Jeugdzorg? En voor deze organisatie?
3. Wat is uw functie binnen Jeugdzorg? En wat houdt deze functie in?
4. Ik ga nu drie verschillende rollen omschrijven, ik wil u vragen om uzelf ergens te plaatsen en uit te leggen waarom.
 - a. Je wordt niet warm of koud van verschillende casussen, je helpt iedereen snel en efficiënt.
 - b. Je bent een achterdochtige luisteraar. Je gaat ervanuit dat de cliënt iets kan achterhouden. Dit is niet bij elke case zo natuurlijk.
 - c. Je bent een sympathieke luisteraar. Je kan 2 uur met 1 cliënt zitten, het maakt je niet uit hoeveel andere cliënten je in die 2 uur had kunnen helpen, zij/hij is nu je prioriteit
5. Welke waarden vindt u het belangrijkste in het werk als Jeugdzorg professional?
6. Waarom deze waarden? Heeft dat met uw rol te maken?

Uitleggen wat een werkgroep is als de geïnterviewde het niet weet: alle interacties op de werkvloer met collega's.

7. Zit u in een werkgroep?
 - a. Als ja: Wat voor collega's zitten er nog meer in uw werk groep?
 - b. Als nee: Waarom niet?

8. Zou u uw collega's ook ergens bij de drie rollen kunnen zetten? Waar?
9. Wat bespreekt u allemaal in uw werkgroep?
10. Hoe wordt dat aangepakt?
11. Helpt dit in besluitvorming? Ja? Waarom?
12. Valt u weleens terug op de groep als u bijvoorbeeld advies wil?
13. Vindt u het fijn/handig om werk gerelateerde dilemma's in een groep te bespreken?

Voorbeeld van waardenconflicten geven:

Kiki is zestien en ze woont op een open leefgroep, maar door corona-maatregelen moet ze alsnog 23 uur per dag binnen blijven. Dit doet haar denken aan haar tijd in een besloten behandelcentrum. Ze voelt zich opgesloten en wil graag meer vrijheid. Haar vader heeft gezondheidsklachten en haar moeder spreekt ze niet meer.

14. Hoe zou u hierop reageren?
15. Zou u dit in uw werkgroep bespreken?
 - a. Als ja: Hoe zou de werkgroep reageren?
 - b. Als nee: Waarom niet?
16. Ervaart u weleens druk vanuit de werkgroep?
 - a. Als ja: Hoe komt dat? Van wie komt dat?
17. Heeft u zelf ook een voorbeeld van zo'n soort waardenconflict?
18. Hoe is hiermee omgegaan?
19. Wat had u gedaan als u geen collega's had om mee te overleggen?
20. Wat is uiteindelijk de rol van bespreken in de groep geweest?
21. Bent u van mening dat collega's die een andere mening hebben dan u, u scherphouden om anders te denken?

Het interview is afgelopen, heeft u nog iets wat u wil toevoegen, iets waarvan u denkt dat ik het ben vergeten te vragen?

Ik wil u heel erg bedanken voor het interview. Ik ga het interview transcriberen en dan opnieuw naar u toesturen zodat u feitelijke onjuistheden eruit kan halen.

Appendix 2: Consent form



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Toestemmingsformulier interview

Projecttitel: Jeugdzorg professionals en hun perceptie over de rol van groepswerk

Interviewer: Mijke Grift

Geïnterviewde:

Het interview zal maximaal 60 minuten duren. U heeft het recht om het interview te stoppen, en te weigeren vragen te beantwoorden, op elk moment

Dit onderzoek beoogt de perceptie van Jeugdzorg professionals over het werken in groepsvorm te onderzoeken.

Voor verdere vragen kunt u contact opnemen met Mijke Grift (interviewer en onderzoeker)
Tel: +31630030509; e-mail: m.h.grift@vuw.leidenuniv.nl

Ten eerste, bedankt dat u akkoord gaat om geïnterviewd te worden voor het bovengenoemde onderzoeksproject. Voordat ik het interview afneem, vraag ik u expliciet akkoord te gaan met het interview en hoe de uitgevoerde informatie wordt gebruikt. Dit toestemmingsformulier is vereist om ervoor te zorgen dat u het doel van het interview begrijpt en dat u akkoord gaat

met de voorwaarden van de deelname. Ik vraag u om het formulier te lezen en vervolgens te ondertekenen om te bevestigen dat u akkoord gaat met het volgende:

- Alle samenvattende inhoud van het interview, of directe citaten uit het interview worden geanonimiseerd zodat u niet geïdentificeerd kunt worden.
- Het interview wordt opgenomen en er wordt een transcript geschreven. Deze zullen na het onderzoek vernietigd worden;
- U ontvangt een kopie van het transcript waarmee u in de gelegenheid wordt gesteld contact op te nemen met Mijke Grift over eventuele feitelijke fouten;
- De transcriptie wordt alleen door Mijke Grift geanalyseerd;
- Persoonlijke informatie (naam en email-adres) van de geïnterviewde wordt niet gepubliceerd. Deze gegevens worden alleen bewaard om contact op te nemen met de geïnterviewde voor mogelijke vervolgvragen;
- Elke wijziging van bovenstaande voorwaarden zal alleen plaatsvinden met uw uitdrukkelijke toestemming

Door dit formulier te ondertekenen ga ik akkoord met de volgende punten:

1. Ik neem vrijwillig deel aan dit project. Ik begrijp dat ik niet hoeft deel te nemen en ik het interview op elk moment kan stoppen;
2. Ik begrijp dat mijn woorden rechtstreeks kunnen worden geciteerd (geanonimiseerd);
3. Het getranscribeerde interview of uittreksels daarvan kunnen worden gebruikt zoals hierboven beschreven;
4. Ik heb het formulier gelezen;
5. Ik verwacht geen betaling voor mijn deelname;
6. Ik kan een kopie van het transcript van mijn interview opvragen en ik kan wijzigingen aanbrenge;
7. Het onderzoek zal worden bewaard in het archief van Universiteit Leiden;
8. Ik begrijp dat ik vrij ben om contact op te nemen met Mijke Grift als ik in de toekomst nog vragen heb.

Geinterviewde

Datum:

Interviewer

Datum:

Appendix 3: Coding scheme

Code	Frequency
Group work	33
Coping mechanism	25
Role conception	23
Caregiver	20
Value conflict	20
Casuistry	20
Heterogeneous	19
Diversity	17
Indifference	16
Mix	15
Bias	14
Efficient/effective	12
Enforcer	10
Following the rules/ offering customization	8
Homogeneous	5
Too involved/ too withdrawn	4
Firewalls	n/a

Table 5

