Advocacy Organizations and the Field of Youth Services: Ongoing Efforts to Restructure a Field

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The field of youth services has undergone many changes in the past few decades, and advocacy organizations play a pivotal role in reconceptualizing this field by promoting better and more coordinated services to youth in need. This article examines how advocacy organizations bring about new conceptions of youth, influence the organization of the field, and ultimately change the way public policy addresses youth's needs. The authors first describe the field of youth services, a highly fragmented field that has historically focused on youth as problems and targets for intervention. Next, they describe the current reform movement that instead promotes positive youth development. Focusing on the concept of restructuration, they then highlight some of the ways in which three advocacy organizations in San Francisco and Oakland, California, influence the field, and they propose early indicators that suggest how this field is being reorganized.

Keywords: *advocacy organizations; youth; social movements; organization theory; public policy*

During the past century, concepts of *youth* and *youth policy* have undergone many changes (Shanahan, Erickson, & Bauer, 2005). G. Stanley Hall's 1904 volume, *Adolescence*, was instrumental in identifying and increasing the social salience of a group of people too old to be children and too young to be adults. Since then policy has largely sought to fix the "problems" of youth

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rather than support their healthy development. Young people have been pejoratively labeled as *delinquents*, *dropouts*, "*druggies*," *turbulent teens*, "*superpredators*," and *targets for intervention*. Beginning in the late 1980s, however, framing of youth policy entered a new phase, one that departed from a narrow policy emphasis on remedying "deficits" to focus on the broader context of healthy development and enhanced integration of youth services (Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2000). Reformers came to see that the needs of youth are complex and interwoven and argued that policies and programs intended to benefit them should strive for continuity across sectors, organizations, and age groups. Although numerous events may be identified as contributors, perhaps the clearest signpost pointing to a hoped-for new era was the publication of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's groundbreaking report *A Matter of Time* (1992). The report noted that focusing on providing positive opportunities for youth is crucial because "with the exception of infancy, no time of life compresses more physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development into so brief a span" (p. 9).

This new perspective about youth services has challenged the field of organizations, networks, and institutions involved in youth-related work. The major players in the field—including organizations in education, health care, social services, and juvenile justice—are well-recognized and stable systems; however, when viewed from a broader youth-oriented perspective, they amount to a fragmented, largely uncoordinated system. The devolution of federal programs to states, counties, and cities has encouraged the growth of diverse and disjointed services. For example, schools generally lack information about students' involvement with juvenile justice, social service, or other community agencies. Moreover, social service, health, and juvenile justice agencies might coalesce around a greater goal to ensure access to services; however, they also routinely vie for the same public monies and work under conflicting program and eligibility requirements. Numerous attempts are under way to reshape the nature of activity within existing youth-serving institutions. Some reformers are also seeking greater integration and cross-sector coordination across service sectors. Notable are the reformers that pursue policies that support youth's positive development rather than simply patch up problems.

Advocacy organizations are central to this reconceptualizing of youth services because they propose new ways to view young people, address youth issues, and work with youth in proactive ways that depart significantly from past policy responses to youth. At the national level, advocacy groups have had a major influence on public opinion and policy. Groups such as the Forum for Youth Investment and the Children's Defense Fund take particular interest in children "who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves" (Children's Defense Fund, n.d.). Such advocates provide more than 30% of the testimony before Congress, and their research is heavily used in national media outlets (Berry, 2001). At the local level, nonprofit and grassroots

groups play a prominent role in giving voice to local concerns and advocating for changes that benefit community residents (Reid, 2001).

This article examines the role of these advocacy organizations in restructuring the field of youth services—promoting new ideas about youth, influencing the organization of the field, and ultimately changing the way public policy addresses youth's needs. In this article, we first describe the youth services field, identifying what issues the current youth development movement is responding to. We then introduce the advocacy organizations in two Bay Area communities that are the focus of the article. Finally, we highlight some of the ways in which advocacy organizations influence this field and propose indicators that reveal how this field is being reorganized.

ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS AND THE FIELD OF YOUTH SERVICES

Advocacy organizations have played a pivotal role in the development of various areas of human rights and social issues, including civil rights, women's rights, environmental issues, and more recently, children's rights and youth services. By giving voice to these issues, advocacy organizations have paved the way for more supportive legislation and have worked to construct a stronger organizational infrastructure within these fields. Advocates have also been able to influence substantially the conception, design, and implementation of new kinds of public support for youth, such as the creation of a citywide Children's Fund in San Francisco or the redirecting of funds from a prison project in Oakland, California, to support public education.

Advocacy organizations that support youth are differentiated by many dimensions, including targeted clientele (children vs. youth), stance (problem-oriented vs. preventive vs. supporting positive development), focus (general vs. specific), and relative mix of advocacy and service provision. Our research participants are organizations focusing primarily on advocacy for broader, more constructive services for adolescents and young adults. This subfield of youth services is relatively unsettled and contested in contrast, for example, to organizations focusing on early childhood development where a greater consensus exists about children's needs and effective programs. The creation of the Children's Bureau in 1912 and the Sheppard-Towner Act (1921), the nation's first social welfare legislation for children and mothers, signals the attention policy makers gave to early childhood at the beginning of the 20th century (Skocpol, 1992). Policies that explicitly target youth emerged much later with the efforts of policy reformers in the early 1960s. Because consensus on definitions, standards, and methods for youth programming remains relatively low, advocates focused on youth are engaged in "heavy lifting" to foster an agreed-on stance for policy and services.

We examine this unsettled field by focusing primarily on efforts at the community level to reframe and reform youth services.[1] Advocacy organizations at this level have won citywide campaigns to improve schools and after-school programs, to reduce crime in neighborhoods, and to increase local spending on programs that support youth. In spite of the importance of this level, relatively few studies of advocacy organizations have concentrated on communities or situate advocacy practices within a local context. We examine the dynamic processes at play in and among local advocacy organizations in San Francisco and Oakland, California. Because communities are not closed systems but are greatly affected by events occurring at wider levels, we also take note of state and national indicators that signal advances in the development and reorganization of the youth services field.[2]

KEY CONCEPTS

Advocacy organizations in the youth services field are not entering and staking out a virgin territory—a "green field"—but are working to reform and restructure not one but several existing, interrelated, highly institutionalized organizational fields, including education, social services, and juvenile justice. The concept of *organizational field* refers to a collection of diverse but interdependent organizations "that constitute a recognized area of institutional life" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 143; see also Scott & Meyer, 1983). We focus on organizations because they are highly influential social actors in modern societies. Although individuals play their part, they are often agents of one or another organization. Typically, fields are defined around a specific type of focal organization (a population) but always include other types of organizations that relate importantly to this population—providing resources (including money), consuming services, acting as targets of the focal population's activities, or providing oversight or governance. Thus, in the current study the focal population consists of various kinds of advocacy organizations working at the community level in the youth services field, and the field includes related types of organizations such as public agencies, government institutions, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood groups, community foundations, governance bodies, and client groups.

We study advocacy organizations because we see them as central to giving shape, direction, and purpose to the field. Sociologists designate such activities as field structuration. *Structuration* refers to the processes by which arenas of social activity are ordered; as this process proceeds, organizations exhibit increased interaction and interdependence and greater consensus on organizational forms and logics of doing work, and stable coalitions and patterns of domination emerge (DiMaggio, 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Giddens, 1979). Most of the previous studies of organization fields detail the creation of new kinds of organizations and new social logics in relatively open or unsettled social arenas. DiMaggio (1991) examined the emergence

of art museums in the United States during the late 19th century; Suchman (1995) studied the beginnings of the semiconductor industry in Silicon Valley; Dezalay and Garth (1996) considered the development of the field of international commercial arbitration; Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch (2003) the rise of the recycling industry; and Powell (1999) the early evolution of the bio-tech industry.

Restructuration refers to attempts to modify existing arrangements. This process has received less attention than structuration; however, recent studies include those by Haveman and Rao (1997) of the early 20th-century displacement of mutual thrift societies by for-profit building and loan firms; Scott, Ruef, Mendel, and Caronna's (2000) analysis of the transformation of the U.S. health care system during the second half of the 20th century; Rao's (2003) study of the gradual ascendance of nouvelle cuisine over classical cuisine in French restaurants; Thornton's (2004) examination of the changes in the structures and strategies of firms in the field of U.S. higher education publishing; and Lee and Lounsbury's (2004) study of the emergence and increasing acceptance of organic food as an alternative to the products of agri-business.

Structuration and restructuration may proceed through either "bottom-up" or "top-down" social processes, or some combination of both (Scott, 2001; Suchman, 1995). In the case of the restructuration of the youth services field, it appears that although there have been significant efforts at reform at the national (and even international level), most of the work to date has taken place in local communities. In the communities we studied, the work of several organizations has been critical in reallocating public resources and providing better services for youth.

A final comment should be added in comparing our own work with other studies of field development. Most such studies have been historical and cover several decades retrospectively. Investigators typically look back on the history of a field that now exists or has been successfully restructured. This strategy has clear advantages; the story's end is known. By contrast, we examine early efforts by organizations to restructure an existing set of institutions and organizations. We ask: what evidence can be adduced to suggest a restructuring field? What processes and strategies are employed? How do we assess progress? Because there is no way of fully knowing the answer to these questions, the evidence we collect and the indicators we employ are tentative. Nevertheless, we aim to discern early signs of restructuration through the work of the community advocacy organizations we have studied, and in related developments beyond the city level.

MOVING BEYOND A PROBLEM FOCUS

Historically, perceived deficiencies have served as grounds for the formulation of various social programs and policies for youth. In 1951, for

example, Congress passed the Federal Youth Corrections Act and prescribed the use of parole in the administration of juvenile corrections. Later the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 encouraged states to implement programs for youth at risk of becoming delinquent.[3] Other recent proposed legislation and policies, such as the Gang Prevention and Effective Deterrence Act (2005), have aimed to expand and improve law enforcement and gang prevention programs. Policies aimed at curbing truancy or teenage pregnancies have also helped to secure adequate supports for children and youth confronting special problems. Note, however, that these policies remain confined ("siloed") in already established institutional domains (e.g., social welfare agency) and focus on youth's behavior. In response, youth workers, foundations, and advocates have rallied around the notion that these problem-focused definitions and associated solutions are largely responsible for perpetuating bad outcomes. Reformers have also aimed to overcome the fragmentation of the youth services field and have promoted interagency coordination around service delivery. This approach suggested a solution to a problem everyone could agree on: the fragmentation of services aimed at improving youth's prospects, with competing eligibility requirements, training, and funding streams. "Comprehensive," "integrated," and "holistic" approaches were especially needed because of the complexity of the problems youth face. Although some improvements followed, such as enhanced case management through multiservice "one-stop shopping" at schools, reforms generally only occurred when modifications did not require any major changes in funding levels, authority, or political turf (Schorr, 1997).

Beginning in the late 1980s, major initiatives, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation's New Futures initiative and the Ford Foundation's Neighborhood and Family Initiative, increased the visibility of these debates and led to the development of new programs and structures within the youth services field. Such efforts have been aided and augmented by foundation support, the development of intermediary organizations, training programs, and collaborative policy councils. The number and variety of these initiatives signal the emergence of new understandings and logics within the youth services field. Major national conferences, reports, and legislative acts have sparked much activity at the local level where advocates continue to push comprehensive youth policies around education, out-of-school time, and more flexible approaches to resource allocation.

In this restructuring field, many advocates question the effectiveness and appropriateness of the dominant logics of custody, control, and punishment that guide mainstream educational, human services, and law enforcement institutions. Although some youth advocates promote collaboration and emphasize prevention over short-term crisis management, to others, the idea of collaboration is substantively empty and may undercut the creation of new support systems. These more ambitious reformers promoting positive youth

development offer a set of challenging logics that go beyond prevention, beyond improvements in school buildings and the school day, and beyond improved "services to clients" (Pittman et al., 2000). Still, youth development as a stance has not yet provided a coherent and consistent image around which policies can coalesce.

It is within this context of shifting frameworks and organizational relationships that the advocacy organizations discussed in the current study promote progressive approaches to working with youth. Advocacy organizations operate within and facilitate exchange between wider systems at county, state, and national levels, within what has become a highly permeable system of programs and policies.

ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS IN TWO URBAN COMMUNITIES

Advocacy happens across the whole nonprofit sector and not just in organizations labeled as *advocacy organizations*, a conclusion borne out by studies of political participation, nonprofit associations, nonprofit mailings, and the activities of religious institutions (McCarthy & Castelli, 2002).[4] Because youth advocacy organizations do not exist in a well-defined field or even in a well-defined organizational network, we used a two-pronged approach to identify the local population of youth advocacy organizations. We first conducted interviews with local community leaders, foundation officers, and nonprofit executives knowledgeable about youth advocacy and asked them to identify prominent or visible organizations advocating for youth—the major players within the community. Their responses helped us to build a snowball sample of youth advocacy organizations.[5]

Second, we consulted the online database Guidestar, which uses filed IRS 990 information from all registered 501(c) nonprofit organizations. A broad search of youth services organizations in San Francisco revealed 313 "youth"-related organizations and 218 organizations oriented toward "children."[6] Using the same criteria, Oakland contains fewer organizations: 191 youth organizations and 167 child-related organizations. In our view, however, the Guidestar data do not give an accurate count of the youth services population, nor, as we believe, a correct sorting of child- and youth-serving organizations because many of the organizations from this search do not fall within the parameters of youth services or youth development.[7]

We used three central criteria to determine the population. We were interested in organizations that (a) advocate for youth (as opposed to children), alone or in conjunction with providing services for youth, such as afterschool programs, shelter for homeless youth, or programs that teach youth organizing skills; (b) are prominent in their fields; and (c) operate on a city level rather than a neighborhood, regional, or state level. Through interviews with leaders of organizations nominated through the snowball sampling, we

were able to identify which organizations met our criteria for the youth advocacy population. The population consists of 9 San Francisco organizations and 10 Oakland organizations.[8] These organizations engage in an array of activities directed at improving resources and increasing public awareness of the needs of youth, including public rallies, electoral and legislative advocacy, youth training and leadership development, political education, community organizing, coalition building, and media campaigns. Organizations whose advocacy efforts were fleeting, episodic, or marginal to their core organizational activity were not included in the population. We confirmed our final population list with five informants, including a foundation officer, leading advocates in both communities, and city-level officials.

We chose to focus on three of the five "general" advocacy organizations from this population. Coleman Advocates, in San Francisco, is an independent advocacy organization that focuses exclusively on children and youth. It uses budget advocacy, media campaigns, public rallies, and electoral processes to increase public support for children and youth. San Francisco Organizing Project (SFOP) and Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) are members of a nationwide network of community organizing groups (Pacific Institute for Community Organizations [PICO]) engaged in advocacy for issues pertaining to families through local leadership training, coalition building, research, and public meetings. The rest of the organizations in our populations focused on issues in one or another established sectors. In both cities, these more specialized organizations focused variously on educational issues (e.g., Community Education Services), foster care (e.g., First Place Fund for Youth), particular ethnic populations (East Bay Asian Youth Center [EBAYC]), or advocacy services for individuals (e.g., Court Appointed Special Advocates [CASA]). These organizations share an overarching youth advocacy agenda but differ widely in terms of cognitive frame, organizing tactics, political stance, and organizational forms.

San Francisco and Oakland, although in close proximity geographically, differ in important ways as contexts for our populations. San Francisco has the lowest percentage of children and youth of any major metropolitan area in the United States. As of 2000, just 12% of its total population were children (younger than age 18 years) versus more than 20% in Oakland, which is somewhat above the national average (Census, 2000). The lack of affordable housing in San Francisco has been proposed as the primary reason for the decline of this population in recent decades (from 24.5% in 1960; Coleman Advocates for Child and Youth, 2001). Two other community context issues appear to affect the advocacy landscape in each city. San Francisco, in contrast to Oakland, is a major commercial center with a thriving financial district. It has a larger philanthropic community, with 769 foundations, in contrast to only 79 in Oakland. Second, with recent immigration, Oakland has become more racially and ethnically diverse than San Francisco (Economic Development Alliance, 2002).

Intensive study of these organizations offered us important opportunities to understand local advocacy work. The role of these organizations in promoting a new kind of youth services field is discussed next.

ROLES OF ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS IN FIELD DEVELOPMENT

The population of advocacy organizations we studied in San Francisco and Oakland has in different ways been instrumental in restructuring the local field serving youth; they have been critical in providing the basic structure or forum for communities to engage in policy debates about the programs and policies that affect them the most (DeVita, Mosher-Williams, & Stengel, 2001). These organizations have promoted new ways of understanding youth, new ways of working toward a common goal for youth, and new types of policies to address issues confronting youth. In their efforts, these organizations have utilized processes and techniques associated with emergent social movements, namely, the construction of collective meanings, shared objectives, and overarching frameworks for spanning diverse groups and interests (e.g., McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Zald & McCarthy, 1987). Although many such processes are under way, we illustrate five we have observed at work in the Bay Area.

RECONCEPTUALIZING YOUTH POLICY

Rather than constructing policy around youth's problems, advocates have promoted various ways to structure policy and programs around supporting youth's healthy development in all its manifestations (Pittman et al., 2000; Walker, 2001). Advocacy organizations have been on the front lines of this rethinking and have been recasting long-held notions of youth by assembling and dispensing new ideas about working with youth.

One such debate was facilitated by a number of advocacy organizations, including Coleman Advocates in San Francisco and Youth Together in Oakland, responding to the punitive nature of California's Proposition 21, or "three strikes" law. The measure, aimed at youth ages 14 to 18 years, enforces tougher penalties on felonies and allows some youth crimes to be treated like adult crimes within the legal system. Despite the efforts of advocacy organizations opposing the legislation at the state level, the measure passed and, as one Oakland advocate remarked, a more rigid context of "control and contain" emerged. In response, advocates began to band together and noticeably "shift their dialogue" from strategizing about how to address specific policies to discussions about "movement building" and policy framing at the local level (S. Ginwright, personal interview, April 14, 2003). For example, Youth Empowerment Center, born out of the "no on 21" campaign, founded School of Unity & Liberation (SOUL), an organizer training and political education

center for young people to learn how to organize for social change. The Movement Strategy Center, founded by former Coleman staff, supports the civic participation of youth and young adults and links them to other community change efforts through alliance building and technical assistance. The organization stresses the need for "cross-issue and cross-community strategizing" to develop sustainable social movements (Movement Strategy Center, 2005).

Changes in advocacy stance and strategy also helped facilitate increased participation of young people in shaping local advocacy agendas and collaboration among advocates to better attend to positive developmental aspects of youth. One advocate described the scene as follows: "You see organizations sharing young people. There is a seamless traveling between organizations amongst youth participating." He also noted that advocacy became more than a commitment to young people; attention from a diverse range of advocates—youth focused and not—centered on reforming policies "hostile" to youth in California.

Another example of youth advocates' efforts to reconceptualize and reframe youth policy comes from Oakland's "Books not Bars" campaign and the work of the Youth Empowerment Center. In response to punitive juvenile justice policies and the threat of the creation of a "super jail" for youth, these organizations were instrumental in fighting to reduce the proposed jail size to ensure more resources would be devoted to positive youth enterprises such as education, after-school programs, and health care. The youth-driven campaign against the super jail in Alameda County received state and national attention. Advocates did not argue against building a detention center altogether but instead pushed for funding a smaller facility with better services. The campaign revealed startling facts about the disparity of funding between detention (at that time California was first in the nation in spending on youth incarceration) and education (California ranks near the bottom on per-pupil spending in education). The campaign also helped expose the draconian policies and practices of the juvenile justice system at the state level. After a recent scandal and pressure from prisoners' rights advocates, Governor Schwarzenegger and the California Youth Authority recently announced a change in emphasis for the agency from "punitive disciplinary measures" to positive reinforcement. This trend signals the shift in ideas and the policy impact local advocates can have on the framing and implementation of policy at state and national levels.

CHANGING REPERTOIRES OF ACTIONS

In response to changing political climates, advocacy groups find that they need to alter their tactics. In addition to being responsive to changes in politics, advocacy groups also have to adjust their strategies to fit changing issues and arenas: Tactics that work in an affordable housing campaign may not be

effective in public school reform efforts. Such changes typically occur by trial and error, and the use of different strategies may characterize different periods of an organization's history. Successful organizations are those who succeed in developing new repertoires of action when earlier modes are foreclosed or unsuccessful (see Clemens, 1997). When these organizations are successful, they are also signaling new ways of approaching issues related to youth and in doing so are restructuring the field.

For example, in its early years Coleman focused its efforts on juvenile justice and foster care reform, carrying out its initiatives by meeting directly with public officials to advocate for changes to youth-serving institutions. The shift toward more conservative policies at the national level and the worsening drug problems of the 1980s forced Coleman to rethink the scope of its work and the strategies it employed. The organization decided to focus on a broader agenda to address the enduring problems of urban poverty that children and youth face. Budget cuts at the local level and impasses with city officials also made direct meetings with politicians less effective. In response, Coleman became an expert in budgetary analysis and used the media to get public officials' attention instead of meeting with officials directly. A longtime Coleman board member noted this shift in strategy: "We were at a point of diminishing returns of sitting down and being really nice with people in city government." By embracing a broader agenda, Coleman promoted the notion that addressing youth's needs is something that requires a cross-institutional and multilevel approach.

OCO has similarly been devoted to a broad youth agenda, with a focus on truancy, crime, and after-school hours. A shift in the organization's focus came in the early 1990s when parents' concerns over deteriorating school facilities prompted OCO to rethink its strategies to address basic school failures. Neighborhood gatherings among constituents, which had been OCO's main mode of community organizing, proved less effective, and OCO shifted its approach to include building alliances with teachers, administrators, and school reform consultants. With these new formalized partnerships, OCO was able to enlist new core supporters among parents and gain better access to politicians and school board members. OCO also enhanced its local policy expertise, conducting research and analysis about current school system inequities. This shift in organizing strategy better equipped OCO to be an active participant in citywide policy debates and also enabled grassroots participation in school district policy making. The choice of a larger institutional target—failing schools—and emphasis on coalition building demonstrated OCO's ability to reframe issues in ways that would mobilize diverse constituencies into a common reform effort and to shift tactics from neighborhood organizing to community-wide alliance building. Of particular importance: OCO had refocused community attention from dysfunctional situations—truancy and crime—to positive programs—education—affecting all youth.

THE TRAVELING OF IDEAS

As fields become better established, ideas flow among organizations with greater ease and speed (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; DiMaggio, 1983). Organizations become more aware of one another, have more contact with each other, participate in the same networks, and often exchange participants, who move more freely among similar organizations. In a restructuring field, the traveling of ideas helps to diffuse new concepts, processes, and techniques. This process is illustrated by two campaigns undertaken by organizations within our focal population.

Campaigns for small autonomous schools have been major initiatives for OCO and SFOP, both of which are members of PICO, a network of some 50 organizations that spans 150 cities and 16 states.[9] OCO began working on small schools in 1997, and SFOP followed their lead in 2001. Because of OCO's efforts, the Oakland Unified School District adopted the New Small Autonomous Schools policy in 2000, and as of 2005, 18 new small autonomous schools have been created in the district. As news of OCO's experience and success spread across the Bay, educators in San Francisco decided they wanted to do something similar. Teachers from Balboa High School were among those interested in starting a small school and attended an OCO conference to learn more about the process of organizing for school reform in Oakland. OCO helped connect the teachers to SFOP, and SFOP staff began training the teachers in their organizing model. The partnership between SFOP and the teachers led to the San Francisco Unified School District's inclusion of small schools in its recent secondary school redesign plan. Two small schools opened in 2003.

The diffusion of ideas—the concept and mobilizing techniques effective in working with teachers, schools and districts—was greatly assisted by OCO and SFOP's shared membership in PICO. Ideas about school reform tactics were again shared at a larger national PICO conference where affiliated organizations were able to listen to OCO's lessons about organizing for school change. These and similar network systems play a vital role in field creation and growth. However, ideas can also travel in the absence of specific network ties.

For example, a second concept traveling across the Bay, this time from San Francisco to Oakland, helped transfer a successful tactic for securing local funding for children and youth services and, more important, helped to establish new political structures in both communities. Coleman was successful in their 1991 campaign to pass the Children's Amendment after they mobilized their members and supporters to reach out and collect 68,000 signatures for Proposition J, a city ballot initiative. The measure, which established the Children's Fund, set aside a fixed percentage of local property tax for the support of children and youth services. As the first citizen-led reform in the country to dedicate a local funding stream for youth services, Coleman's effort brought national attention to local advocacy efforts, and

Oakland soon followed course. In November 1996, more than three fourths of Oakland voters supported an amendment to the City Charter that sets aside 2.5% of the city's general purpose funds for youth services. The amendment (Measure K) established Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY), the city institution that administers funds for youth services. The advocacy organization Kids First, also grew out of the efforts of a coalition of advocates and parents dedicated to the cause. The East Bay Community Foundation and the City of Oakland's partnership to administer OFCY holds the potential for institutionalized support for integrated child and youth services in Oakland.

In both of these cases, 3 to 8 years passed before advocates were able to achieve policy gains. The example illustrates how strategies and tactics used to push for reform in one district or community can be emulated in another. However, how and to what degree reforms take hold differ under various political and social contexts. Moreover, understanding the temporal dimension of advocacy work—that advocacy takes time—has been an important factor for nonprofit advocacy and service organizations working within San Francisco and Oakland neighborhoods.

LEGITIMACY AND POWER

A general trend among advocacy groups is to operate as professionally staffed proponents of reform, relying on contributions and foundation support but lacking rank-and-file members (Jenkins, forthcoming 2006). Many advocates work on behalf of marginalized youth instead of involving parents and youth to become effective advocates in their own right. In contrast to this trend, our focal advocacy organizations involve and train community members to become advocates and, in this way, gain legitimacy within the neighborhoods in which they work and with public officials. For example, the creation of a youth organizing group at Coleman Advocates, followed by the launching of a parent-organizing group, has allowed Coleman access to neighborhoods in San Francisco in which it could not previously do effective advocacy work. These groups legitimize Coleman's work not only in particular neighborhoods but also at the citywide level: Public officials, as a former Coleman employee stated, recognize that "the issues are real issues coming from real people." Similarly, SFOP gains legitimacy with city officials through its position as a nonideological group of "ordinary" church-going folks who take progressive stands on many issues concerning youth. OCO and SFOP have been able to involve young people as participants in political actions with public officials. As one OCO organizer explained, "youth are doing research to find out who is responsible" for unsafe and poorly equipped schools, and to propose policy solutions. "Research"—in this case youth conducting surveys of other young people—is another way in which such organizations establish their legitimacy. These examples indicate a shifting sense of whose knowledge matters when it comes to creating

policy for youth. Empowerment of the disempowered is an important component of the restructuring effort.

Not only are youth and families establishing a stronger voice when it comes to youth policy in these two communities but also in some cases funders and officials are listening. For example, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a leader in fostering innovative policy and community support for disadvantaged youth and their families, has been active in Oakland through their Making Connections work. The Foundation chose to collaborate with a local organizer, EBAYC, to create new strategies and policies through community organizing. EBAYC developed a "listening campaign" on family economic support and surveyed more than 500 residents. Staff met with community members who indicated interest in planning, and together they developed an action plan. The results from the campaign were used to set a strategy that now guides Casey's economic success work in East Oakland.

However, gaining legitimacy among community residents or even with city officials cannot solidify the restructuring process. Advocacy organizations also need access to and an ongoing role in the power structure of their city.

LINKING INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

One of the greatest challenges confronting the youth services field is the fragmentation of public agencies and service providers and the isolation and sense of powerlessness of many community members. The youth-serving organizations are too often insulated and working independently or at cross-purposes (National Housing Institute [NHI], 1998; Wynn, 2000). Under these conditions, those organizations that take on a mediating role—convening and networking, coordinating and facilitating—create micromobilization structures in which advocates can promote new ideas and garner support for change (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988).

OCO and SFOP's approach, for example, connects parents in local neighborhoods with public officials through the structure of their local organizing committees. This bridging function between local citizens and policy makers provides the opportunity for residents to organize around community concerns and gain entry into public policy debates. The committees are a micromobilization context in which residents share concerns, create a common sense of issues facing youth, and gather the resources needed to address these issues in a public forum. Creating intermediary structures linking neighborhoods and city officials is one important mechanism for advancing field restructuration.

Another is the institutionalization of reformer's efforts as programs, initiated by advocacy groups and adopted by established organizations, including the municipal government. Such "handoffs," as we call them, mark moments when reform initiatives shift from reliance on protests, rallies, lobbying, and other "outsider" tactics to become new programs within the establishment—a transition, as it were, from "the streets" to "the suites." Such handoffs signal a shift from dependence on the social mobilization of everyday citizens—a

process requiring much time and continuous energy—to the routine reliance on the support of full-time officials authorized to take actions on behalf of the public. As an example, when the children's initiatives became law in Oakland and San Francisco, new public agencies, The Oakland Fund for Children and Youth and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, were established to manage the programs within city hall.

Moving into the halls of power is one way to measure an advocacy organization's progress and is a clear indication of success. However, it can be a double-edged sword. Implemented programs rarely meet all the goals intended by advocates, and some compromise and dilution of objectives is almost inevitable. There will always be more work for outsiders to do, even when they succeed in enlisting the aid of insiders to adopt and manage their programs (Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005).

INDICATORS OF FIELD DEVELOPMENT

The previous discussion focused on how advocacy work at the local level serves as a critical locus of the movement to change policies and practices that support youth. We now turn to examine the efforts of a broader array of actors operating at local, state, and national levels—of which advocacy groups are one among several players—that are beginning to reshape the youth services field as a whole.

Organizational fields vary in their degree and type of structuration, and analysts have highlighted some of the important dimensions along which field development and organization may vary across different sectors and over time (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1994; Scott et al., 2000). These variations include differing levels of consensus on goals, program standards, and social logics for organizing work within the field; varied availability and importance of standardized training and certification for work within the field; variations in the presence and strength of interorganizational relations and networks; and different levels of stability of funding for field activities.

By these standards—whether applied to activities at the national, state, or local level—youth services exhibits, at best, a very low degree of field structuration. Youth services field organization is weak or nonexistent in each of these categories: There is little consensus on how to define and treat the problems facing youth; there is virtually no standardized training or certification for working with young people; networks within the field are often episodic and weak; and public funding to support youth is far from secure given the greater lobbying power of more entrenched interests. However, other types of indicators, we believe, may signal not a degree of maturity, but evidence of new progress toward the restructuration of this field.

Early indicators of the restructuration of the youth services focus attention on youth assets rather than deficits, on positive development rather than punishment and might include the following:

- The presence of visible champions who provide ideological energy and focus: Environmentalists point to the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* as a watershed event in raising civic consciousness about the dangers of chemical pesticides, thus launching the environmental movement in the United States (Hoffman, 1997, pp. 50-57). J. I. Rodale is credited as inspiring the organic movement in the United States through his books and magazine, *Organic Farming and Gardening*, launched in 1942 (Lee & Lounsbury, 2004).

Those reviewing the history of youth services suggest that a more "coherent, holistic framework that would help oriented thinking about youth and inform policies to address youth needs" began to come together during the late 1980s (Costello, Toles, Spielberger, & Wynn, 2000, p. 190). Influential proponents included Karen Pittman, Marlene Wright, Michele Cahill, and James Connell (see, e.g., Connell, Gambone, & Smith, 1998; Pittman & Wright, 1991), although none of these individuals have attained the visibility of a Rachel Carson. In the more established children's rights movement, perhaps the most influential and well-known advocate in this country is Marian Wright Edelman, founder, in 1973, and first president of the Children's Defense Fund. Ideas from champions are critical to social reform efforts (Campbell, 2002).

- The number and influence of national (and international) conferences, publications, and events intended to clarify the agenda: A second indicator that reveals promising signs of restructuring is the mobilization of concerned citizens, politicians, and research groups at the societal level to get issues facing young people onto the public agenda. Conferences and publications highlighting problems that young people face help to focus the field's goals, increase its visibility, and potentially lead to more supportive public policies. Instances of galvanizing conferences and publications include the publication of *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours* (Carnegie Council, 1992). This report established strong support among funders and policy makers for developing comprehensive "out-of-school time" programs and activities for youth. Numerous cities have focused attention on afterschool programs, prompting some to establish comprehensive, citywide systems that have become models (including Los Angeles' BEST, San Diego's "6-to-6", and New York City's The Afterschool Corporation). Other examples include the report of the Committee on Community-Level Programs of the National Research Council's, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development,* published in 2002, and the 2003 White House Task Force on Disconnected Youth. All of these efforts help to develop common indicators of positive development and to identify gaps impeding design of unified policies to promote youth's healthy development and transition to adulthood.

- Number of legislative acts that significantly advance the agenda: Calling for social reforms at conferences and in publications is a start but enacting legislation to advance such reforms is clearly more significant. This is particularly challenging at the federal level; as De Vita et al. (2001) pointed out, devolution policies pursued since the early 1990s have shifted significant responsibility for social legislation from the federal government to state and local jurisdictions. The lack of coordination between federal agencies that serve youth is another formidable obstacle to comprehensive legislation; as legislators continue to treat youth policies from a sectoral perspective, attempts to pass comprehensive youth policy fail. A coalition of organizations still advocate for a national policy, the Younger Americans Act, which was introduced in 2001 and disregarded by Congress. Similarly, in 2001 California State Senator Dede Alpert introduced the Youth Development Act to coordinate youth policy at the state level; however, the legislation was vetoed by the governor because of fiscal concerns. In 2004, under a new banner and broader endorsement, Alpert's "Youth Policy Act" was rejected once again. Although recent efforts in states across the country demonstrate willingness for sustained work across departments, leaders in various states have concluded that they cannot fully reform the structure and function of state agencies to best serve youth. Successful attempts at creating a state youth policy have occurred in states such as Massachusetts, New York, Iowa, and Kentucky; however, California, a preeminent voice in policies for youth nationally, continues to look to its counties as central actors in implementing innovative youth policy (Ferber & Pittman, 2002).[10]

In spite of these challenges, though, some small advances have been made in recent years. The 1998 Development of Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative is a notable success at the federal level. As a collaborative effort between the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, and Education, this initiative provides grants to school districts to work in partnership with local mental health and law enforcement agencies to promote healthy development and reduce youth violence. In this tough climate for enacting positive policies, success sometimes comes in the form of blocking legislation deemed to be detrimental to the cause, as it did in the Books not Bars campaign opposing Alameda's super jail.

- Number of nonprofit organizations, service and advocacy, devoted to the cause: Another promising indicator of restructuration is the number of nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving conditions for youth. More so than is often recognized, organizations operating in the nonprofit sectors of the United States perform a critical role, operating between more episodic and ephemeral social movements, on the one hand, and established public agencies, on the other. Hence, the

number of such organizations—service and advocacy—operating in a field is an important bellwether of its vigor. Employing data from IRS 990 forms, which provides a useful, albeit imperfect, measure of this activity, De Vita et al. (2001) identified more than 45,300 nonprofit organizations that focus on service provision for children and youth throughout the United States in 1997, and more than 9,200 engaged in advocacy on these issues. An additional 880 organizations identified themselves as engaging in direct or grassroots lobbying on youth services issues. Of course, not all of these organizations are committed to advancing a progressive assets-based agenda; a number of more conservative groups advocate for more punitive measures, reduced public support, and favor more traditional parental controls (Covington, 2001). As discussed earlier, available databases that classify organizations often misrepresent their work, thus making it difficult to getting an accurate, macro picture of the field's population. However, IRS 990 forms do give a general indication of growth within the field when considering field development processes.

The presence of more than 55,000 nonprofit organizations in the youth services field nationwide is a useful datum; however, interpretation requires information about trends over time and comparisons with similar, and sometimes competing, causes and interests. The structure of the largest nonprofit organizations in the United States has changed dramatically since the 1960s, membership organizations have dwindled in number and influence, whereas staff-led professional organizations have significantly increased (Skocpol, 2003). In the youth services field, for example, the membership-based National Parent Teacher Association has experienced a steady decline in total membership and in numbers of local Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chapters since 1963. By contrast, many newer professional staff organizations do not function as membership organizations; the Children's Defense Fund is representative of this new model in that it is run by professionals and does not have a formal membership base, although it conducts national meetings involving a few thousand supporters (Skocpol & Dickert, 2001). Other national advocacy organizations, such as Voices for America's Children, work primarily to provide research and policy support to state and local child advocacy organizations.

- Number of foundations operating at the national, state, and community levels: In addition to nonprofits, foundations are important engines of reform in American society (see Jenkins, 1998). The number of foundations at the national, state, and local levels whose agenda includes funding for youth services is thus another important indicator of the field's development. Employing data collected by the Foundation Center, Covington (2001) estimates that just more than U.S. $1 billion dollars were invested by 890 foundations in 1997 to support services and advocacy for children and youth. Locally, in San Francisco

and Oakland, the number of foundations funding children and youth is also quite large: 120 foundations in San Francisco fund children or youth programs, and Oakland is home to 15 foundations providing grants in the same funding category (FC Search, 2004). Many of these foundations are well known and fund projects throughout the Bay Area and in other parts of California and the United States.[11]

- The development of metrics and data-gathering mechanisms for assessing progress in achieving field-level objectives: Yet another indicator of interest is the extent to which metrics have been developed to enable the routine evaluation of programs developed to advance the cause. What gets counted and how increasingly matters in societies organized around intendedly rational principles and policy making (Ventresca, 2002). Since the 1990s, a growing number of published reports about youth outcomes—some issued annually—attest to substantial progress in this arena. Influential reports include *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance*, administered by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1998; *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, compiled from federal data sources by the Federal Intra-Agency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998; *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth*, compiled from federal data sources by Child Trends, Inc, 1997; and *Kids Count Data Book*, compiled from various data sources by the Anne E. Casey Foundation and published annually (MacDonald & Valdivieso, 2000). These reports provide convincing evidence that "the data available for tracking the well-being of children are fairly extensive," but also reveal that for many years, the data gathered have been "fixated on negative outcomes" (MacDonald & Valdivieso, 2000, pp. 159, 165; see also Child Trends, 1997). Only in recent years have there been concerted efforts to identify and measure more positive evidence of development, including self-worth, sense of mastery, sense of belonging, and responsibility, and various physical, intellectual, civic, and social abilities (Hair, Moore, Hunter, & Kaye, 2002).
- The development of university-based programs supporting data collection, research, policy formulation, and dissemination activities: A final indicator of restructuring stresses the importance of receiving support and legitimation from the involvement of higher education institutions and research groups. To be successful, emerging fields must gain traction in systems of higher education, the major gatekeeper and arbiter of professionalization efforts. To our knowledge, no universities in the United States have created full-fledged schools or departments to support and advance youth services; however, important indicators of progress include research centers and degree concentrations at universities. Such centers include the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, which was established in 1984 as a research center and which houses an integrated database to allow researchers to track child populations within programs at the city and state level; the Center

for Community Partnerships, founded in 1992 as an outgrowth of the Penn Program for Public Service based at the University of Pennsylvania, to collaborate with surrounding communities to solve urban problems; and the John Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University, which aims to bridge research and practice to help communities positively support youth. In addition to university-based research, independent think tanks have recently focused more research on youth policy. The Brookings Institutions recently published a paper examining the growth of after-school programs and their impact on academic achievement (Hollister, 2003); the Urban Institute has a research area dedicated to Adolescents and Youth Development.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The field of youth services is gradually being reenvisioned and restructured. Although some youth services interests must depend for their advancement on mobilizing strategies targeting rank-and-file, casual, one-time recruits who take to the streets or disrupt the forums of entrenched elites, most efforts rely on paid staff who are employed by nonprofit organizations relying on public or foundation funding. At a certain stage—which youth services appears to have reached—even struggle and reform takes on a somewhat stable, organizational, and professional demeanor.

Although our primary data collection has been restricted to the activities of advocacy organizations in two urban communities, we have focused attention on the ways in which these organizations are buoyed up by and contribute to the construction of larger and wider social structures and meaning systems. Highly structured, institutionalized organization fields do not arise because of a clarion call from a god or a government; they begin with the labors of single, separated individuals and organizations that think and work in new ways and, if they are lucky, find others to join them. When, and if, they are successful, the gods and governments will adopt and claim credit for the work. In the meantime, we have attempted to identify interim indicators of progress and isolate some of the mechanisms used by advocacy organizations within communities to advance field structuration.

Notes

1. The community level affords us a view of organizations interacting with local government and is, in a practical way, the level at which many youth services are provided.

2. It is also of note that the headquarters of many widely recognized state and national advocacy organizations are located within San Francisco or Oakland.

3. Later revised and expanded in the late 1980s, the law reacted to the recent increase in juvenile crime and allowed states to try youth as adults for some violent crimes.

4. Definitions of the population of nonprofit organizations engaging in advocacy are numerous and conflicting. In one study, any 501(c)3 nonprofit organization reporting a nonzero

amount of funds for lobbying or grassroots initiatives, as well as all 501(c) 4s, were included in the advocacy population (DeVita et al., 2001). Other definitions, including our own, depend on self-identification or the judgments of knowledgeable community informants.

5. The basic idea underlying snowball sampling is that members of a special population often know each other, and the technique is applicable only with populations for which this is the case. When one or more members of the special population are located, they are asked to name other members of the special population who are then asked to name others, and so on. (Sudman & Kalton, 1986, p. 413).

6. To distinguish segments of the nonprofit sector Guidestar uses preassigned National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) categories designated by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS). "Youth advocacy" is not a preidentified category, so organizations are in the position of identifying their advocacy activity with other descriptors, such as *youth development* and *advocacy*. Another search using the youth development category captured a wide array of organizations that fund, serve, interact with, and/or advocate on behalf of children and youth, many of which were not included in the child and youth-related categories.

7. Moreover, when we narrowed the search to "child advocacy" organizations in each community, San Francisco listed 19 organizations while Oakland reported 9, numbers that do not reflect the reality of advocacy organizations that currently exist, as determined by our on-the-ground qualitative research. A closer examination of the organizations listed revealed serious errors of classification: Many of the organizations did not fit within the scope of children and youth services. For example, two—the Dental Health Foundation in Oakland and Ujaama Westbrook Hunters Point Management Corporation in San Francisco—were found mislabeled under "child advocacy." And one of our key focal organizations in San Francisco, Coleman Advocates, did not appear in our original search because it was incorporated in a neighboring county. This has since been corrected as Guidestar has updated the database.

8. Organizations in our population included the following groups in San Francisco: Coleman Advocates for Youth, San Francisco Organizing Project (SFOP), the San Francisco Youth Commission, Center for Young Women's Development, Larkin Street Youth Services, Community Educational Services, Lavender Youth Recreation & Information Center (LYRIC), San Francisco Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and Huckleberry Youth Programs. Organizations in Oakland included Oakland Community Organizations (OCO), First Place Fund for Youth, Kids First, East Bay Asian Youth Center, Youth Together, Oakland Youth Commission, Youth Alive!, Leadership Excellence, Books not Bars, and Youth Empowerment Center. We also interviewed intermediary organizations and government agencies concerned with youth issues.

9. Pacific Institute for Community Organizations' (PICO) mission is "to assist in the building of community organizations with the power to improve the quality of life of families and neighborhoods" (http:www.piconetwork.org/aboutpico.html). Its work is based on principles of "respect for human dignity; creation of a just society; and development of the whole person." In California, 16 organizations form the PICO California Project, which works to make changes at the state level on major issues relevant to local communities including education, health, housing, crime, and safety.

10. For example, in 1993 a six-county Youth Pilot Program was implemented under state legislation to facilitate counties' ability to blend funding and integrate services for youth across agencies.

11. Foundations especially active at national and local levels include Robert Wood Johnson, Annie E. Casey, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr., Hewlett, Ford, Packard, Irvine, Mott, and Stuart.

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