Political Learning Revisited: How Nonprofit Service Provision Shapes Political Participation Among the Poor

By

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Dedication

To Mom and Dad

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Chapter 1

Introduction

How do public policies shape political engagement among the poor? Studies demonstrate that public assistance recipients are "quiescent" in every form of political activity (Verba et al 1995; Soss and Jacobs 2009). Political participation models attribute this inactivity to a lack of resources and skills needed to participate in politics (Verba et al 1995), the development of traits of dependence through receiving welfare (Mead 1992), and the ways in which public assistance obscures the need for political demand making (Piven & Cloward 1971).

In recent years political scientists have examined the ways in which public policies shape mass political behavior (Campbell 2002;2003; Mettler 2002; Soss 2001). Scholars suggest that public policies can offer resources and incentives for political action and act as sources of political information and meaning (Pierson 1993; Mettler & Soss 2004). Schneider and Ingram (1995) elaborate on these "policy feedback" effects, asserting that policies communicate messages and lessons that influence people's values, attitudes, group identities, orientations to government, and patterns of political participation (442). From this perspective, social policies are characterized as agents of political socialization through which clients learn lessons about citizenship, politics, and the government.

As venues of political learning, some policy feedback scholars suggest that public programs can create and reinforce "inequalities in citizen voice," politically marginalizing the

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poor. Andrea Campbell (2012) expounds on the ways in which the government shapes "patterns of political inequality through the designs of public policies." She notes that,

> "Democracy is predicated on equal distances of citizens from government and some citizens' preferences are much more likely to be expressed in policy than others…But feedback scholarship demonstrates that public programs themselves shape the ability, interest, and opportunities of citizens to participate politically. The structure of policies can undermine or build up recipients' participation, disadvantaging or advantaging groups beyond their personal characteristics. Government itself shapes patterns of political inequality through the designs of public policies."(342)

Welfare scholarship shores up this claim by indicating that, after controlling for demographic characteristics, beneficiaries of universal programs have higher levels of political and civic engagement than recipients of means tested programs (Mettler & Stonecash 2008; Soss 1999; 2001). These differences are attributed to divergent program designs, which confer different resources and incentives for participation and convey distinct messages about citizenship and political participation (Mettler 2002; Campbell 2002; Soss 1999). For instance, research demonstrates that the punitive and paternalistic elements of AFDC and TANF policy design teach clients negative lessons about the government and attenuate external political efficacy and voting among welfare clients (Soss 1999; 2001; Bruch et. al. 2010). In contrast, universal programs such as Social Security encourage political participation among low-income participants by incentivizing political engagement and connecting low-income seniors to political recruitment targets such as AARP and senior citizens groups.

Further research demonstrates that other social policies have similar positive effects on political participation of low-income participants. For example, Suzanne Mettler (2002) finds that the education benefits offered through the GI Bill enhanced beneficiaries' socioeconomic status and skills, which fostered capacity and predisposition for civic involvement (361-362). Furthermore, the impartial application of rules and procedures and the ease of benefit receipt also

conferred a sense of dignity to veterans, resulting in increased civic engagement among program participants. Studies show that Head Start has positive interpretive effects on participants through local policy councils that foster political efficacy and civic and political engagement (Soss 1999; 2001; Bruch et.al 2010).

Limitations of Research

Despite the insights of this body of research, the policy feedback literature has two broad limitations. First, the theoretical insights of this body of work have not been explored in the context of nonprofit social service provision, an integral component of post-welfare reform policy administration (Allard 2009). Since welfare reform, there has been a growing trend toward privatized welfare service provision. From 1993 to 2005, the cash welfare caseload declined from 14.2 million to 4.6 million (Allard 2009). As spending for cash benefits declined, spending on welfare services, such as childcare, transportation assistance, and job-search assistance increased. In 2012, federal and state governments paid a combined $137 billion to nonprofit organizations through nearly 350,000 contracts or grants with 56,000 nonprofit organizations. Human service nonprofit organizations reflected the majority of these grants and contracts with $81 billion funding 30,000 human service nonprofits[1]. These numbers suggest that a growing number of poor families are currently receiving social services through nonprofit human service organizations. These types of organizations may offer new interactions with the state and teach alternative lessons about citizenship and political processes.

Studies that do examine the implications of this "New American Welfare State" point to the potentially mobilizing effects of private social service provision, suggesting that community

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[1] Urban Institute. Nonprofit-Government Contracts and Grants: Findings from the 2013 Survey. Washington D.C., December, 2013.

based social services foster self-sufficiency, political advocacy, and mobilization, build political constituencies for local elected officials, and increase political activism among participants (Allard 2009; Marwell 2004, Lawless and Fox 2000). However, this research focuses primarily on single cases and overlooks the variation in service provision across the nonprofit sector. Research on nonprofit human service agencies often characterizes program design as a "black box" that varies considerably across the nonprofit sector by agency type, staff, budget, and size (Hansenfeld 1972, Sandfort 2001). Thus, additional research that incorporates different types of agencies and programs is needed to better understand the implications of this policy trend.

Policy feedback scholars primarily explore how interactions with public bureaucracies inform political behavior and have developed a typology of program design that describes program authority structures. However, the contextual range of this program typology may be limited when applied in the context of nonprofit social service provision. While public programs are described as paternalistic (punitive and directive), participatory (incorporating clients voice in decision making processes), or bureaucratic (impartial and rule oriented), variation across the nonprofit service sector may yield nuances outside the scope of this concept of program design. An in-depth examination of nonprofit program design is warranted to further refine the existing program design typology in order to more accurately reflect the realities of front-line service provision in nonprofit human service agencies.

In addition to offering a limited understanding of privatized welfare services, the policy feedback literature falls short in deepening our understanding of the mechanisms driving feedback effects. Most studies observe relationships between program participation and outcomes (Soss 1999; 2000; Mettler 2002; Bruch et.al. 2010; Mettler and Stonecash 2008), but

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offer less clarity regarding the mechanisms of program design behind these relationships. Interpretively, how do design elements convey messages to clients? How do clients interpret these messages and turn them into beliefs and, ultimately, political action? In what ways do program attributes equip clients with resources and skills for political action? Soss and Mettler (2004) address these shortcomings in the feedback literature and suggest that identifying mechanisms of feedback effects will advance this body of literature. The two state that,

> "Policy feedback can be advanced by isolating the effects of special features of policy design […] to understand why policies produce different types of feedback, we need to identify the underlying dimensions of policy variation that have political significance for mass publics." (64)

Furthermore, the two contend that although,

> "Much can be learned from studies that show how policy actions or features of policy design, correlate with public responses […] scholarship on feedback effects must begin to trace the processes and specify the mechanisms that link public policies to mass responses."(64)

Taken together, the policy feedback perspective is in need of further theoretical development to both advance its relevance in the context "New American Welfare State" and to clarify how specific elements of program design shape political action.

Contribution to Literature

This dissertation accomplishes the theory building tasks posed by Mettler and Soss (2004) in the case of subsidized childcare services. Through an in-depth ethnographic case study of two nonprofit organizations offering subsidized afterschool childcare, I propose a revised conceptual tool to fit nonprofit community based social service provision, identify nuances in program design among nonprofit service providers, and uncover the processes by which program design informs political behavior outcomes. I incorporate existing resource and recruitment

models of political participation with the policy feedback framework to explore how nonprofit service providers influence the political behavior of clients. In the context of subsidized childcare services, nonprofit service providers offer alternative pathways to political participation by serving as venues for political engagement and by conveying messages to clients about effective modes of political and civic action. Because nonprofit community-based organizations exist in unique neighborhood and service contexts, nonprofit service providers teach "place-based" lessons about effective responses to neighborhood conditions and local public issues. These lessons, in turn, inform political efficacy beliefs and political action.

Furthermore, the evidence demonstrates that the extent to which nonprofit service providers shape the political behavior of clients depends on how clients choose to interact with the organization and staff discretion throughout these interactions over time. The interplay of client and staff discretion results in varied program experiences and exposure to aspects of service delivery and program design. Parents with the greatest degree of involvement are privy to benefits of program design, receiving resources that extend beyond the scope of afterschool care, obtaining access to decision-making roles and skill building opportunities within the program, and garnering entrée to opportunities for political action.

Brief History and Context: Non-Profit Service Provision

Charitable organizations have always been integral in providing assistance to the poor (Katz 1986). However, federal funding in the past few decades has expanded the role of nonprofit organizations in service provision. In particular, the Johnson Administration's War on Poverty broadened social policy to incorporate a "service based approach" to assist the poor through job training and placement services. The 1962 and 1967 amendments to the Social Security act encouraged states and communities to provide social services that would help public

assistance recipients find employment. The Community Mental Health Center Act of 1963

provided support for private agencies and established health centers, while the 1964 Civil Rights

Act established community action agencies in addition to neighborhood health centers. Johnson's

"service based" approach nearly tripled federal expenditures on social services from 8.2 million

in 1965 to 2.2 billion dollars in 1970 (Smith and Lipsky1993, 58-59; Allard 2009, 22-

23).

Eventually, federal provision for social services became more distinct and permanent

through the 1975 title XX of the Social Security Act (the Social Services Block Grant), the

Community Service Block Grant, and the Community Development Block Grant. The 1973

Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration, and with Medicaid reimbursements also emerged as important sources of

support for private health and social service programs (Allard 2009: Smith and Lipsky 1993).

Despite deep cuts in federal funding for social welfare and social service provision in the Reagan

and Bush Era, public provisions for foster care services, drug and alcohol treatment, and

supportive services for the homeless spurred a proliferation of different types of services offered

through nonprofit organizations (Smith and Lipsky 1993, 58-59). The greatest push for

privatization in social service provision coincides with the 1996 Welfare Reform legislation.

Welfare reform established new eligibility stipulations, time limits on the receipt of cash

benefits, and work requirements resulting in declining caseloads (Allard 2009).

As cash-based assistance declined, spending for supportive welfare services increased.

From 1997 to 2004, total federal expenditures for cash welfare declined by 50 percent in real

dollars (Allard 2009, 27-28). In contrast, federal welfare spending on social services increased

from 23 percent in 1997 to 58 percent in 2004. State welfare spending reflects a similar shift; the

proportion of state welfare funds for cash based assistance declined from 69 percent in 1997 to 49 percent in 2004 (28). The Charitable Choice provision of welfare reform expanded nonprofit social service provision through faith-based organizations by allowing churches and synagogues to enter into contracts with states to deliver welfare services without compromising their religious mission (Anna Greenberg 2000, 183). Now community based nonprofits are the primary mechanisms for federally funded service delivery (Allard 2009). Essentially, "community based organizations, not welfare checks, provide the bulk of the help offered by the safety net" (Allard 2009, 3).

Afterschool Care as a Case of Welfare Privatization

Rising maternal employment rates and concerns about the dangers of unsupervised time for children during afterschool hours led to a marked increase in afterschool program since the mid-1990s (Burdumy, Dynarski, Deke 2007). The number of afterschool programs grew from 1.7 million in 1991 to 6.7 million programs in 1997 (Burdumy, Dynarski, and Deke 2007). In 2004, 6 million children were enrolled in afterschool program and by 2009, the number of school aged children in afterschool programs rose to 8.4 million students (Afterschool Alliance 2009). Many of these afterschool programs are administered by local schools, nonprofit community based organizations, and for profit daycares. Federal dollars have supported this emergence of afterschool programing through large grants such as 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant and the Federal Childcare Development Fund Block Grant.

21st Century Community Learning Center Grant

The 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grant reflects increased support for afterschool programming during the Clinton and Bush administration (DeAngelis & Rossi 1997; Burdumy, Dynarski, and Deke 2007). The program was originally authorized under the

Secondary Education Act of 1994 and awarded three-year grants to local school districts to administer afterschool programs. By 1998, funding for 21st CCLC increased to $40 million and in 2002, 1 billion dollars was awarded to 1,520 programs in 6,800 rural and inner city schools (Burdumy, Dynarkski, and Deke 2007). Title IV Part B of the No Child Left Behind Act reauthorized the program during the Bush Administration and expanded the amount of funding available to organizations. The reauthorization also shifted the program's focus to the academic enrichment of low performing schools, as indicated by student performance on state standardized tests, in low-income areas. Instead of targeting school districts, the program began to prioritize partnerships between local schools and community organizations such as youth development organizations, community centers, and childcare organizations. The 21st CCLC grant now supports,

> "The creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children."

States are awarded the grant, manage statewide competition, and award grants to nonprofits and local education agencies (local schools) with a priority for partnerships by local schools with community based organizations and other public or private entities. To receive this funding, organizations must develop programs that enhance the education and social benefits for participants; this includes increasing the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state academic standards in reading and math, and decreasing truancy, suspensions, and behavioral problems. The grant encourages the development of programs that offer character education, focused academic assistance for students, and encourage family involvement (Anderson-Butcher

2004; Mahoney and Zigler 2006). Nearly 1 million students are currently enrolled in an 21st CCLC funded program (US Department of Education). In 2012 the program received 1.13 billion dollars and awarded over 47 million of these dollars to the state of Illinois to support afterschool programs **(**US Department of Education**).**

Child Care Subsidy

The Child Care Development Fund Block grant (CCDBG) is another funding resource for afterschool programs. CCDGB reflects a welfare reform effort to facilitate the transition from welfare to work by subsidizing childcare for among low-income families (Blau 2003). The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation consolidated earlier federal childcare programs into a single block grant distributed to states to implement the program. States can subsidize childcare for parents that are within 85 percent of the state median income, with a preference for low-income parents. In 2012, 1.5 million children received as subsidy from the federal childcare block grant per month. Illinois received 1 billion dollars for the subsidy program in 2012. 265,693 children were in subsidized care and 40 percent of this care was for school age children ages 6-12 to support before and after school programs (DHS Illinois Annual Child Care Report FY2012).

Eligibility for the childcare subsidy program is determined by family size and income with income thresholds that are no less than 185% of the federal poverty level for each family size. To qualify, parents must be employed or enrolled in school or a training program and once eligibility is determined, parent co-pays are determined by income and family size. States then allow parents to purchase childcare at a reduced rate from a range of providers that meet state regulations. Providers are reimbursed by the state at a set rate by that is determined by the type of care provided.

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In Illinois, the program is administered through a set of nonprofit organizations designated as Child Care Resource and Referral Centers. Families in Cook County apply for the subsidy through Illinois Action for Children, an advocacy nonprofit. This means-tested program has extensive application components and a 6-month redetermination period where recipients must provide paycheck stubs, work schedules, and additional supporting documents to prove eligibility for the program.

Together, 21st Century Community Learning Center funding and the Child Care Subsidy are key component of the private social safety net, reflecting the "welfare to work" emphasis of welfare reform by subsidizing childcare for the working poor. Many nonprofit organizations receive significant support from these federal efforts to subsidized childcare and broadly impact the economically marginalized. Consequently, the political implications of these types of programs should be explored.

Plan of Dissertation

In what follows; I review the literature on political participation and proposed frameworks that are used to understand the political behavior of low-income populations. I focus on applying the insights of the policy feedback literature to understand how community-based nonprofit service providers shape the political behavior of low-income clients. Chapter two is a review of relevant frameworks and an introduction of my proposed theory of policy feedbacks processes for nonprofit service providers offering subsidized afterschool care. In chapter three, I explain the methodological approach to the study. Chapter four introduces the cases of this study and situates the two cases into a revised conception of program design that incorporates parent and staff discretion in creating varied program experiences. The remaining chapters reflect findings of the study. Chapter five explores the ways that organizations build

political efficacy beliefs by conveying messages about neighborhood context and effective

political and civic action and chapter six demonstrates how program design equips parents with

resources and avenues for political engagement.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Political Participation among the Poor

Research has shown that low-income individuals are underrepresented in every form of political activity (Verba, et al. 1995). From the Downsian perspective (1957), this dearth in political action can be explained by the cost and perceived benefits of participation. The poor do not participate in politics because the benefits of participation do not outweigh the costs. Riker and Ordeshook (1968) elaborate on an additional component of this "voting calculus," by emphasizing the role of "civic duty" in motivating political participation. Low-income populations may lack the sense of civic obligation to become actively engaged in politics.

More contemporary work has probed the implications of SES in engendering political activity. Verba, Scholzman, and Brady's, (1995) seminal work demonstrates how components of SES are relevant for different kinds of participation. Political participation is described as a function of resources,(time, money, and the civic skills), interests in politics, and networks of recruitment by which individuals are mobilized to participate in politics (15). These three key predictors of political participation are mediated by institutions (family, schools, employment, church, non-political organizations, etc.) which cultivate psychological engagements, serve as a locus of recruitment activities, and help develop organization and communication skills that facilitate political action (17). The authors find differences in participation patterns between recipients of means tested programs and beneficiaries of more universal policies and attribute these differences to resources disparities. Simply stated, welfare client lack the resources needed

for political engagement.

Recently scholars have worked to draw more concrete connections between the receipt of welfare benefits and political behavior. Some researchers suggest that welfare receipt cultivates traits of dependency that fosters political passivity (Mead 1992; Handler and Hansenfeld 1991) while others contend that welfare benefits demobilize the poor by obscuring the need for demand making (Piven and Cloward 1971). Still, other empirical work relies on the insights of participatory democratic theory to connect the institutional design of welfare bureaucracies to political participation outcomes among the poor. These policy feedback scholars explore how policies "once enacted restructure subsequent political processes." (Skocpol 1992)

Similar to the VBS conception of institutions as mediators of resources and interest in politics, policy feedback scholars characterize public policies as institutions that shape mass political behavior. Public policies do this in two ways: by offering resources and incentives for participation "resource effects" and motivating participation through "interpretive effects," where by public policies act as sources of information and meaning for citizens. Policies communicate messages that influence people's values and attitudes, group identities, their orientations to government, and patterns of political participation (Pierson 1993; Mettler and Soss 2004; Schneider and Ingram 1995, 442.

Suzanne Mettler and Joe Soss' (2002) broad review of the feedback research offers additional ways in which policies affect mass political behavior by increasing both motivation and resources for participation. The two suggest that policies can build or undermine civic and political capacity among beneficiaries by creating material incentives for mobilization— beneficiaries may become active on political issues to protect or expand benefits— and by cultivating civic skills within the citizenry (i.e. education policies). Public policies may also

redistribute resources by supplying citizens with materials that can be used to organize pressure groups among the disenfranchised.

Mettler and Soss (2002) also suggest that policy designs shape citizens personal experiences with the government and inform political learning processes and beliefs. Clients may use experiences with public programs to develop beliefs regarding political systems as a whole. Furthermore, public policies may help citizens learn how to deal effectively with the government. In this sense, policy designs may encourage or discourage demand making (63).

Mechanism of Feedback Effects: Program/Policy Design

For policy feedback scholars, the key mechanism of feedback effects is program design (Mettler 2002; Campbell 2002; Soss 1999). Ingram and Schneider (1993) more formally define policy design as "the elements found in the content of the policy that affects target populations." These elements are loosely categorized as

1) the definition of targets

2) political attributes (whether policies are beneficial or burdensome)

3) the location of target groups within the chain of effects (proximate, remote)

4) tools through which the policy attempts to motivate the target populations towards envisioned behavior (authority, incentives, capacity building, and self learning)

5) rationales for justifying and explaining the policy(merit, need, equality, efficiency, or effectiveness) (71)

As mentioned, policy design conveys messages to the polity about citizenship and the government (interpretive effects) and confers resources and incentives for participation (resource effects).

Interpretive Feedback Effects

The interpretive effects of policy design consists of messages about the responsibilities of the government, distinctions between the underserving and deserving, and the appropriate forms of political participation in democratic societies (Schneider and Ingram 2009; Ingram and Schneider 1993, 72**).** Clients internalize messages through their experiences with public policies and use these messages in developing perceptions about how they are perceived by the government and by society. Ingram and Schneider suggest that different populations receive different messages that either encourage participation or foster withdrawal and political "passivity."

Additional feedback research has further explored the messages communicated through policy tools by linking the social construction of policy targets to authority structures of policy design. Targets are socially constructed according to their political and economic power and "cultural valence," the extent to which the target's values reflect mainstream norms (87). Targets that are advantaged politically, economically, and socially are considered more deserving of benefits and "receive policies that offer high levels of client discretion, short implementation chains, and strong provisions" (Schneider and Sydney 2009). Campbell's (2003) work on Social Security Age Old pensions, illustrates this pattern. Social Security confers a sense of respect to the elder and legitimizes their receipt of benefits. Conversely, social welfare policies communicate less favorable messages to negatively constructed policy targets. Targets that are socially constructed as dependent or deviant are subject to the policies "that limit discretion and have long implementation chains that often impede the receipt of benefits." (Schneider and Sydney, 2009)

Through a burgeoning typology of program design we more clearly observe a connection

between authority structures and political behavior. Ideal authority structures should position targets as secure and equal citizens, reflect democratic values, and encourage client engagement (Bruch et. al. 2010; Soss 1999; 2000; Mettler 2002; Schneider 2005) That said, the design typology centers on the agency clients exercise throughout their interactions with welfare bureaucracies and the use of "fair procedures and clear rules that protect client security, autonomy, and voice." (Bruch et. al. 2010)

Bureaucratic Programs

Bureaucratic programs are characterized by centralized administration and rules and procedures that are indiscriminately applied across beneficiaries. Clients usually initiate interactions with the agency and are rarely subjected to agency directives or other tools of authority or control. Agency-client interactions are two-way transactions in which both actors share power (Soss 2000). Because the process of claiming benefits is governed by standard rules and procedures, the outcomes of client demands are usually positive and predictable. Additionally, standardized processes are less stigmatizing for clients. Bureaucratic programs secure clients in their relationship with the agency and encourage clients to express preferences and grievances within the agency and in broader contexts through political activity.

Suzanne Mettler's (2002) research on the GI Bill illustrates the positive interpretive effects of the program's bureaucratic design. According to Mettler (2002), the universal nature of the policy, the impersonal routinized rules and procedures, "bestowed dignity" and an "elevated status" to veterans (345). In qualitative interviews, veterans emphasized the uncomplicated routines involved in qualifying for benefits (360) and described the program as an "extremely convenient arrangement" and "very well administered (360)." Veterans did not report feeling stigmatized by the program. The interpretive effects of program design shaped

beneficiaries sense of obligation to the polity by offering a positive experience of government and public provision. Positive experiences with the GI bill encouraged them to give back through civic engagement. These effects were most prominent among veterans from lower to middle income backgrounds.

Soss (2000) finds similar positive interpretive effects of the Social Security Disability Insurance program.. The rules and procedures of the Social Security Agency (SSA) signaled agency responsiveness to clients. Clients developed expectations that their valid claims would be granted and that workers who violated regulations would be held accountable (144). Because benefits are not tied to "directive and supervisory institutional requirements," SSDI recipients rarely felt vulnerable in their connections with the agency (144). Instead, SSDI clients were taught to act as initiators and that bureaucracies can be responsive. These lessons applied in the realm of political participation. In comparison to AFDC clients, SSDI beneficiaries exhibited greater levels of participation.

Paternalistic

Paternalistic programs are more directive and supervisory (Mead 2005; Soss 1999, 2000). They are designed to impose order and enforce work and civic obligations among policy targets and are commonly reflected in means-tested programs. Soss's (1999, 2000) work on AFDC brings to light the implications of paternalistic program design on the political behavior of policy targets. He finds that paternalistic elements of AFDC deter external political efficacy and voting among welfare clients. Intrusive caseworker relationships, the autonomous nature of agency discretion, stringent eligibility requirements, and punitive sanctions place clients in a position of vulnerability and powerlessness. Consequently, clients are hesitant to exercising agency in their interactions with welfare administration or expressing grievances to agency workers. Soss

suggests that client's dampened agency in their ongoing relationships with the program attenuates external efficacy and voting. More recent analysis of means-tested programs supports these findings. Bruch and her colleagues (2010) find a similar relationship between TANF participation and political and civic engagement.

Participatory

Participatory programs build capacity among clients by incorporating clients into agency decision-making through advisory councils and other governing boards within the agency. By incorporating clients into decision-making, participatory program communicates to clients that their participation is valued and effective. Studies suggest that Head Start has these positive interpretive effects on low-income individuals, demonstrating that the required participation local policy councils fosters internal and external political efficacy along with civic and political engagement (Soss 1999; 2001; Bruch et.al 2010). According to Soss (2000), the positive interpretive effects of more participatory programs like Head Start may reverse the demobilizing effects of AFDC.

Resource Effects

The policy feedback literature also highlights alternative mechanisms of mobilization in which policies extend resources to policy targets and offer venues for political recruitment and information about politics. For instance, Mettler (2002) finds that the education benefits of the program enhanced beneficiaries' socioeconomic status and skills, which fostered capacity and predisposition for civic involvement (361-362).

Andrea Campbell (2003) finds a similar relationship between social security benefits and the political engagement of low-income seniors. Her study reveals an inverse relationship between income and political participation among social security beneficiaries. Low-income

seniors receiving social security are as likely to vote as higher income seniors in the program. Campbell explains that less affluent seniors depend more on social security for income than their more advantaged counterparts. Their stake in receiving social security benefits increases political activity. Additionally, low-income seniors become targets of mobilization by political parties and become involved in other non-political organizations/institutions such as AARP and senior centers. These organizations serve as sources of information, venues of political discussions, and targets for recruitment into political activity.

Advancing the Feedback Model

Although the feedback framework has shed significant light on client experiences with public welfare bureaucracies, the framework has not been applied in the context of the nonprofit service provision, an increasingly significant component of the social safety net. Exploring the insights of the policy feedback perspective in this new policy context will further the theoretical and conceptual development of the framework, and strengthen its contextual range. Most feedback studies are limited to observing relationships between program participation and outcomes (Soss 1999; 2000; Mettler 2002; Bruch et. al. 2010; Mettler and Stonecash 2008). However, the mechanisms of program design behind particular feedback effects are not clarified. Interpretively, how do design elements convey messages to clients? How do clients interpret these messages and turn them into beliefs and, ultimately, political action?   In what ways do program attributes equip clients with resources and skills for political action? In her recent review of the policy feedback literature, Andrea Campbell (2012) calls for additional in-depth research that explores mechanisms, causality, and the "lived experience" of programs. She notes that

> "…it may be more fruitful to revisit the methods of the older sociological paradigm, with its in-depth work and focus on uncovering the subjective perceptions and knowledge of

individuals. Such methods may bring us closer to the lived experience than can the surveys on which scholars have largely depended. They can also enhance understanding of causality and mechanisms."(347)

This dissertation meets this call for deeper understanding of program experiences and mechanisms. Its key objective is to uncover experiences with this emerging element of the social welfare state and the processes by which nonprofit administered programs shape political behavior outcomes.

NPOs Different By Design: A Case for Concept Development

Although, there is little scholarly consensus regarding the nature of non-profit social service providers, organizational theory and complementary welfare research highlights elements of program design/service technologies that are unique to nonprofit human service agencies. Non-profits have a great number of features that are ripe for empirical study and enhancing the policy feedback literature. This includes variation in service context, public advocacy efforts of NPOs, caseworker practices, and levels of client program involvement. This variation may be useful in clarifying the feedback mechanisms of program design and developing individual level feedback models.

<u>Service Context</u>

Nonprofit service providers (NSPs) are subject to a number of factors that affect service delivery. In particular, NSPs often operate within particular neighborhood context, are subject to funding parameters that influence service delivery, and engage in advocacy efforts that may shape program experiences and broader political behavior.

1. Neighborhood Context

The policy feedback literature obscures the role of community context in influencing political action. Individuals are treated as independent agents interacting with public

bureaucracies with little emphasis on how neighborhood context informs these interactions or influences political behavior. In an era where place-based nonprofit organizations offer a wide range of government funded social services, community context is increasingly relevant in determining how individuals interact with these types service providers and the political behavior that follows.

In their exploratory work linking economic inequality to political behavior, Soss and Jacobs (2009) emphasize the importance of neighborhoods in structuring political interest and opportunities for political participation. The two describe political participation as a social act that "emerges from an ecology of social relations that is…local in nature." (121). Neighborhoods act as "force multipliers" in political life compounding the resources and advantages of the more affluent and reinforcing resource deficits experienced by low income individuals (121). Poor neighborhoods often lack churches, social organizations, and networks that would lead to political action. Soss and his colleague further argue that neighborhood conditions such as crime, unemployment, high mortality rates, and residential instability, undermine "collective efficacy," the shared capacity to achieve goals and beliefs about government responsiveness (Sampson et. al. 1997). Consequently, residing in distressed neighborhoods makes political engagement both unlikely and inaccessible for low-income individuals.

Many nonprofits are situated in unique community contexts that may pose a challenge to political action for low-income clients. Some community-based nonprofits develop responses to distressed neighborhood contexts through service provision, incorporating community development objectives into the organization's mission and means of service delivery (Chaskin 2001; Scully and Harwood 1997;Walsh 1997; Warren 2001). These community development

organizations are designed to change neighborhood conditions and often incorporate residents into change processes.

Nicole Marwell (2004) describes this response to neighborhood context as a particular model of service delivery where organizations either adopt community-building objectives or simply focus on service provision. In her study of a network of New York community based organizations (CBOs), Marwell finds that organizations that adopt a "reciprocal model" of service provision have community building objectives and seek to build client commitment to the organization's efforts to improve neighborhood conditions. Clients give back to the organization and their neighborhood through community work. Conversely, CBOs engaged in nonreciprocal service provision rarely adopt "community building objectives". Marwell explains,

> "No discussion of reciprocity is broached by the CBO staff to clients, there are few if any organizational events in which clients might participate, and the CBO is characterized by distant relationships between staff, and clients, and among clients."(273)

These types of organizations are primarily bureaucratic and adhere to procedures imposed by government funding guidelines. Clients view these types organizations as service providers rather than "community focused self-help organization[s]." (274)   Together, this small body of research suggests that the ways in which nonprofit service providers incorporate responses to neighborhood contexts into service provision may shape client program experiences and yield new feedback processes. How NSPs respond to its surrounding neighborhood, whether it seeks to improve neighborhood conditions or offer the services to community residents, may influence client program experiences and political behavior outcomes by the extent to which clients are recruited into "community building" political activity.

2. Funding

Some scholars argue that non-profits reflect opportunities for citizen participation in urban politics and policy (Putnam 1993). Historically, nonprofits have served "community building" roles and enhanced citizen participation in public affairs (Smith 2011). During Johnson's War on Poverty, the Ford Foundation funded nonprofit community action agencies that were required to have community residents on boards to strengthen client voice in public service provision (Marris and Rein 1982; Morone 1990; Stone 1999; Andrews 2001).

As contemporary counterparts, some community-based organizations maintain the participatory nature of their predecessors, incorporating clients into decision making processes through informal workgroups, advisory councils, board of directors, client satisfaction surveys, and self-help components (LeRoux 2007, 2009; Hansenfeld and Gidron 2005).

For some scholars, public funds threaten opportunities for citizen participation in nonprofit organizations. Funding parameters from public grants and private donors may subvert the participatory "community building" objective of NPOs (Smith 2011). Hansenfeld and Garrow (2012) elaborate on this concern and argue that

> "by becoming major service providers, nonprofit organizations alter the relationship between civil society and government, possibly co-opting civil society to serve the political and ideological needs of the political elite."(311)

In the same way, scholars claim that market mechanisms such as competition for federal and state funding shifts NPO objectives from client participation to efficiency and professionalism (Smith 2011).

However, empirical studies do not support these claims. On the contrary, research demonstrates that that government funding increases client participation in nonprofit organizations (LeRoux 2009; 2011). In her examination of Michigan nonprofits, LeRoux (2009)

finds that government funding increases the likelihood that client perspectives are incorporated into agency programs through client surveys and participation on advisory boards. These findings suggest that government funding results in greater opportunities to incorporate client voice into service provision because government grants require participatory elements of program design. As noted by feedback scholars, participatory programs are linked to higher levels of stronger political efficacy beliefs and greater levels of participation. Essentially, government funding may create potentially mobilizing service providers by influencing program design.

3. Advocacy

NSPs may engage in policy advocacy designed to educate clients of relevant issues regarding welfare benefits and politics. Most studies on NSP advocacy focus on lobbying efforts (Mosely 2010, 2011). Sandfort (2011) demonstrates that agencies engage in activities that educate the general public and clientele about policy-relevant issues. Nonprofit agencies may host candidate forums, issue reports about a public policy issue, or utilize media outlets to increase public awareness about a particular policy.

Nonprofits may similarly make political processes accessible to clients by organizing clients around "systems-level issues" through non-partisan voter registration efforts, get out the vote activities, mobilizing around ballot measures, and organizing citizens to influence policy making (Sandfort 2011). Further research highlights these educative and grassroots tactics. Marwell (2004) finds grassroots mobilization among a New York community based organization network in which clients were introduced to elected officials through candidate forums and rallies and were also encouraged to canvass for public officials. LeRoux (2011) similarly identifies voter registration efforts of nonprofit agencies as a mobilization tool. Studies are

mixed on how prominent advocacy efforts are in the nonprofit service sector (Bass et. Al. 2007;

Child and Gronbjerg 2007). Nonetheless, this line of research highlights how advocacy efforts

can positively shape political outcome among clients.

<u>Caseworker Discretion</u>

In the policy feedback literature, staff discretion is usually characterized as an attribute of

program design and not instrumental in the development of organizational form. In the context

of means-tested programs, staff are instruments of paternalistic system that penalizes welfare

clients through caseworker discretion. The absence of caseworkers is considered a positive

program attribute that signifies greater client agency in determining program outcomes and

minimizes the control of a neo-liberal paternalistic state (Schram, Soss, and Fording 2009).

Within this typology, caseworkers are less active in creating policies and program

experiences. Sociologists and organizational theorists, however, position staff as key players in

shaping programs. Accordingly, elements of program design are not external imposed, but

organically developed by agency workers. Scholars of new institutionalism and structuration

characterize institutions as socially constructed templates for actions that are created and

maintained through ongoing interactions of the organization's collective members (Zucker 1977,

Meyer and Rowan 1977; Giddens 1984, Barely and Tolbert 1997; Orlikowski 1992). In this

sense, nonprofit agency staff may shape organizational form, structure, and procedures.

Barley and Tolbert (1997) demonstrate how institutions are translated into day-to-day

organizational routines and practices. They suggest that institutions become encoded in actors'

practical knowledge in the form of scripts, "observable, recurrent activities, and patterns of

interaction characteristic of a particular setting" (Barley 1986). These practical scripts

incorporate institutional principals and are revised by actors overtime. Empirical work on public

and private human service agencies shores up these claims. Research indicates that front line agency workers shape the contours of program design and service technology (Sandfort 2000; 2003; 2009). In her ethnographic study of five front-line welfare agencies, Jodi Sandfort (2000) finds that "structures are not imposed through "organizational charts, formal procedures, or written rules that staff passively enact. Rather they arise from the collective, daily experience shared by front-line workers"(731).

Additional work demonstrates how caseworkers inform client program experiences. For Hansenfeld (2010), workers also embed their own personal assumptions and experiences in day-to-day practices. Worker-client relations are manifestations of "personal values" of agency staff and "strategies to manage the conditions of their work" (151). Celeste Watkins-Hayes (2009) similarly draws attention to "discretionary toolkit" used by workers in case management. Accordingly, caseworkers develop professional identities within welfare bureaucracies that are informed by agency rules and policies along with race, gender, and class. Drawing from these competing factors, caseworkers choose to become social workers that are committed to more comprehensive holistic problem solving or "efficiency engineers" that minimize personal attachments.

The implications of personal and impersonal attachments are well documented, For instance, Soss (2000) demonstrates the importance of caseworker-client relationships in determining client's experiences with AFDC and their broader assessments of the agency. Accordingly, clients' perception of how agency workers view them guides their presentations of themselves throughout their interactions with the agency. By communicating sympathy, offering advice, and avoiding a condescending posture, workers can confirm or change clients emerging perceptions of themselves and the agency (Soss 1999; 2000). Agency workers can either build

supportive relationships with clients, or opt to avoid relationships by emphasizing the scarcity of time and resources, penalties for not following directions, and advantages of cooperation and the cost of conflict (Soss 1999).   Supportive relationships with clients can create positive program experiences, which may have important implications on client's evaluation of organizations, assessments of government institutions, and political behavior. Feedback research draws connections between positive program experiences and, positive views of the government, and greater levels of political participation (Mettler 2002)

In the context of NSPs, where varied resource constraints, organizational cultures, and service contexts abound, the role of staff in shaping program experiences warrants clarity. Staff may develop practice-based scripts that extend beyond efficiency into personal advocacy (Lockhart 2005).

Client Discretion and Program Experiences

Much of the policy feedback literature characterizes experiences with a program as uniform across participants. For instance, universal programs uniformly apply standardized procedures to clients (Mettler 2004; Soss 1999; 2001; Campbell 2003) and the terms of program participation in means tested policies such as AFDC and now Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) are determined and enforced by the agency. Clients are required to meet with caseworkers or attend workforce development trainings and workshops to continue to service receipt (Soss 2001, Sandfort 2001).   In the case of nonprofit service provision, in particular government funded childcare services, there may be substantial variation in client experiences within a particular program. Unlike mandatory participation requirements of means-tested programs or the uniform application of rules and procedures in universal public programs, clients may exercise considerable discretion in choosing their level of program involvement.

Moreover clients may be subject to varied requirements for involvement (Marwell 2004)

Although, the feedback literature offers little insight regarding variation within program experiences, educational psychologist's work on parent involvement in schools is particularly useful in understanding how clients interact with subsidized childcare providers. Research on parental school engagement suggests that parent's decisions to become involved in their child's education depends on a number of individual level factors such as parents construction of parental role, their efficacy beliefs around helping their child succeed in school, and whether and how schools structure opportunities for involvement (Hoover-Dempsey and H.M. Sandler 1995; 1997).

Epstein and Dauber's (1991) typology of parent interaction further elaborates on the intersection of parent characteristics and schools' outreach efforts in fostering parental involvement. At the basic level parents can provide for the child's health and safety and offer positive home conditions that support school learning and good behavior. Schools can help parents cultivate positive home environments through workshops, home visits, and family support programs. Parents choose greater levels of involvement by assisting their child with homework or engaging in home learning activities, but become more involved in "school intensive" acts by volunteering at schools and attending their child's school performances, events, and sports activities. Schools can enhance parent involvement by offering parents "school-based decision making" opportunities through parent-teacher associations and advisory councils. Finally, schools can facilitate broader parent connections to community resources and services outside the school context.

Nonprofit childcare service providers may engage parents in a similar way. These service providers may offer parent workshops and support groups or create opportunities for

parental involvement through field trips and volunteer opportunities. Finally, NSPs can encourage parental involvement by offer parent leadership opportunities. In doing so, each subsidized provider may offer a range of program experiences for parents. This level of variation is not currently captured by the existing program design typology**.**

Moreover, client's high level of discretion in engaging service providers challenges the prevailing characterization of means tested programs as depressing client agency. As mentioned, feedback scholars contend that client agency in service receipt leads to positive efficacy beliefs and greater levels of political participation. Exploring whether and how high levels of parent discretion in program participation influences political behavior in this service context may yield additional policy feedback processes.

Revised Conceptual Tool for Program Design

Together, these nuances in the nonprofit social service field demonstrate the need for conceptual and theoretical development of feedback framework. I propose a revised conceptual tool that may better reflect program experiences with NSPs in the childcare service context. This revised concept of program design builds around a central category of the existing program design typology and integrates relevant program referents from the other "program types" to the cases of interests. This conceptual tool also allows variation in client participation within a program. Furthermore, the revised conceptual tool adds the dimension germane to the NSP service provision, namely service context, client discretion, and staff discretion illustrating program experiences. Figure 2.1 displays a revised concept of program design.

Figure 2.1 Program Design
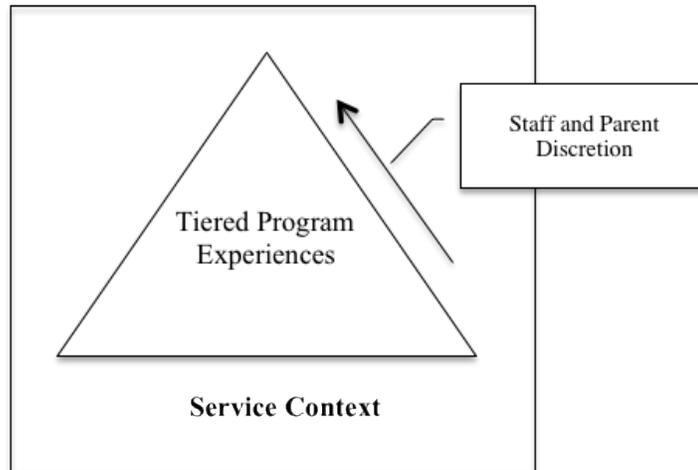
Service Context:

      Service context refers to the funding parameters of government grants, NSPs' orientation to neighborhood context (community development aims or service provider), and advocacy efforts regarding public issues and political processes. I find that service context determines the central attribute of program design, whether a program is primarily participatory, bureaucratic, or paternalistic.

Tiered Program Experiences

      I incorporate variation within program experiences by conceptualizing program design as a continuum of exposure to different program attributes.   I assume that every program has a baseline program experience that represents the typical experience for clients. Movement along this continuum is a function of parent and staff discretion. In the context of subsidized after school care, program experiences change as parents choose to become more committed to the program by developing more personal ties to the staff. Staff then move parents along the continuum by exposing parents to different aspects of the program

Program Design and Alternative Pathways to Civic and Political Engagement

In exploring the insights of the policy feedback literature, the data reveal unique

processes of mobilization for program participants. The emerging framework suggests that the

feedback effects of nonprofit program design reflect both resource/skill building opportunities

and interpretive messages about communities. Figure 2.2 illustrates the full conceptual model of

the pathways to participation.

Figure 2.2 Conceptual Model
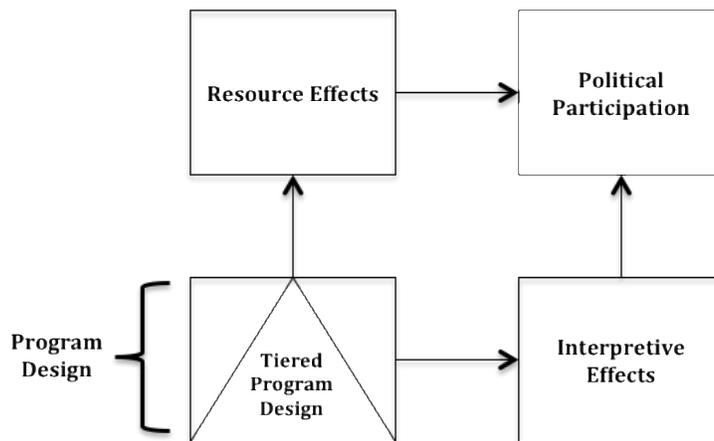
Interpretive Feedback Processes

Borrowing community and social psychology frameworks, I find that these two

afterschool programs can empower or demobilize parents by communicating place based

messages about neighborhood context effective means of political action within the community.

Messages broadly stem from the organization's response to neighborhood context which is a

result of the organization's beliefs systems about neighborhood conditions, its perceived role in

the community, and a defined role for parents in the within the organization and in the

neighborhood.

These beliefs are communicated by the organization's work within the community, which serves as a model for effective responses to neighborhood problems. Parent narratives reveal efficacy building mechanisms that include reducing or increasing task uncertainty around neighborhood. An organization's action or inaction can influence perceived uncertainty around neighborhood improvement by either signaling the feasibility or neighborhood change or emphasizing challenges to bettering the community. Parents look to these programs for appropriate responses to neighborhood conditions. One program modeling means for neighborhood transformation and, in some instances gives parents the chance to master political participation acts through hands on opportunities.

Resource Feedback Processes

In one case, the leadership, volunteer, and employment opportunities offered by the program strengthened parent's "civic competence," parent's capacity for civic and political engagement. Through these elements of program design, parents were exposed to new tasks and behaviors and were given opportunities to practice civic and political acts that were instrumental in broader realms of political activity. Participatory elements of program designs also led to opportunities for political engagement. In one case, involvement in the organization through parent advisory council and employment, led to parents having access to elected and public officials.

The extent to which parent's are mobilized through their program experiences depends on how they choose to interact with the program. Not all parents have the level of engagement that would reap civic and political action. These cases demonstrate that parents who choose deeper levels of organizational commitment by developing a personal rapport with staff are privy to exposure to additional elements of program design, per staff discretion. These additional

elements may include access to supportive services and resources or participatory opportunities. In one case, a select few of the program participants wield substantial power within a program. Their elevated position within the program gives them entrée to political engagement opportunities outside of the program.

In the remaining chapters, I apply a revised concept of program design to two nonprofit organizations that provide subsidized afterschool care. I also demonstrate novel feedback processes that stem from parent's experiences with these programs.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The objectives of this dissertation are descriptive and analytical. First, I shed light on how subsidized childcare services are executed on the ground, describing the spectrum of experiences of low-income parents at these organizations. My second set of more analytical aims explores the relevance of the policy feedback framework in the context of nonprofit social service provision. This includes 1) identifying variation in program design to improve the contextual range of existing program design typology 2) uncovering feedback patterns across two organizations, and 3) discovering formal and informal mechanisms behind these patterns. These analytical objectives are a means to the greater theory building aim of this project.

Ethnographic Case Study

Leaning on the expertise of ethnographers and sociologists, I use an ethnographic comparative case study to accomplish my research objectives. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) describes ethnography as an exercise in developing thick descriptions that are "stratified hierarchy of meaning structures" in terms of what behaviors are "produced perceived and interpreted"(6). According to sociologist Diane Vaughn (2009), ethnography requires "situating oneself in a social setting to observe and analyze individual interactions? in order to understand some complex social process, event, activity, or outcome" (690). To develop "thick descriptions" of how parents interact with these organizations and parents' interpretations of these interactions, I adopted the "immersion" process prescribed by ethnographic approach.

A comparative case study also lends itself to theory building objectives of the study by allowing me to trace processes within and across cases (George and Bennett 2005). More formally, this dissertation reflects a heuristic case study with the deliberate selection of cases for theory building to "inductively" identify new "variables, hypotheses, causal mechanisms, and causal paths" (George and Bennett 2005, 75).

Case Selection

Proponents of small "n" case studies depart from "representativeness" in case selection and emphasize the potential of selecting deviant outlier cases to uncover causal mechanisms and processes (Small 2009; Mitchell 1983; Vaughn 2009). The end result of a case study is not "statistical inference" wherein hypotheses that are inductively developed from a set cases are generalizable to wider populations (Mitchell 1983; Small 2009). Instead, inferences stemming from case studies yield "logical" connections between actors and outcomes that can be tested across other cases (Small 2009; Mitchell 1983). Emphasis is placed on the "plausibility" of mechanisms or hypotheses and not generalizability.

Because research suggests substantial variation in the non-profit service sector, I aimed to capture variation across different types of service providers. This entailed finding faith-based organizations offering government contracted services and other types of community based organizations. I attended the Christian Community Development Association's national conference in Chicago to recruit a faith-based organization into my study. I scheduled meetings with executive directors from prominent faith based organizations in Chicago, explained my project, and expressed interest in completing my study at their respective organizations. I had follow up meetings with executive directors that expressed interest in participating in the study

and received verbal consent to conduct the study at Progress Community Development Corp[2]. I was encouraged by the executive director to attend organization events and to volunteer in the organization's various programs. I volunteered at Progress Youth Development Corp. for eight months prior receiving formal consent from the director of youth program to conduct the study.

To minimize the effects of neighborhood context on observed program outcomes, I wanted to recruit another secular youth program in the neighborhood. I networked with various executive directors of nonprofits in Westfield and gained access to a youth center a few blocks from Progress Youth Development Corp. However, after a labor dispute in the early childhood program, I lost access to the youth program at this center and was given permission to conduct the study at another center branch in South End. Table 3.1 shows demographic characteristics of the neighborhoods.

Table 3.1 Neighborhood Characteristics		
	Westfield	**South End**
Population	20,567	25,983
Percent African American	84%	87%
Per Capita Income	$13,596	$18,928
Percent without High School Diploma	26.2%	17.9%
Unemployment Rate	16.4%	17.3%
Percent Below Poverty Line	39.7%	28.3%
Homicide Rate	38.4	31.1

*Data retrieved from the 2010 Census

The two neighborhoods are both are low-income, predominately African American communities with high levels of unemployment, poverty, and crime. The residents of Westfield are less educated and experience higher levels of poverty and crime than South End residents. The differences in these two communities do not hinder the objectives of the study, but rather

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[2] Per the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board requirements, I use pseudonyms to refer to the neighborhoods, organizations and individuals involved in the study to strengthen confidentiality and protect the identity of study participants.

reflect an opportunity to understand the role of organizations in distressed neighborhood contexts and find common mechanisms across the two unique communities.

Table 3.2 Organizational Context	
Progress Community Development **Homeless Intervention** Crisis response, Transitional housing Permanent housing, Bible Studies, Professional development **Youth Development** Preschool, After School Program (80 students),Creative Arts and Sciences Programs, Sports and Fitness Program **Neighborhood Transformation** Food Distribution, Legal Aid, Food Stamps, Housing, Employment, Financial management, GED, Family Workshops	**South End Community Center** **Community Services** Gang Intervention, Housing, Senior Services, Youth and Teen Leadership **Child Care and Education** Infant Care, Preschool, After School Care (75 students), Camps, Arts, Creative Arts, Dance, Drama, Music **Recreation** Health and Wellness, Sports and Fitness, Swimming

Both afterschool programs are imbedded in a larger organization offering additional services.   Progress Youth Development Corp. is a part of the Progress Community Development Corporation, a faith-based organization that offers homeless intervention services, a neighborhood food pantry, and employment services. The South End afterschool program is a part of a community center offering early childhood education, employment services, and recreational/fitness activities for South End neighborhood residents. Progress is a community-based organization, while South End center is a part of a national network of centers as well as a smaller network of community centers in Chicago. Again, minimizing the differences between the two cases was not the objective of the study and does not advance my analysis. The differences between these two cases are useful in exploring mechanisms and generating a set of testable and "logical" hypotheses in future larger "n" research (George and Bennett 2005).

Progress Youth Development Corp: A 21st Century Community Learning Center

Progress Community Development Corp. is tucked away in Westfield, a neighborhood that is notorious for drug trafficking, crime, and gang violence. The organization was initially

started as a church soup kitchen for homeless men on the North side 20 years ago. Ten years ago, Progress moved to the Westfield neighborhood. The organization now offers comprehensive community services that include homeless shelters, a youth development program, food and clothing services, workforce development programs, legal aid, and technology classes to the residents of the Westfield. Couched in this array of services is the Progress Youth Development Corp. Its modest exterior of yellow, aged brick and opaque windows obscures the bustling activity of the youth program. Before 3:00 in the afternoon, the old rehabbed brake factory functions as a quiet day center for homeless women. Around 2:00 p.m., it is quickly transformed into a youth center that houses 90 children, ages 5 to 14, in the after school program. Parents and staff meet at 3:15 to discuss the programmatic details of the day: which vehicles are in need of repair, extracurricular after hours programming, staff shortages, and any conflict between children.

Parents man the welcome center, the administrative hub of the program, while children stomp their way up the stairs to drop off their backpacks and coats. Under the watch of a few Progress parents and several staff, students funnel into three areas: the computer lab, down stairs eating area, or outside. On any given day, you will see former Progress students supervising a lively game of double-dutch or playing basketball with younger students. Beneath the exterior of fun, play, and academic enrichment, there are strategic structures designed to facilitate community transformation.

Program History and Mission

Progress Youth Development Corp started 13 years ago as a combined effort of David and Claire Jones and Anne Jenkins, the founder of Progress Community Development Corporation. The youth program began small and informal Bible studies and an afterschool

homework club of 20 students.   The program initially aimed to prepare "the next generation of leaders in the neighborhood." Now, the scope of services provided has expanded significantly to serve over 600 students in its 32-block catchment. The program's chief focus has evolved to transforming the neighborhood through the next generation. This end is achieved through a comprehensive set of enrichment programs that are facilitated by a network of adults. David describes the nature of the youth program as

> "a collection of parents, staff, volunteers, and donors working together to create learning environments for the children of Westfield…[through]…holistic services: academic, athletic, artistic, science, life skills, faith development, and technology."

Taken together, these services and positive adult mentoring are designed to,

> "invest in the young people of Westfield through… so that they can become the change agents in our neighborhood, where they become the transformers in our neighborhood to where our neighborhood becomes a place where success becomes the norm and families prosper."

Progress has shifted its strategy from short-term individualistic goals to a long-term community wide aim of neighborhood transformation overtime. The objective is to serve a cohort of students that, overtime, can create a tipping point in the neighborhood—changing its culture to one in which success in the form of high school and college graduation rates, viable employment, and healthy families become the norm for Westfield.

Skill Building and Social Capital

The academic enrichment programs anchor the Progress Youth Development Corp. These programs include a pre-school which targets 3- to 5-year olds, an after school program for kindergarten through eighth grade students, and a high school mentorship program. Progress also offers broader community outreach through the sports and creative arts and sciences programs. Collectively, these programs are designed to cultivate academic and life skills that will help students successfully enter adulthood.

Skill development is only one objective of the service delivery. Activity also focuses on creating positive social networks for the students in the program. Within these spaces of learning, adult mentors, staff, and volunteers act as bridges to opportunities and employment outside Progress and the Westfield neighborhood. Students are challenged to leverage these relationships with "caring adults" who can "open the door of opportunity."

Budget

Progress Youth Development Corp. has an operating budget of approximately $600,000 and one-third of this budget ($220,000) is annually allocated to the afterschool program. Forty-five percent of the afterschool program budget is supported by the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grant. The program uses $100,000 of 21st CCLC funds towards afterschool programing, which includes covering the salaries of a select set of employees and some program expenses. The remaining 55 percent of the program's budget consists of a mix of private donations and small city grants that cover the costs of hot meals, field trips, and snacks for the students.

Figure 3.1 Progress After School Program Budget

□ Private Donations
■ Government Funding (21st CCLC)
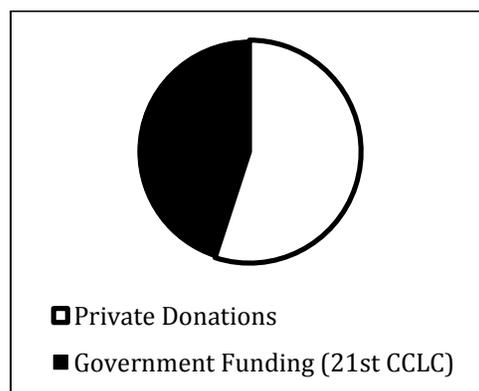
As a 21st Century Community Learning Center, Progress is required to partner with a low performing school. Progress partners with Jackson Elementary by giving Jackson

elementary students priority enrollment into Progress's intensive tutoring and literacy program.
The afterschool program tracks several academic and behavioral benchmarks to fulfill the grants
academic enrichment objectives. First, the program aims to improve student's reading by one
grade level. This is monitored by literacy assessments and students' progress in a computer
based reading and math program. The program also monitors improvements in GPA by tracking
report card grades over the course of the year. With regards to behavior, the students should
show improvement in staff administered behavioral assessments (BESS) and have fewer
disciplinary problems in schools. Finally, Progress encourages parent involvement through
volunteer opportunities and events like Christmas parties and awards ceremonies. Parents enroll
their children in the afterschool program at no cost.

The after school program consists of literacy instruction, tutoring, and homework help.
Ninety-five students are divided into five classes by grade level: K-1st, 2nd Grade, 3rd-4th Grade,
5th-6th grade, and 7th-8th grade. Each class is assigned a teacher as well as an advisor, a youth
mentor that handles classroom management responsibilities. Once enrolled, students receive 40
minutes of literacy instructions from a small-group reading curriculum and a half hour of one-on-
one tutoring and homework help. Students finish the day in the computer lab on Success Maker,
a computer program designed to strengthen reading and math skills.

On Mondays and Fridays, the program's structure changes. Mondays are set aside for
character education for which staff adapt the "Character Counts" curriculum by integrating
biblical themes and scriptures around a particular character trait such as respect, trustworthiness,
caring, or kindness. Fridays are dedicated for creative arts and science classes so there is no
literacy instruction or homework assistance. Instead, students have additional free playtime and
choose from a set of classes ranging from "yoga and art" to "cooking."

Progress Staff

The staff members at Progress are racially diverse and reflect a range of leadership roles and program experiences. The majority of the Progress staff has full time positions and some form of leadership role in the program, either coordinating or directing a set of programs. There are more women on staff than men. With the exception of two, staff members are in their 30s or 40s. Staff program tenures range from relatively new hires (2-3 years) to 13 years of experience. Every staff member has earned college degree, and two have earned advanced degrees, one in nonprofit management, the other in education. Table 3.3 displays staff characteristics**.**

Table 3.3 Progress Employee Characteristics (n=7)							
Name	**Age**	**Race**	**Sex**	**Education**	**Tenure**	**Job Status**	**Position**
David	40	White	M	Masters	13 yrs	Full Time	Executive Director
Lauren	35	White	F	Bachelors	11 yrs	Full time	Director Preschool/K-2ⁿᵈ Afterschool
Amanda	30	White	F	Masters	8 yrs	Full Time	Director of Afterschool Program
Derrius	25	Black	M	Bachelors	2 yrs	Full Time	Sports Coordinator/Teacher
Alex	26	White	M	Bachelors	2 yrs	Full Time	Teacher
Gynger	33	Hispanic	F	Bachelors	6 yrs	Full Time	Teacher
Amy	26	Black	F	Bachelors	3 ½ yrs	Full Time	Art and Science Coordinator/Teacher
*Race: 43% African Americn 43% White							

South End Community Center: A Subsidized Child Care Provider

South End Community center is located along a main corridor of the South End neighborhood in Chicago. The center is branch of a national network of community centers. It has occupied a central intersection in South End for nearly 30 years. Over the years, the South End neighborhood lost an active park district program and a Boys and Girls Club. Consequently, South End Community center became the main source of recreational activities and youth programs for the neighborhood. Members of the center have access to an indoor pool, basketball courts, exercise rooms, and dance studios. The center also offers a Head Start program, an after school program, and summer youth camps for neighborhood children.

The after school program is located in the "After School Room," a large dance studio. The space is divided into three main sections according to activity. One section of the room is

designated for group play, another corner for homework, and another portion of the room for student check in. Educational bulletin boards line the bright red, blue, and purple walls. A staff member is responsible for signing in students and managing parent pick-up. The remaining youth workers drive three small buses to pick up children from nine neighborhood schools.

Mission

The program's mission is to provide a safe, positive, and stimulating afterschool environment that fosters positive youth development. The staff offers age-appropriate social, physical, and creative opportunities. Students are "an integral part of the curriculum planning and implementation and are empowered to make their own choices regarding how they spend their afterschool care." Youth are supervised by trained staff while they complete homework assignments, read books, and participate in structured games and activities.

Program Structure

Seventy-five elementary students are enrolled in the afterschool program, which runs from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Students are picked up by program staff from their schools, arrive at the center, and sign in. After signing in, children usually hang their coats and book bags up on hooks near the door and begin homework. When homework is finished, students play group games with staff or games amongst themselves until parents arrive.

Figure 3.2 South End's After School Program Budget

☐ **Private Donations**
■ **Government Funding (CCAP)**
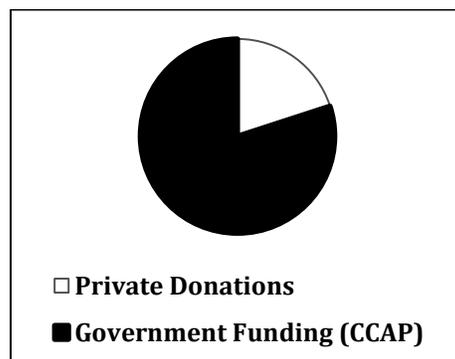
South End's afterschool program operates on roughly $150, 000 per year, with $75,000 covering the salaries of part-time staff. The remaining funds supplement program activities and operating costs.   The afterschool program is heavily subsidized by the Illinois childcare subsidy with eighty percent of the afterschool budget is supported by the state grant. The program receives a set reimbursement rate from the state for every subsidized child enrolled in the program. The remaining 20 percent of its funding is supported by private donations.

Program Staff

The staff at South End is predominately African American and neighborhood residents. Most of the part-time employees are under the age of 25. With the exception of one part time-employee, every youth worker was once a participant in the youth program as a child and became a program employee during high school and college. All of the part-time youth workers have at least three years of program experience. Levels of education vary among the South End staff ; most of the part-time employees have some college experience or are currently completing degrees. The director of the program has a high school education, and one staff member has an advanced degree. Table 3.4 offers staff characteristics at South End.

Name	Age	Race	Sex	Education	Tenure	Job Status	Job Title
				Table 3. 4 South End Employee Characteristics			
Celeste	36	Black	F	High School	15 yrs	Full Time	Director
John	35	Black	F	Masters	4 yrs	Part Time	Youth Worker
Kayla	24	Black	F	Some College	5 yrs	Part Time	Youth Worker
Bianca	25	Black	F	Bachelors	4 yrs	Part Time	Youth Worker
Zach	21	Black	M	Some College	5 yrs	Part Time	Youth Worker
Annette	19	Black	F	High School	3 yrs	Part Time	Youth Worker
Kierra	30	Black	F	Some College	10 yrs	Part Time	Youth Worker

Race: 86% African American

Procedures and Data Description

I received approval for this study from Michigan's Institutional Review Board. At the West Field site, parents were recruited through fliers that were sent home with students in the

afterschool program. At South End, I recruited parents onsite during program hours by distributing fliers to parents during parent pick up. To participate in the study, parents must have had their child enrolled in the after school program for at least six months. Parents indicated interest in participating in the study by contacting me in person on site or by phone.

I initially aimed to recruit a representative sample of parents. However, I wanted to capture a range of program experiences that included new program entrants and long-term program participants. Thus, my approach changed to a more purposive sampling strategy where I sought out parents with longer-term experiences. Table 3.5 shows parent characteristics at both sites.

Table 3.5 Parent Sample Characteristics

	Progress Youth Development (N=15)	South End Community Center (N=15)
Age	33	30
Race	100% African American	100% African American
Marital Status	26% Married 20% Single 40% Divorced 6% No Response	28% Married 43% Single 28% Divorced
Number of Children	4	3
Mean Age of Children	12	9
Education Level	13.8 years	14.5 years
Household Income	60% less than 20,000 20% $20,000-$30,000 6% $35,000-$40,000 6% $45,000-$50,000 6% $60,000 and above 6% No response	25% $20,000-$25,000 37.5% $25,000-$30,000 25% $35,000-$40,000
Public Assistance	86%	86%

Both samples of parents are predominately low-income, African American, single parents. Progress parents are slightly older, have larger families, and have older children in comparison to South End's parents. Parents from both programs have similar levels of education,

with most having had at least a high school diploma and in some instance, some college experience. Among Progress parents, college degrees of any kind were far less prevalent. The two sets of parents have distinct connections to their respective communities and each program. Tables 3.6 and 3.7 summarize parents; time in the program, the number of children enrolled, and history of residency in Chicago and their neighborhood.

Progress Parents

Progress parents are long-time Westside and, in most cases, Westfield residents. They spend, on average, six years in the program and enroll multiple children in the afterschool program. There is a cohort of six parents that have had long-term connections (six or more years) with the program. Parents that are newer to Progress, having children enrolled for three years or less, reflect more than half of the sample (nine parents).

Table 3.6 Parent Characteristics at Progress

Respondent	Number of children	Number of Children Enrolled	Time in Program	Time in Chicago	Neighborhood
R001	3	3	6 years	20+	Westfield
R002	3	3	10 years	20+	Westfield
R003	4	3	2 years	20+	Westfield
R004	3	2	1 year	20+	Westfield
R005	3	2	12 years	20+	Westfield
R006	5	5	2 years	20+	South Side
R007	4	3	1 year	20+	Westfield
R008	6	2	2.5 years	20+	Westfield
R009	3	3	4 years	20+	Westfield
R010	1	1	6 years	20+	Westfield
R011	1	1	1 year	20+	Westfield
R012	2	1	3 years	22	Westfield
R013	2	2	1 year	29	Westfield
R014	3	3	8+ years	31	Westfield
R015	5	5	14+ years	45	*West Side

Westside indicates neighboring community

<u>South End Parents</u>

Parent turnover at South End is relatively higher than the Progress afterschool program. On average, South End parents have their children enrolled in the program for nearly three years, with six years being the longest program experience. Like Progress, there is a small contingency of parents with longer-term program experiences ranging from four to six years. Newer parents have spent one to two years in the program. Although parents are long-term South-End residents, they have relatively shorter-term experiences with the program.

Table 3.7 Parent Characteristics at South End

Respondent	Number of children	Number of Children Enrolled	Time in Program	Time in Chicago	Neighborhood
R020Y	1	1	2 years	30	South End
R021Y	2	1	2 years	27	South End
R022Y	3	2	1 year	20+	*South Side
R023Y	2	2	4 years	20+	Far South
R024Y	2	2	5 years	31	South Side
R025Y	4	3	6 years	21	South End
R026Y	3	3	1 year	40	South End
R027Y	1	1	3 years	20+	South Side
R028Y	1	1	4 years	22	South end
R029Y	2	2	1 year	40	South End
R030Y	3	2	5 years	35	South End
R031Y	2	2	4 years	24	South End
R032Y	2	1	2 years	20+	South End
R033Y	3	1	1 year	5	South End
R034Y	1	1	1 year	10	*South Side

South Side indicates a neighboring community

<u>Data Description</u>

The data consists of participant observations and in-depth interviews with program staff and parents of children enrolled in the program. The sample consisted of a total of fourteen staff, seven staff members at each site and thirty parents. Fifteen parents were interviewed at the South End site and fifteen parents were interviewed at the West Field site.

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Agency Staff

I recruited staff members at both organizations through announcements about the study in staff meetings and flyers. To participate in the study, staff members must have worked at the agency for at least six months to participate in the study. Staff interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants. These locations were usually coffee shops, meeting rooms, or a private office on site.

Participant Observations

From August of 2012 through March of 2013, I conducted program observations (3:00-6:30 p.m.) three days a week and observed staff meetings and trainings at Progress Youth Development Corp. I conducted interviews and observations at the South End center from March 2013 through November of 2013. At South End, I was not given access to staff meetings and my observations were limited to transportation routes and afterschool program hours (2:30-6:00 p.m.) three days a week. I asked about staff daily routines, which included short staff meetings with program directors. These meetings addressed program details such as changes in assigned bus routes, upcoming program events, and student behavior problems.

Interviews

Semi-structured qualitative parent interviews probed parent's day-to-day program experiences, addressed the nature of their relationships with staff, and included questions about political beliefs and views of their neighborhood. Semi-structured staff interviews focused on the organization's mission, staff daily routines and practices, and the frequency and nature of the staff-parent interactions. For both parents and program staff, interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes.

Analysis Plan

Grounded Theory

I use grounded theory as theory generating tool in my data analysis. Straus and Corbin more formally describe grounded theory "as a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in systematically gathered and analyzed data" (Charmaz 2000, 2006). Theory evolves during the actual research through interplay between analysis and data (273). The process of constructing a grounded theory is "fluid" and requires examining the interaction of multiple actors and new situation to see if they fit and how they might fit. In doing so, I work to develop systematic statements about plausible relationships (Corbin and Smalls 2009; Mitchell 1983). In this sense, interviews and observations are treated as cases that confirm, reject, or elaborate emergent hypotheses (Strauss and Corbin 1994; Glaser and Strauss 1967).

As I conducted fieldwork, I read and analyzed staff and parent transcripts as they were completed. The data was initially sorted by the categories reflected in the semi-structured interview protocol. Examples of these categories include day-to-day program experiences, program mission, parent-staff interaction, and parent staff relationships. Parent and staff responses were open coded along these dimensions. Codes were integrated as the iterative comparisons of parent and staff responses yielded broader analytic categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1994). This "constant comparison" process was completed for both sets of parents and staff separately. I then completed comparisons across the two group and distinct categories and patterns regarding program experiences and political engagement outcomes surfaced. I wrote a series of analytic memos describing theoretical hunches about these emergent patterns and themes in the data. Field notes were used to tease out differences between parent and staff interview responses and what was observed in participant observations.

Grounded theorists emphasize theoretical sensitivity to the data and the existing literature (Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Theoretical sensitivity refers to the collective professional knowledge and personal experiences the researcher brings to data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967). There are debates around the extent to which the researcher should use literature to inform the interpretation of the data, with some proponents of the method contending theory should be entirely driven by the data. The theory developed here is not completely emergent in this respect. I did not approach fieldwork "open," to the story that the data would tell. I was "sensitive" to the existing literature of about political participation, human service agencies, policy feedback, and program design. I could hang the data on these conceptual and theoretical hooks as I conducted fieldwork and analysis. However, these tools were not imposed or forced on the data. I had minimal expectations about what I would find in the field and I used the literature as "data" to confirm components of the emergent theory (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 280).

Key Concepts and Measures

I rely on existing definitions of political behavior outlined in the political participation literature when developing interview protocols and conducting analyses of interviews, field notes, and observations. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) make the distinction between time intensive acts, political acts that require money, and acts that require civic skills. Time intensive acts include working on a campaign and engaging in protests and demonstrations, while contributions to political parties, candidates, and political causes require financial resources. The authors suggest that civic skills are useful across political activity from voting to contacting elected officials. Civic skills are defined as letter writing, planning or chairing meetings, giving presentations or speeches, and contacting government officials (Brady, Verba,

and Schlozman 1995). I classify participatory acts and political skill building opportunities across these dimensions. I also capture voting in the last presidential election, the last congressional election, the last state-level election, and the last local election.

Efficacy Beliefs:

I incorporate several definitions of efficacy beliefs in this study. I adopt the social psychology view of self-efficacy, which Bandura and Wood (1989) define as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet the given situational demands." Through out analysis, I treat this global measure of self-efficacy as having more specific dimensions such as collective efficacy (the shared capacity to achieve goals and beliefs about government responsiveness), internal political efficacy (the perceived understanding of important political issues) and external political efficacy (more specific views of government responsiveness) (Bandura and Wood 1989; Niemi, Craig, and Mattai 1991; Sampson et. al. 1997).

Open-ended questions are model after American National Election Study survey questions regarding political interests and gauge individuals' internal efficacy beliefs and their qualifications for political participation (Niemi, Craig, and Mattai 1991). External efficacy beliefs are captured by a set of questions addressing whether respondents thought city, state, and national elected officials care about what people like them think and whether respondents thought they had a say about the what the government does. Questions also probed respondents' understanding of appropriate forms of government responsiveness. For instance, respondents were asked how the government would show it cares about people like them and the neighborhoods where they reside.   Open-ended questions about respondents' assessments of

present and past elected officials were also used to gauge external political efficacy beliefs

among respondents. The complete interview protocols for clients can be found in Appendix A.

Chapter 4

Program Design

Progress Youth Development Corp.: A 21st Century Community Learning Center

It is 3:15 and it's the last day of the afterschool program at Progress Youth Development Corp. The staff just ended their daily meeting coined "the huddle." Ms. Brandy, a longtime Progress parent, lounges at the welcome desk smacking on an orange. She is working with Lauren, the pre-school director, to prepare pre-school portfolio for the awards ceremony tomorrow. While they sort students' artwork, Brandy enthusiastically sings the lyrics to a gospel song playing in the background. Her high-pitched voice and thick vibrato does not seem to bother Lauren. She looks over at Brandy and grins.

As Brandy prepares the preschool awards materials, students are trickle in downstairs to check in with Ms. Karen. Karen clutches her clipboard close to her chest and scribbles check marks by students' names. There are a few boys playing outside on the basketball court today, but most of the activity is occurring in the downstairs cafeteria. Two fourth grade girls enter the doors and stop to greet Ms. Karen. Meanwhile, Anita, a 6th grade student, sits calmly in the corner at one of the cafeteria tables. Her hair is pulled tight into a large round bun and adorned by a bright pink bow. Rori, Anita's little sister, disturbs her solitude and pesters her for loose change to buy a bag of hot chips from the vending machine. Anita sternly responds with an abrupt warning, "You better get out of my face!"

It is now 3:45 and there is a crowd of students surrounding the vending machine to purchase chips and candy. James, a fifth grader, is managing the customers today. However, the coin machine is broken so he frantically collects the children's coins and distributes skittles, snickers, and flammin hot chips. Adjacent to the growing line of vending machine patrons is Alice in the kitchen preparing the food for mealtime. Alice ties a thin plastic apron around her waist and tucks her thick ponytail under a translucent hair net. She directs her gloved hands to Leslie, her fourth grade kitchen assistant for the day. Leslie quickly joins her behind the counter. She slides her hands into a set of thin gloves and begins to lays out stacks of paper

plates and red trays for her classmates.

Students from the playground, basketball court, and the upstairs computer lab have made their way downstairs for mealtime. Ms. Grace grabs the microphone from the grey utility closet and asks for a volunteer to say grace, "Do I have a volunteer who's like to pray for our meal today? Anybody? Anybody?" Grace grows impatient with the talkative group, "Ok…Ok…Ok… Excuse me, we'll wait…we are not ready yet." The commotion finally wanes. A small girl from the second grade class quickly mumbles a prayer and ends with an enthusiastic, "Amen!" Grace announces the menu for the day and directs the students to the food line by grade level. "Today we have meatballs with pasta and marinara sauce, green peas, oranges, and milk. K through 2nd, you may walk up! 3rd through 5th grade may line up. Walk please, walk to line up for food. "3rd through 5th!"

At 4:25, most of the children have been served and have finished their meals. Grace makes her way over to the sound system and turns on the cleanup song, which signals the transition from meal time to class dismissal. However, the students have ignored her cue. They slowly dump their plates, trays, and milk cartons into the large grey trash bins and begin to form lines by grade level. A group of 4th and 5th grade girls continue to stall, congregating around the trashcan. They finish off their oranges, wiping the juice from their chin with their shirtsleeves. Nadine has managed to amass several oranges from her peers and now juggles her extra oranges in defiance against Ms. Grace's instruction.

Grace returns to the microphone and beings the dismissinal of students by grade level. The 7th and 8th graders are dismissed followed by the 3rd through 5th grade class and, finally, the smaller children. Ms. Grace shouts into the microphone, "K-2nd, you are dismissed you can follow Ms. Karen." Ms. Karen instructs her class gather their homework, "Make sure you have your homework before you go upstairs. You know what's gonna happen. You don't wanna get your name moved." The group of five and six year olds climbs the stairs in single file line.

South End After School Program: A Subsidized Childcare Provider

It is 3:30 and the South End afterschool program has already begun**.** Ten students dressed in navy blue polos and khaki pants are seated at the homework table. Pencils and worksheets are out and backpacks are tucked under seats. Miss. Annette is sitting at the sign in table teasing a little toddler girl dressed in purple stripes. In the midst of their play, she catches Deidra, a fifth grader, who seems to be entranced by the passing vehicles in the parking lot.

Deidra looks stately in her school uniform. The magnet school she attends requires her to wear a plaid pleated skirt and black sweater with the school's gold emblem etched on her shoulder. Deidra is startled by Miss Annette's interruption. "Deidra! Get out of that window!" She reluctantly leaves her post and slowly drags her feet away from the large windowpane.

Ms. Keisha oversees the homework station today. In frustration, she battles to keep the students focused on completing their homework assignments and addresses the restless group with stern commands to do their homework. While Keisha struggles to motivate her students, the sign in table becomes congested with white shirts and blue Dockers. Ms. Annette has stepped out of the room. The students peer down at the sign in sheet awaiting her return.   It is 4 pm. Ms. Keisha has left the homework table to gather toys for the students. She drags two large crates filled with oversized Lego blocks, dolls, and puzzles to the center of the room. Meanwhile, a group of about seven students huddle together on the floor and begin removing homework from the backpacks. They engage in small talk about the day's events and pending summer plans. One small third grade boy peers over the shoulder of his friend with curiosity. His pal fumbles through some papers in his backpack and informs his inquisitive friend of his plan to stay in touch with his classmates over the summer, "You know school is shutting down in a month, so I want to keep in touch with every boy….I dunno about the girls…"

By 4:30, all 70 students have arrived and are now seated in two separate lines on the floor, one line for the boys and a line for the girls. It is snack-time and Mr. Zach and Ms. Beverly are in charge of distributing pre-packaged snacks to the students. Each day they receive a delivery from the local food depository that supplies hot and prepackaged meals to youth programs in the city. Mr. Zach looks exhausted. His brow is furrowed and he is propped up against that wall with his hands resting in his pocket. Mr. Zach's tired voice strains to address the two long lines of students, " If you can hear my voice clap once.. twice… once…twice…" His frustration mounts with a set of talkative students in the back of the line. "Ya'll still talking in the back!" He waits for the students to quite down and proceeds to direct students to the snack line. One by one students grab their prepackaged lunches from Ms. Beverly. Sounds of rustling of plastic and giggles fill the room as the students crowd around three tables to devour their snack.

A father walks in and quickly signs his son out. Tiffany, a young mother, arrives soon after to pick up her son. Mr. Zach gets her attention as he jokingly recounts her son's peculiar

behavior. "Tiffany! He got in the front [of the line] talking about some can I get my lunch… I'm fittin to go…I need my lunch… can I get my lunch, like we required to give you something." Mr. Zach and Ms. Beverly chuckle at the child while Tiffany smiles and lovingly rubs the top of his head. After the children have finished their snack, they spread out on the floor in three lines. Mr. James, a tall athletic African American man, has arrived. Today, he is tasked with taking the children outside to the playground. Ms. Annette greets him enthusiastically, "Mr. James, I'm glad you're here! Welcome back, the kids have been asking about you!" His large commanding voice bellows as he greets her and the children, "What's up? How ya'll doing?" A pair of excited students runs to embrace him, wrapping their arms around his knees. He turns to Ms. Annette and asks, "All these people going outside?" She affirmatively nods. He instructs the children to gather their belongings. They quickly scatter to the mounted wall hooks, grab their backpacks, and form a line at the door.

Ms. Keisha and Mr. James lead the large group in a single file around the perimeter of building, stopping just short of the playground's bronze fence. The group must wait for Ms. Keisha to inspect the playground. She swings open the fence and walks around the jungle gym, testing its sturdiness by grabbing hold of the monkey bars and rungs. The children finally enter the playground gates and wait for Ms. Nikki to announce the ground rules of the playground. Ms. Nikki is an imposing figure on the playground. She's short, heavy-set, and tough. Her hands are on her hips, and her eyes are hidden by dark shades. She means business today. Ms. Nikki begins to address the group in her usual no-nonsense tone. "What you need to realize is it is very annoying to say the same thing over and over again." She shifts her burgundy purse on her hip and points to portions of the jungle gym, "This thing right here is broken, meaning if I see anyone on it, it's over! You know the rules, no running or hitting. You shouldn't keep getting in trouble for the same thing. If I see something, you're sitting down indefinitely." She catches a child running toward the jungle gym. "I said no running…don't play with me!" After correcting the rogue student, she releases the children, "Go play!"

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These two afterschool programs do not look or feel like your typical welfare office, yet these types of programs reflect the growing trend of privatization where by publically funded social services are contracted out to for-profit and nonprofit organizations. As new extensions of

the state, subsidized afterschool programs like these offer new encounters with the government.

Much of the focus of policy feedback research has been on encounters with means-tested and universal programs. While the framework and typology that has been developed in this public context helps understand how public programs shape political behavior, we know less about the inner workings of the nonprofit human service organizations and have a limited understanding of how nonprofit program design shapes clients experiences. How do parents utilizing subsidized childcare services experience these programs? Furthermore, it is unclear whether the insights of policy feedback are relevant in the context of nonprofit social service provision. Do existing conceptions of program design fit the realities of this service context?

Program Design in the Context of Subsidized Nonprofit Afterschool Care

As noted, policy feedback scholars apply a typology when characterizing public policies, categorizing programs as bureaucratic, paternalistic, and participatory[3]. Each category reflects the level of client agency in determining program outcomes. The conventional typology of program design is below.

Table 4.1 Program Typology

Bureaucratic	Participatory	Paternalistic
Administrative Rule Oriented Impartial Limited agency/worker discretion	Incorporates client feedback Advisory boards, policy councils	Intrusive Directive Punitive High discretion of agency and workers

(Soss 2000, Mettler and Soss 2004)

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[3] See chapter three for a more in-depth discussion of program design

The existing typology of program design categorizes programs by the extent to which clients exercise agency in service receipt and are incorporated in the decision-making processes within the program. In bureaucratic programs clients have two-way transactions in which both actors share power (Soss 2000). The agency is rule oriented and has standardized procedures surrounding service receipt. Caseworkers have limited discretion in determining client outcomes. Consequently, the outcomes of client demands are positive and predictable.

Paternalistic programs, on the other hand, place policy targets in a position of vulnerability and powerlessness. These types of programs are directive and supervisory and are designed to the impose order and enforce work and civic obligations among clients. Paternalistic programs are characterized by intrusive caseworker relationships, the autonomous nature of agency discretion, stringent eligibility requirements, and punitive sanctions.

Finally, participatory programs build capacity among clients by incorporating clients in decision-making through advisory councils and other governing boards. These types of programs communicate to clients that their participation is valued and effective.

Varied Program Participation: a Function of Parent and Staff Discretion

The conventional typology assumes that there are uniform program experiences for all clients involved in a particular "type" of program. Research on nonprofit service providers similarly portrays program experiences in an organization as uniform, making distinctions in varied program experiences across different types of organizations (Hansenfeld and Gidron 2005; Leroux 2007, 2009). However, the voluntary nature of program participation for services complicates this view. Many clients of nonprofit service providers are not subject to mandatory participation requirements and chose how they engage these organizations. For instance, Rebecca Kissane (2010a; 2010b) finds varied use of non-profits offering food and clothing

assistance. Clients choose to utilize programs based on stigma of program use and the ease of

receiving assistance. In her study of a network of community-based organizations offering

housing and childcare services.

Nicole Marwell (2004) also finds different levels of involvement among program

participants, distinguishing clients from community participants and program adherents. Clients

receive services, with minimal commitment to give back to the work of the organization or the

community. Community participants are engaged in agency efforts to improve neighborhood

conditions and program adherents work to promote agency interests and objectives. Varied

levels of program participation is especially relevant in the context of afterschool service

provision, where parents exercise discretion in choosing how and how often they interact with

these providers.

Parents' experiences at these two afterschool programs reveal different levels of program

involvement and, by consequence, distinct program experiences. For instance, some parents

choose to have minimal involvement in the afterschool program, simply picking their child from

the program without engaging staff or attending other program events. For these parents, the

program may seem straightforward and bureaucratic. Conversely, a parent who builds more

rapport with staff through casual conversation, attends Christmas parties, and chaperones field

tips, may be invited to volunteer in the program or brainstorm with staff about the next excursion

for students. This active parent experiences a more participatory program, where they become

part of the program activities and act as decision makers. In this sense, parents from the same

program may have exposure to very different "types" of programs.

What's more, the role of staff discretion in shaping clients' program experiences is

understated by the existing typology. Staff discretion is considered an attribute of program

design, rather than instrumental in shaping organizational form and client experiences. Research on human service agencies suggests that staff create program experiences for clients through exercising discretion in day-to-day program activities (Sandfort 2000; 2003). Staff discretion is instrumental in developing personal attachments to clients, which result in different program experiences. Celeste Watkins-Hayes (2009) clients may encounter and impersonal efficiency engineer or a "social workers" who engages in more comprehensive problem solving for clients. Agency staff can choose to build supportive relationships with clients or avoid these relationships, depending on how they manage work conditions (Soss 1999; 2000).

In the context of afterschool care, staff may create different program experiences for parents based how they view their work responsibilities. When staff view personal relationships with parents as a priority in service delivery, they may engage in interactions beyond their professional roles as service providers. For instance, staff may work to forge strong ties with parents and invite a parent to lead a parent volunteer group or share information neighborhood food pantry. In contrast, limited more professional interactions with parents may diminish opportunities for additional parent involvement or parent access to resources.

In this service context, parents exercise considerable discretion in how they interact with programs. Parents voluntarily apply for after school care and choose subsequent levels involvement throughout their time in the program. Thus a more accurate conception of program design in this service context would incorporate parent's individual preferences for program involvement and staff discretion in offering resources and parent involvement opportunities.

I propose a conceptual tool that characterizes program design in this service context as "tiered," yielding a spectrum of unique program experiences. I assume a baseline program experience for the typical parent that incorporates organizational components from the existing

typology of program design. I depart from the prevailing typology, by allowing for more

nuanced program experiences that include exposure to referents from other program types such

as participatory opportunities such as volunteer activities and parent advisory boards. How

parents move along the continuum of program design is function of parent and staff discretion.

Parents in both programs exercise high levels of discretion when choosing their level of

involvement. Staff-respond to parent interactions by using their choosing to expose a select

group of parents to additional aspects of the program. Figure 4. 1 illustrates this concept

program design.

Figure 4.1 Program Design: Revised Conceptual Tool
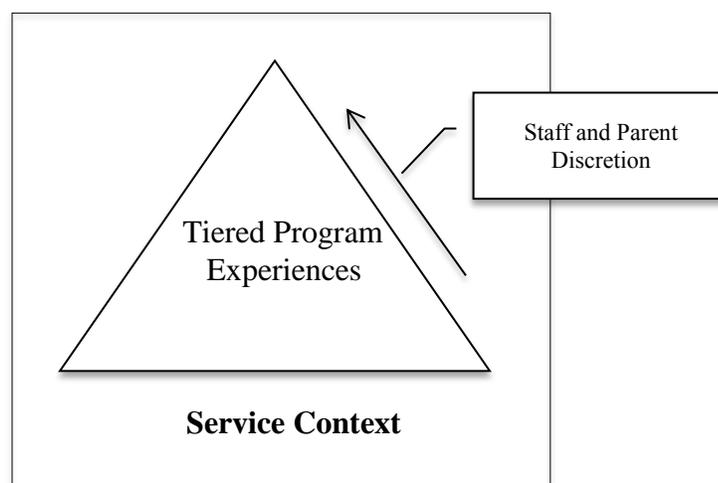
Service context for these two programs include the funding parameters imposed by

government grants and service objectives. Research suggests that these two factors influence

participatory opportunities within programs and program experience these program**s** (LeRoux,

2007; 2009; Marwell 2004).

In this chapter I apply this new conceptual tool to explore the process in which parental

involvement, formal elements of program design, and staff discretion influence experiences of

parents at South End and Progress. In these two cases of afterschool care, most parents experience a bureaucratic program and are moved along a continuum to different elements of program design that are beyond the scope of afterschool care. I find that how parents choose to become involved in the program translates into nuances in program experiences. In both cases, parental involvement and staff discretion yield direct resources and support to parents. In the case of Progress, informal interactions with staff are bridges to more formal roles and influence within the program as staff use discretion to give a select group of parents access to participatory elements of program design.

After School Care: A Bureaucratic Program Experience

Most parents at South End and Progress initially encounter bureaucratic programs. Staff and parents share power in a two-way transaction, service receipt is governed by standard procedures, and there is limited staff discretion in allocating afterschool care (Soss et. al. 2010; Bruch et. al. 2010; Mettler 2002) Parents learn about the afterschool programs through recommendations from family members and other parents, by attending community outreach events sponsored by each program, or in the case of South End, through use of the center's facilities.

Parents at both programs typically meet with the program director to secure an application and complete forms that cover basic information such as emergency contact information, medical conditions, and a list of authorized adults that can pick up the child from the program. Unless parents apply for the childcare assistance program to subsidize the cost of afterschool care, this is the extent of application process for parents at South End**.** South End parents receiving the subsidy are required to pay a reduced co-payment monthly. The amount of the co-pay is determined by subsidy guidelines regarding family size and household income.

At Progress, afterschool care is free and parents are not required to report income, marital status, or employment in the application. If there is available space in the program, the student is immediately enrolled in the program, unless there is a waitlist, which is often the case for the Progress afterschool program. Space in the Progress afterschool program becomes available if enrolled students lose their spot in the program due to poor attendance (less than 80 percent for more than two weeks) or behavioral problems.

South End and Progress afterschool programs share similar behavior and attendance requirements. South End's program has a three-strike disciplinary policy "Program participants are expected to refrain from disturbing others both physically and verbally; refrain from property damage and be respectful to the staff." When a child misbehaves, parents are notified of infractions and students get a verbal warning. A written warning follows if poor behavior continues, with a one to two day suspension if behavior does not change. Finally, students are expelled from the program if behavioral problems are not resolved. The South End staff expects parents to reinforce positive behavior and the child's full participation in the program. This includes addressing patterns of poor behavior at home and ensuring their child's regular attendance in the program. Ms. Celeste, the program director explains that the attendance standard is roughly three days of the week. She notes that, "Students should be [here], students should need homework help, and they should participate in the activities that are planned for the children."

The Progress afterschool program has a similar attendance requirement. Students are expected to maintain 80% attendance, attending roughly four out of the five days of the week. Parents receive warnings about poor attendance and, if attendance does not improve within one month of the initial warning, students lose their spot in the program. Students that engage in

fighting or disrespectful behavior face a one-day suspension from the program. When behavior problems persist, parents are required to meet the program director and another member of the staff to address behavior problems. Students are expelled from the program if behavior problems continue.

Interactions with staff beyond the application process are not required and rarely occur at either center. Any further interactions with staff are usually regarding payment issues (for South End parents) and student behavior problems.

The South End and Progress afterschool programs diverge in the ways in which parent-staff connections create distinct program experiences. First, Progress program design is characterized by a systematic and intentional outreach to parents, what the staff call "parent partnership". In compliance with the 21st CCLC parent involvement guideline, staff is required to initiate and document monthly contact with parents. South End lacks a parent outreach component and parents are the primary initiators of parent-staff interactions. Moreover, strong ties with Progress staff increase parent access to participatory elements of program design. While efforts to build personal ties to staff yield material benefits and resources at both programs, Progress offers multiple avenues to integrate parents into the program's decision-making processes. South End's opportunities are limited to parent surveys and family oriented program events. Parents hold little decision-making capacity within the program.

Essentially, Progress offers a "bureaucratic partnership" that becomes increasingly supportive and participatory as parents choose higher levels of program involvement and the staff grants parents access to decision-making power. In contrast, South End's afterschool program offers parents a "bureaucratic transaction," where staff and parents view the organization as providing a service and mutually acknowledge clear professional roles of youth

worker as child care providers. As a result, parent-staff interactions are primarily distant and professional and the afterschool program remains a bureaucratic experience even for parents who have cultivated deep ties with program staff.

South End After School Program: A Bureaucratic Transaction

Figure 4.2 South End After School Program Design
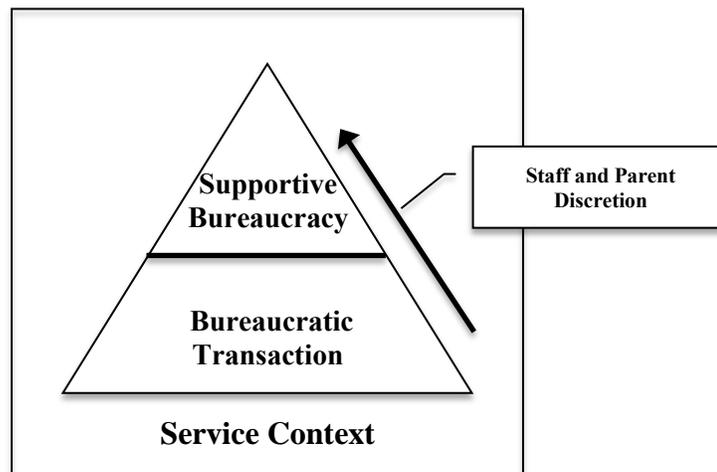
Most South End parents experience a limited bureaucratic transaction. The outcome of the application process is predictable, childcare services are offered in exchange for a reduced co-pay. Continued program use is governed by a set of rules surrounding payment and child behavior. Parents have minimal and cursory interactions with program staff, choosing to quickly pick-up their children from the program and, if needed, occasionally meet staff to discuss child behavior.

Parent Pick Up

Beyond the application process, parents interact with program staff during parent pick-up. Amidst the commotion of 75 children, parents quickly make their way to the sign out table to sign their child out for the evening. By and large, this is the extent of parent interaction with the South End afterschool staff. Program experiences consist of a quick parent pick up and very

brief conversations with the staff about their child's behavior for the day and homework. Sheila explains her usual routine at South End,

> "Um, I get off work, get here around, around this time, 5:30ish, pick them up, you know see how they're days has went. Hopefully neither one of them has gotten in trouble or whatever. And pretty much just go home after that. And it's like the same thing every day."

Charles, a policeman and father of three, describes his brief pick-up routine, "Um you sign them out…um yeah sign them out and um just pick them up. That's basically it…It's just cut and dry."

The South End staff generally characterizes their interactions with parents as professional with communication that is limited to greetings during parent pick-up and brief conversations about the child's behavior in the program. In fact, the youth workers are discouraged from having personal conversations with parents as this is viewed as beyond the scope of their work responsibilities. Ms. Annette shares that she avoids "personal" conversations with parents because she is "not really allowed."

> "Um, when I talk to the parents it's basically on a, just talking about like what the kids did that day. I don't really go, I don't talk to parents and get into they personal business. They don't really get into my personal business. So it's basically like a work thing. So, the only time I talk to a parent if a child act up, or if a child did something special, or just basically if a child did something out the ordinary, cause we're not really allowed to, I'm not going to say we're not allowed to conversate with the parents, but Ms. Celeste would rather us do our job so talking to the parents won't take away from what we doing."

The extent to which the staff develops more personal connections with parents also depends on parent's willingness to engage staff in casual conversation. While personal conversations with parents are not encouraged among the staff, some staff members are simply reluctant to develop any rapport with parents because they view parents as distant and aloof. The youth workers make the distinction between "cool parents," parents that are more involved and choose to develop relationships with the staff, and unfriendly parents. Mr. Zack complains about the parent's attitudes towards the youth staff.

"Like, I'm not even gone lie. It's like I don' had parents to come and have a attitude to us. Like, we haven't did anything to you. Like, we done kept your child all this time and you mad at me, like I didn't do nothing to you. I'll just speak to you, and they just give that look like, ok, excuse me. It's a lot of different personalities**.**"

Sarah, a veteran on the South End staff, further elaborates on the two different types of parents they encounter in the program. There are parents that are friendly and parents that "won't say nothing."

"You have a lot of different parents. You have your friendly parents, you have your parents just come in like it's the end of the world, then you have your parents, you know, just speak to you, you have some parents that you might speak to and they won't say nothing back. So it's basically the ones that you usually see me talking to, those are the ones that like, they kind of, you know, cool and kind of laid back. They don't even really, too uppity and, you know."

On the whole, parent interactions with the youth staff are cursory and limited. In this bureaucratic transaction, youth staff exhibit limited discretion in their interactions with parents. Their day-to-day program practices are child focused and consists of providing homework help and recreational activities for the students until parent pick-up. Because personal ties with parents are viewed as beyond the scope of their professional responsibilities, interactions with parents are centered around child wellbeing and program related activities.

Supportive Bureaucratic Transaction

Some parents choose a higher level of program involvement, by breaking the professional barrier with staff. These parents choose to develop personal ties with the youth staff by "hanging out" during program time. "Cool parents" usually have a long-term connection with the program. Briana explains,

"I would say that [cool parents] they're a little bit more personable, and their children have been in the program for a while. So, you've just kind of established a rapport with them. So, they, they come in, they sit down for a minute, they not in a rush to grab they kids and go. But they, you know, they kinda hang out. They let the kids take they time getting they stuff. They'll, you know, ask us how we doing, how everybody doing,

what's going on, ask how the weekend went. I guess they, we, we call them the cool parents cause they don't come in all stern and get your stuff and go, and you know how's everybody doing, and just leave out. They just come in and hang out for a minute and, you know, we have better relationships with them…"

Regina is one of the few parents that choose to "mingle" with staff. Regina has two sons a four year old and a 6 year old. The four year old is enrolled in an all day head start program housed at South End, the 6 year old, in the South End After school program. She picks up her younger son first from Head Start. Regina explains,

"Well when I come I go and pick up my younger son first. And yes, you do have to sign the kids in and out. And I ask how was my younger son. How was his day and they'll tell me what did he do or what he didn't do, as usual. And then we'll go pick up my bigger son. So, I tend to have a small chat with both parties for both kids. But it's normally a little bit longer with my older child, because all the kids they all want to talk, they all want to tell about my day.

Regina engages in small talk with the staff both programs, but she chooses to "mingle" in the afterschool program. "Yeah so, we tend to mingle," she explains. Regina goes on to describe the kinds of conversations she has with the staff.

"What's the big topic these days? All the kids and all the parents they have Instagram and Facebook. So if you post something before you come in, everybody want to know what it was about or what's going on. Then we tend to talk to the, you know, I talk to all the kids. So like today is progress report day. So right before I came to talk to you, I went and snatched a few kids progress reports to see what they had.…I might sneak up some chips or some candy for the kids."

Regina does not mingle every day at the South End afterschool program. Some days she is in a rush and wants to "get in and get out."

"Some days I do it and some days I don't. It depends on me. If I want to hurry up and get out of here I just say hey to go about my day. But you know, if you get sick or that woman day calls, you don't really want to talk to nobody. You just want to get in and get out. So it switch, but I'm normally just, you know, I'm friendly with them. Yeah."

The additional time spent mingling builds rapport and more meaningful relationships with staff.

Over time, relationships become more personal and the staff is perceived as family. Lisa explains

how long she has known the staff and why she takes the additional time to develop friendships

with staff members.

> "I mean, if your child is going to be here, why not be in a family atmosphere and be friends and stuff with everybody. A lot of the people I went to either high school with or I been coming to the center for so long, and so every day, so I know them. I been knowing them."

When parents have developed this type of rapport with the program director, they receive

additional support and resources. Ms. Celeste uses her discretion on case-by-case basis to

enforce payment requirements and connect parents with resources in the community. By

building a personal connection with the program director, parents move along the continuum of

program design from a bureaucratic transaction to a more supportive bureaucratic experience.

A few parents informally drop by Ms. Celeste's office to talk. Topics of conversation consist

of payment issues, children's behavior, and more personal matters. Ms. Celeste is lenient with

parents when they choose to "communicate" with her.

> "I think I have a very, very good relationship with the parents. I hear that a lot because I'm, I'm a good listener. The thing is, them being able to explain to me what may be going on, or me just listening to their thoughts about things is a real big help. Or me just being understanding. So, it, with like a parent, if you communicate with me, so like, let's just say for instance it's time for you to like, make your payment, and you know you payment is due on the fifteenth, but on the tenth you say to me, um, 'Ms. Celeste, um, I'm having a little dilemma. I don' get paid till this date. I know payments is due on the fifteenth. Can I get to the seventeenth.' I'm fine with that, you know. So, I think that, that's a help. And just greeting the parents. Just talking to them, and just being friendly to them, even if they're not having a friendly day or not being friendly to you. I think that is a help to them."

Ms. Celeste also uses these casual conversations to learn about parents' needs and makes efforts

to connect parents with resources. She refers to a resource book that has job and apartment

listings and information about other programs. Ms. Celeste also "asks around" for parents when

a specific need arises.

"If a person is looking for an apartment or a person is looking for somewhere to buy healthy something, you know, I have a resource binder, but I try to just, I ask around for them, you know, or I may have heard another parent say that's what they do. The parent may need insurance, life insurance, or something, and I made note that one of my parents are insurance agents. I'll try to connect them in some type of way."

Developing rapport with Ms. Celeste also results in exposure to additional center resources.

Parents learn about new opportunities through their informal one on ones with Ms. Celeste.

Celeste explains how she introduces parents to new center activities.

"…Because I have those one-on-ones with them, and…they come and talk to me about different things, I'm able to say, you know, well, you know, maybe your baby need to be in karate, you know. Your baby like to wrestle, and you know, really active, maybe your baby. Try karate….You know, and the thing is, I listen to those things that the parents talk about, and if we don't have those things, I try to write em down and in our staff meetings I try to bring em up. …And we see how we could, um, help those parents with that. Or whether we have the resources here or we refer them to someone else, or another area or another center that may offer that on certain days or something like that."

Ms. Celeste admits that a small group of parents have this kind of relationship with her. These are parents that have had long-term relationships with her and "make it their business" to speak with her on a regular basis.

"Parents that have been with the program for several years They just attach to me. Yeah. They just attach to me. Out of all of the parents I have, I think, I'm going to be honest with you, it's about ten to fifteen of them that I'm really close to, either because their kids have been in the program since they were little, or they had other kids that was in the program... So some just make it they business to come in here and talk to me."

In sum, parents that choose to develop deeper level of program involvement through extended casual conversation with staff gain access to support and resources that parents with cursory program interactions are less likely to receive.

Parents who forge the closest relationships with director are likely to receive assistance in paying for the program. Ms. Celeste will "work with" parents who struggle to pay for summer

and afterschool care. She explains how she approaches parents who are experiencing difficulty paying for South End's programs**.**

> "So you, for me I have, well honestly, two days ago I had a parent to come in. She have three children. And she don't qualify for Action for Children where the state can help you pay for it, she can't afford to pay two hundred dollars a week per child. That's steep and I really can't afford that. And that was kind of hard for me. Cause I'm like, man, I understand where she's coming from. That's a lot. Now, don't get me wrong. I oversee the program. I know the program is worth it, but being on the, understanding where the parents are coming because I have children also, that you can't, you'll be going to work just to pay for your babies to come to camp and you couldn't pay any other bills. And so, I told her I would try to see what more I can do, in hopes that maybe one of the people decide not to use some of the other scholarship we were doing, and we'll be able to offer her a little more, but you know."

For South End, parent program experiences are a function of personal preference in choosing their level of interaction with program staff. Parents that have cursory program interactions receive a professional childcare service in a bureaucratic transaction. Parents experience a more supportive bureaucratic transaction, where staff-choose to offer direct services and resources, when they choose to develop deeper connections with staff through extended causal conversation.

Limited Parental Involvement

Within this more bureaucratic type of program design, the South End afterschool program offers limited participatory opportunities for parents. In my sample of 15 parents, no parent indicated that they had volunteered in the program and no parent reported that they were encouraged to volunteer by the afterschool program staff. Staff members were also unaware of volunteer opportunities for parents. If parents do express interest in becoming more involved, they can "sit in" and observe the afterschool program during program hours.

While there are limited volunteer opportunities, the youth staff does highlight recreational opportunities for families as additional options for parental involvement. For instance, the center

offers family nights, which allows parents and their children to participate in activities ranging

from watching movies to playing games. Family nights are designed to facilitate bonding

between parents and their children through recreational activities. Parents can also attend open

house days at the center, chaperone fieldtrips, and donate supplies to the program. Ms. Celeste

describes these opportunities in further detail.

> "We offer a lot of, I will say open house days to the community, like, Kids Day Out, Healthy
> Kids Day, and it's another one we do annually, and that's open where the parent can come
> and see everything they offer. Oh, and a free day of camp. Those three days, the parents
> come and every, all the policies and procedure, games, and recreation, we do so that the
> parents can see what goes on during camp, while you're at work or away. And we have some
> parents that even chaperone our trips. After school goes on trips for the Kids Day Out days.
> That's when the kids have no school, but the parents still have to go to work. So they bring
> their kid here from 6am to 6pm. It's like a regular day, and we go on field trips. And some
> chaperone. And we also have parents that donate. They donate books, that you know, their
> children have read already, games and activities, and supplies. So we try to, we try to hold on
> to those relationships as well."

Parent feedback is incorporated through a satisfaction survey at the end of the school term and

through informal conversations between parents and Ms. Celeste. Ms. Celeste describes how she

administers general surveys to families at the end of the school term.

> "We do general surveys…they're the center has a whole survey. So they really, it's really
> about the program, about what the kids feel about the program. It's not so much about what
> the parents feel about the program. So I, at the end of the year have like this box that I create
> that parents are able to put in the box ideas, suggestions, wants, needs, things like that. So,
> like the last week of the after school program, I put that in the box. I mean, I put the box out.
> Same thing with camp. The last week of camp, I put the box out so we can um, so that, um,
> they can put their ideas or whatever they may have in there."

Parent suggestions are then incorporated into small changes to the program. For instance, Ms.

Celeste recalls a parent's suggestion to brighten up the parent information board. Doing so would

encourage more parents to read the information.

> "We have the parent information board in there. So, one parent asked me to brighten it up.
> Because I'm not going to say I used dull colors, but…it was just like basic. So she was like,
> you know, I think if you brighten it up parents will actually stand there and read it. You

know, or, pay attention to what's going, so like…. I'm putting something new up there… So that it can stick out to the parents."

In the main, most South End parents and staff are involved in a professional bureaucratic transaction that is focused primarily on the afterschool care provided; parents pay for afterschool care and homework help for their child. A handful of parents mingle and casually talk with South End staff, developing friendly rapport and "kin" like bonds with the staff members. The extent to which less formal rapport develops depends on how the parent views the program and their desire to know adults that are actively involved in their child's life. Still, the length and nature of the relationship, does not shape parent's role in informing program day-to-day activities. Parents are not given formal opportunities to volunteer in the program and there are limited opportunities for parent feedback to be incorporated into program activities.

Progress Youth Development Corp: A Multileveled Partnership

Figure 4.3   Progress Youth Development Program Design
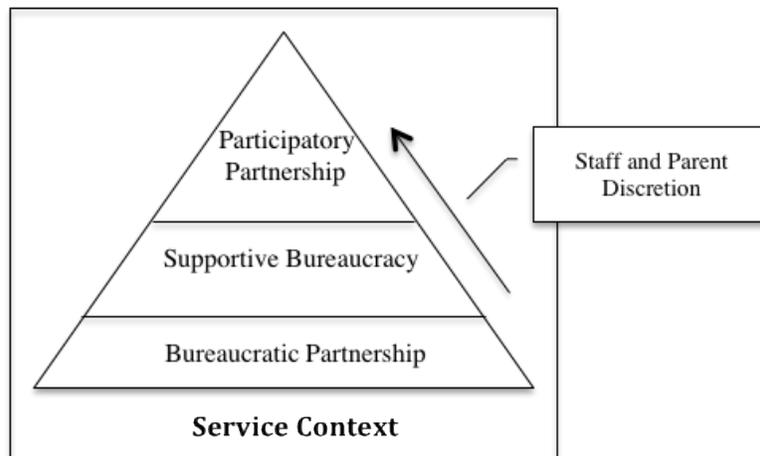
The Progress afterschool program reflects a tiered program design that incorporates supportive resources and participatory elements. Distinct from the South End afterschool program, Progress program design is characterized by systematic and intentional outreach to parents. To fulfill the "parent partnership" guideline required by their 21st Century Community

Learning Center Grant, staff are required to initiate monthly contact with parents. The staff uses these monthly contacts to inform parents of the student's progress in the program and upcoming program events. Furthermore, the Progress has incorporated parents as a key element of their community transformation mission. For Progress staff, neighborhood transformation involves the success of neighborhood youth, which requires parent involvement in child development and academic enrichment activities. Thus, the Progress bureaucratic partnership entails a high level of parent commitment in the form of parent participation at program events and, in select cases, participation in parent volunteer and leadership opportunities.

Similar to South End's program design parents who choose to develop more personal relationships with the staff experience a supportive experience where staff use their discretion to connect parents with direct resources and services that are beyond the scope of afterschool care. Staff and parent discretion intersect to create a highly participatory program for parents that have developed strong ties to the staff overtime. Parents that have deeper relationships with program staff gain access to participatory opportunities and decision-making power within the program. These "committed" parents are selected to serve on the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), a key decision making board that determines afterschool program policies and disciplinary guidelines, and are invited to participate in daily program activities. In addition to the PAC, this select group of involved parents is invited to participate in staff meetings and often volunteer during program hours. In what follows, I illustrate how parents move along the continuum of program design at the Progress afterschool program. Movement along this continuum is a function of parent's choice in forging personal ties with program staff and staff discretion in exposing parents to resources and particular elements of program design.

Bureaucratic Partnership

The 21st Century Learning Center grant requires the Progress afterschool program to

incorporate parent involvement in its programming. Progress has developed "parent partnership" overtime to meet this guideline. Parent partnership consists of monthly staff initiated contact with parents by phone or in person. Furthermore, parents are invited to attend program events such as holiday parties, student showcases, and award ceremonies. The program in recent years has increased its efforts to strengthen its relationship between the staff and parents. At Progress, parents are viewed as indispensable in ensuring the success of their children and the transformation of the neighborhood. David, who oversees all of the youth programs, explains the emergence of parent partnership as a key objective of the afterschool program.

> "for the first four years I knew that parents were important but I, and we got their signatures on everything and that was kind of the extent of parent partnership, unless they reached out to us."

David describes parent partnership, then, as an "afterthought" motivated by the attitude that doubted parents concern about their children's involvement in the program. Now parents are perceived as a key hinge that opens the door to opportunity for students. Staff also began to prioritize parent partnership because they share the same social spaces as parents. David explains this transition,

> "Six years ago, the staff began to make personal relationships a priority, these social relationships were facilitated by the social spaces both staff and parents occupied. So many of our staff live here in the community. There were, there was the opportunity where we started worshipping at churches where some of the parents were worshipping. And so you get to know people more deeply."

The Progress staff now offers a listening ear to the parents. As such, the staff have an "open door" policy with parents and are encouraged to forge more personal ties with parents in the program.

> "A lot, for a lot of the institutions in our area that parents take their kids to, there's not a, the system isn't built around listening to the parent and what happened in their day….So I think a listening ear of the staff member, a trusted staff member might be the single greatest asset that we might have for the parents."

In practice, parent partnership takes various forms. Like South End youth staff, Amanda, the

afterschool program director, explains how her relationships with parents vary, with most parents

choosing to connect with her on a more professional level. She describes these relationships as

"shallow" but "positive" primarily focused on the child's behavior in the program. Very few of

these relationships go beyond the scope of the students and their participation in the program.

> "I would say um I would say personally that I have very few parent relationships that are really developed highly developed strong parent relationships…. I would say it's a very small group of parents that that our relationship has kind of gone to the next level. You know where it's beyond where we can talk about things that's beyond just your child all the time and your child's behavior in the program and your child has this coming up or that coming up. So very few relationships are beyond that but… I still, I feel like I have a positive relationship with the majority of our parents even if it's a more shallow relationship you know its more surface level like we talk about your kid and that's the end of our conversation."

Veronica's relationship with the staff reflects the typical experience of most Progress parents.

She usually interacts with the staff around her son's attendance, recent behavior problems, or

conflicts he has been having with other students. She explains her most recent visit to Progress;

where she met with Amanda to explain her son's recent absences from the program.

> "Ok last time I came to Progress it was regarding my child. Because he hadn't been to school, he hadn't been in Progress but he was actually sick so. I came here to let Amanda know the reason why he hadn't been here. He was sick you know and I had to let them know when he was coming back."

She explains that additional interactions are usually discussions about disciplinary issues with

her son. She visits Progress to better understand the details surrounding her son's behavior.

> "Ok when I'm usually here I'm coming regarding my child. Something he then did, or something that went on. And I have to come up here and make sure I know exactly what happened you know because I like to hear from them not just my son. You know a child might try to curve the words and put it on somebody else so yeah I mainly come up here regarding him."

Veronica has gone through the bureaucratic process of securing free afterschool care. Her

additional interactions with the program are brief and child-centered. In essence she has

experienced the bureaucratic partnership offered to most parents by the afterschool program.

Supportive Bureaucratic Partnership

Other parents develop more personal connections with program staff. Like Amanda,

Alice also makes this distinction between more professional relationships with parents and

personal connections. She connects with parents more professionally through her monthly

parent phone calls but Alice builds more personal connections with parents who stop by the

program regularly to "shoot the breeze" with staff.

> "There are parents who come to Progress regularly and so we can just interact and shoot
> the breeze of kind of what's going on with them at home or the latest movie that we seen
> or places to shop or um the new grocery store that's being   built down the street."

Alice views more personal relationships with parents as furthering the mission of the

organization and her own personal beliefs. She interprets the mission as holistic and finds it

difficult to separate the personal from the professional, in part, because she sees it as an

opportunity to invest parents and families lives more deeply.

> "I think its important to interact with the parents as well as the youth on a personal level
> not just on a quote on quote professional level because I think that's just an
> important culture for Progress mission and vision and are able to invest in and live out
> Progress mission and vision and mentally, physically, and spiritually."

She recalls an instance where she connected with a parent on a personal level,

> "I can think of a parent who is recently at Progress sharing about one of their students
> well one of my students last year, in which she's really struggling to figure out   best
> how to mother her child and kind of meaning to make a lot of very important and large
> decisions. She was just kind of sharing her feelings and just her fears and throwing
> around some ideas and kind of kicking around some ideas and possible ways to um
> operate as a family."

However, this level of interactions are not the norm for all parents, some parents are "in and out." Lauren explains, "[Some] parents are quick in and out and don't really have the time and attention to spare for small talk as much as you try to reach out to them."

For parents who choose to drop-in and build relationships the staff, the program becomes more supportive. The staff chooses to connect parents with additional resources and services that are beyond the scope of after school care. For instance, Rita is a mother of five and a recent divorcee. In the past year Rita has financial hardship due to spells of unemployment. At one point, Rita and her children lost their home and lived in shelters and transitional housing. She discovered Progress when she stumbled upon a basketball tournament hosted by the organization in the summer. She quickly connected with Claire, the former director of the after school program who guaranteed a spot in the program for all five of her children.

> I think it was a basketball game, a tournament, on a Friday, a Friday or something like that. And I'm like, ok we're all going to go as a family. Cause they had BBQ and everything and it was like a family outing. And it was really, really hot out that day. And so we went and I was introduced to Claire who is a wonderful woman and Progress is just an answered prayer to me being a single parent. And so that day, which was two years ago, um she invited my son, um Mitchell to go on the camping trip with them to Missouri. And the rest is history….There was no wait time [for the afterschool program0. She knew, like As soon as you fill it out they're accepted, just fill it out…. She was like 'You go ahead on, and they're in. We just need you to complete the paperwork and, you know, they're in.'

Since then, Rita has received significance assistance from the staff. Through her connections with Progress staff, Rita has received beds, clothing, school supplies, and access to a private school education for her children. Rita describes as particular instance when the staff was supportive to her family. She and her children were leaving a transitional housing after a brief stint in a shelter and she was in need of beds. She explains how the staff helped her acquire the beds she needed.

"I had just moved out of a shelter. I was in transitional housing…. for a year…. One

bedroom, two bunk beds with all five kids, but we made it. We made it.   So, when we moved out I was blessed with a four bedroom home, and so the   children needed some beds and I mentioned it to Anne and the next Sunday she   was calling me saying I had got an email from somebody that wanted to be a   blessing to somebody in need and all five of your beds to be delivered from Sears by the end of the week. And all five beds came and Alan and his wife came and put em up for me. And so, that was another miracle."

Progress staff also supplied Rita's children with school supplies for the upcoming school term.

Rita continues,

"When the kids started school…it was things they needed and every
day they came home with it. From school supplies to gym uniforms, to Amanda called me. And I was like, Lord my kids need some shoes. And she called me and was like 'Rita, I got some questions for you. Do your kids need any shoes and what color and what size? And do you want em delivered or do you want to pick them up?' And it was just like, every day, every day the need was met and the staff was supportive."

Rita has access to this level of assistance, because she has developed rapport with staff members

throughout the course of her program experience.   When Rita picks her children up from the

program, she lingers for a while and chats with staff. She explains to me her pick-up routine at

Progress.

"I was here, the children were preparing to go home, so it was pretty wild. But it wasn't, you know, like out of control. The children was just all hyped up and of course I had to sign my own kids out. Cause Progress got the strict policy. You got to sign in and out. I had to, you know, come in and wait from my other daughter to come down…..I spoke with Lauren. I spoke with my girl Tammy. And had a few words with Marissa. Slow talking Marissa. That's my girl. Yeah. So I had a few conversations. It was good. I love 'em. They were celebrating with me because I got a job and so I always keep Tammy updated on little things, little accomplishments because it had been a really, really struggle for a while. And so, so we were just talking about my job and just rejoicing in the Lord over some things that has been taking place."

Rita also maintains personal ties with the staff through phone conversations. The staff members

know Rita well and choose to provide assistance that is well beyond the extent of their

responsibilities as youth staff. In this sense, Rita experiences a supportive bureaucratic program,

where in subsidized child care is impartially secured, but higher levels of staff discretion are to

benefit the program participant. In the case of Progress, staff discretion is used to provide Rita with material assistance.

Rita, however, is not a part of the day-to-day program activities at Progress and has minimal decision-making power within the afterschool program. She is not exposed to participatory aspects of Progress because the staff has not asked her to be involved. When asked if she was asked to participate in any parent leadership opportunities, she replied,

> " No, I wish they would. I guess, maybe because I haven't really stepped out and made my voice heard. I mean, Progress know, and Anne knows me. I need to do something, you know. But I really, really want to,"

Participatory Parent Partnership

In some instances, parents that build deeper relationships with the staff overtime are privy to opportunities to wield influence within the program. Staff exercise discretion in selecting parent leaders and base these decisions on the quality of relationships they have with parents and an informal set of criteria the characterizes strong positive parenting.

"Committed parents" are often those who are present, they pick-up their children, drop by the center during program hours, attend Progress events regularly. Committed parents also engage staff about the well being of their child by taking initiative in contacting staff about their child's Progress in the program, responding to staff emails and phone calls about student behavior, and cooperating with staff when behavior issues arise.

Kevin is considered a "committed parent." He became "tight" with David and Claire when they moved into the neighborhood.

> "I think we came tight the first day we met. Cause it's like every time we was out there, either I made my way over here to see what they were doing or they made my way, if I was standing out there, they came over there. And, and once the center start open, [my] kids used to stay at they house. You know, stay at the house, go over there just to be going. They went after the [program]... [After a while] you go in their house, you see

picture of my kids on they table with they kids. So, that's how I knew, that's come we start coming tight….they became like a family."

Now Kevin often informally meets with David to "shoot the breeze." Kevin's relationships with program staff have, overtime, given him access to participatory elements of program design. Kevin explains that his responsibility in the program grew overtime from staffing free health classes for the organization on the weekends to advising staff members on program activities. Kevin shares how his responsibilities grew overtime,

> "Basically when I first started, I wasn't vocal like I was. I just used to watch and see things. I started getting vocal when, they used to have where they do classes here for the community. They give free classes. It was like, some of the staff couldn't be here to do it and David came to me, asked can you, can you run it and do it. Yeah. So, we did it like every Saturday."

Kevin then became a regular fieldtrip chaperone. He chuckles as he shares how he assumed the responsibility of looking after the trouble-makers on field trips.

> "Yeah, then, then we used to go on the field trips and everything. I would get my own group al of a sudden. At one point, we go on field trips, let me see how can I put this one? The kids that didn't want to listen, I got all of them "

Kevin currently acts as an informal advisor to David and Derrick in the sports program. His son plays for the Progress basketball team and he usually attends a weekly practice to watch him play. Kevin is often recruited to help solve problems that arise among the players. He recalls what occurred during his last practice.

> It was stuff happening at practice, and me, David, and Derrick got together that morning and talked about how to handle a situation…..About like the discipline with the boys….But it's more like a role uh, seeing things and me and David sit there and watch things, and we discuss it. If something bothering, I tell him, or if I think about it I'll let him know. Or he'll be like, Oh I was thinking the same thing, and we'll talk to Derrick bout it.

Kevin is a valued member of Progress and has assumed staff like responsibilities in program activities. In his informal path to a leadership role has also led to more formal leadership

opportunities. Kevin has also been asked to serve on the Parent Advisory Council, a powerful

decision making council within the afterschool program.

Parent Advisory Council

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) consists of eight to ten "committed" parents that

have decision-making power within the program. The PAC was created two years ago to

incorporate parent feedback into afterschool programming. David explains, "rather than just

having a program that's delivered to your kids, [parents] have a chance to help shape that

program"

The council meets once a month to discuss a big question posed by Progress's youth

leadership team. The "big question" discourse usually involves developing a program policy

ranging from a new security policy to creating a disciplinary guidelines for afterschool students,

Amanda elaborates on the purpose of the PAC and recent decisions made by the council

regarding discipline within the program.

> "We really try to you know just work through some tangible issues that we have in the
> program and let them brainstorm on how they should be fixed… So the behavior policy
> was one of the things the parent committee wanted to change about Progress. And they
> felt like last year what we did was way too many chances for kids and so um they feel
> like the Progress program should be an elite program and because of the fact it is such a
> huge waiting list for kids who want to be in the program, you know there's no reason that
> we should be keeping kids that are ruining the culture because of their negative behavior
> who are ruining that culture there's no reason we should keep them around um
> indefinitely because we feel bad or we feel sorry for them or all of that because,
> inadvertently, it ruins the experience for the other students around them and so um. So
> yeah it was a change with the parent advisory committee made this year "

More broadly the parent advisory council (PAC) shapes the "culture" of the afterschool program.

Lauren the pre-school director and director of K-2nd afterschool care explains the role of the PAC

> "The parent advisory board is new within the last few years and their role has developed
> in the last years but the parent advisory board kind of as it is now um is a space for a
> committed group of parents to voice what they think the Progress culture should be. Uh
> whether it's being maintained um give idea or suggestions for way for Progress to
> strength their involvement um in the lives of the youth and the community at large. They

are apart of um projecting the Progress youth department mission and vision for the future…"

Membership on the PAC often leads to addition volunteer opportunities within the program and in the community. Brandy describes how she became more involved in the program through the council.

"I was elated that they asked me to be a part of this committee. So now that we are an official committee of the Progress Youth program they ask that you volunteer more, which was not a problem for me not all because I personally wanted to find more way to get involved and so this kind of created that avenue for me to get more involved. So now the people who volunteer at the welcome center is the parent advisory committee. So we take turns throughout the week um sitting at the desk.."

Council members take on roles within of the afterschool program's daily activities. These parents sit in on staff meetings and staff the welcome center, the administrative hub of the afterschool program during program hours. Brandy is a member of the PAC and volunteers in the afterschool program on Wednesday and Fridays. She describes the brief staff meetings called "huddles" that she attends and her responsibilities at the Welcome Center.

"It was time for the huddle and so the staff goes into like these brief meetings before the kids come in and the staff and the volunteers well not all the volunteers but I'm a volunteer and I guess I'm apart of the huddle because of what I do. Um on Wednesdays and Fridays I sit at the welcome center. That's the front desk um on the second floor, so I'm apart of the huddle to know if there's anything new that I need to know for that position so then there's the huddle and then I went to the desk. I was there until the end of program. The kids come in, I had, if there is any children who gets in trouble they get sent to me and so that day I had maybe 3."

Brandy sits at the Welcome Center till about 6:15, she then rides the bus home with her children. During her time at the Welcome Center, she deals with children who are having behavior issues. She briefly details how she works with children who get sent to her during program time. This particular day she watched a child cool off after getting in trouble in class.

"Ms. Carol had some behavior issues with a few of her students. So she would bring them out and say um this one needs to sit here until he gets it together and I'll come back and get him…. There was one….his name was Andrew I talked to him. And he wanted he

kept blaming another child for why he got put out and I just needed him to understand that he needed to take ownership for his own actions. Um because he didn't get put out because of something someone else did, he got put out because of what he did and I needed him to understand that…so I was trying to get him to understand you know the areas of his own ways and he kind of calmed down and she came back and got him and everything was fine."

Parents that have demonstrated high levels of commitment through forging personal ties with program staff are offered a leadership role within the program in addition to "staff" like responsibilities during program hours. Brandy considers the staff "life long friends." She has developed deeper personal relationships with staff members overtime. She explains the depth and nature of this relationship.

"In getting to know Progress as a whole I have created…life long friendships with the staff….I can call any of them about just about anything. And we can talk and they are there for me, they have been supportive of some of the personal things that I've gone through and it has been important to me to have a support system and they have been that for me. ….And they support you and they are there for you and they want you to succeed they want your children to succeed…."

In Brandy's case, these ties have given her access to daily staff meetings and have yielded a position for her a parental "guidance" counselor for students during afterschool program hours. Furthermore, she serves as an administrative support by taking on small projects and facilitating communication between teachers, staff members, parents, and program visitors.

In the main, the Progress afterschool program is a multilevel parent partnership that incorporates bureaucratic and participatory elements of program design. Parents typically experience a bureaucratic program when enrolling their child into afterschool care. Parents are exposed to straightforward application process, cursory program interactions, and monthly staff contacts that are professional and child centered. Program experiences change as parents decide their level of program involvement. Parents can choose to foster personal relationships with staff, which often yields additional resources and support outside of the scope of after

school care. Parents who cultivate relationships with staff through causal conversations and more personal connections experience a supportive bureaucratic partnership where staff connect parents to resources and material assistance.

Finally staff selected a group of "committed parents" for leadership opportunities within the program.   This select group of parents experiences a "selective participatory partnership" where they are incorporated in program decision-making processes and invited to assume responsibilities in day- to-day programming. This can occur informally overtime or through more formal avenues where parents are selected to serve on the formal parent decision-making body, the Parent Advisory council. As a decision-making body, the PAC develops policies and procedures that are implemented in the afterschool program. Moreover, membership on the council leads to additional leadership and volunteer opportunities within the program. Parents essentially become extensions of program staff.

Conclusion

In contrast to the current description of program design as a uniform "type", parents' experiences at Progress and South End's afterschool program illustrate continuum of program experiences. Program experiences are not static but are a dynamic interaction between staff and parent discretion. Parents determine the nature of program involvement, which is largely relational, and these choices yield distinct program experiences that range from material assistance and support from the staff to access to leadership opportunities. Parents at both centers encounter primarily bureaucratic program. However, each program becomes more personal, supportive, and or participatory as parents develop personal rapport with staff members.

Service Context and Program Design

Tiered program experiences are also a result of service context, namely the guidelines of government grants and the organization's objectives for service provision. I find that service context informs the typical program experience for parents. As a 21st Century Community Learning Center, Progress' after school program is required to engage and record parent involvement. Thus, parent's baseline program experiences involve consistent staff initiated contact. In contrast, South End's funding parameters do not require parent contact from the staff and parents initiate interactions with staff.

Furthermore, these two programs have distinct service objectives that influence how the staff interacts with parents. The staff at South End focuses on the professional delivery of childcare services to its clients. Thus interactions with parents are cursory professional and child centered. On the other hand, Progress integrates parents into is greater objective of neighborhood transformation through youth development services. Parents are viewed an integral part of student success and ultimately the transformation of Westfield. As a result, there are higher expectations for parental involvement and additional opportunities for parent leadership within the program.

Reducing Political Inequality through Welfare Privatization

Given that each program incorporates bureaucratic and participatory aspects of program design, proponents of the feedback perspective would contend that these programs foster client agency in service receipt and cultivate political voice in broader contexts. As such, federal support for program like these challenges the current argument in welfare research, which contends that public policies targeting low income populations repress political voice and diminish the representation of the poor in political processes (Soss and Jacobs 2009; Campbell 2012). On the contrary, these subsidized programs maximize client agency throughout their

program experiences.   By funding programs like these, the government may be supporting the development of political voice among the poor and reshaping political behavior among this demographic.

Government support of potentially mobilizing nonprofit service providers has its caveats. Although some research on NSPs suggests that government funding increases the amount of participatory opportunities to clients, the evidence here indicates that different government grants have divergent effects on client participation opportunities. The 21st century grant promotes parental involvement as a means of supporting youth academic enrichment in ways that CCDF grant does not. In contrast, the CCDF block grant is a work support that subsidizes childcare for the working poor, incorporating parental involvement into program activities is not required to receive funding.

Bundling government grants to fund programs also complicates the consequences of government funding on service provision. Organizations that are supported by multiple government grants may design program that reflect an array of competing or complementary government objectives. Additional research that explores how these streams of government support influence service delivery may be useful to clarify how privatization confounds or engenders political participation among clientele.

Chapter 5

Interpretive Feedback Effects of Nonprofit Service Providers

"[The center] makes me want to move….Yeah, cause it's just, I mean even before then I wanted to move, because it's just so violent over there. It's like I cannot let my kids ride they bikes up and down the street without nobody getting shot or anything. Nothing changed."

-Sharon, single mother of three and South End parent

"I mean don't get me wrong Westfield has its issues but um to see the impact that Progress alone has on this community…. So I see how Progress is centered right here but in this radius of this community their having an impact and so to me it says that it may look this way right now but there's still hope"

-Brandy, mother of three and long-time Progress parent

Sharon and Brandy live in two of the poorest and dangerous neighborhoods in Chicago. Sharon is from South End, a notoriously violent community that faces high unemployment and acute poverty. Last year, nearly 20 percent of South End residents were unemployed, almost 30 percent lived below the poverty line, and there were 475 incidents of violent crime. However, the neighborhood is "up and coming." Gentrification efforts from a local university have brought new schools, businesses, and multi-level apartment complexes to South End. Still, abandoned buildings and lots are sprinkled throughout South End's blocks, concerning residents who worry about increased criminal activity. Brandy is from Westfield, where nearly 40 percent of residents live below the poverty line and almost 30 percent have less than a high school education. Westfield is known for drug trafficking and has picked up the reputation as a heroin trap. In 2013 there were nearly 2,000 reports of narcotic use and sale in the neighborhood.

Westfield also has one of the highest homicide rates in the city of Chicago.

Despite the challenges these mothers face in these communities, their responses to neighborhood conditions are distinct. Sharon expresses deep dissatisfaction with South End and a desire to leave, while Brandy remains hopeful about the future of Westfield. Both mothers use afterschool care provided by Progress and South End, yet these two centers distinctly influence how they perceive their neighborhood. For Sharon, the community center does not change her desire to leave South End. In fact, it reinforces her sentiment of withdrawal. Brandy has a more optimistic view of Progress's role in the neighborhood and alludes to the changes the program has made in Westfield. She views change in Westfield as promising and feasible.

In this chapter, I combine the insights of community and social psychology to explore the ways in which involvement in two afterschool programs influences parents' perspectives regarding their communities and efficacy beliefs around civic and political action within their neighborhoods. I argue that nonprofits teach alternative lessons that are place-based, supplying parents with information about neighborhood conditions and signaling to parents their capacity to address neighborhood problems.

"Place-Based" Messages: Organizational Messages about Neighborhood Context

Schneider and Ingram (2009) define the interpretive feedback effects of policy design as messages about the responsibilities of the government, distinctions between the deserving and undeserving, and the appropriate forms of political participation in democratic societies. These messages can either encourage participation or foster withdrawal and political passivity (Ingram and Schneider 1993 72).

Policy feedback scholars have explored these insights by drawing connections between the authority structures of various means-tested and universal public programs and have

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developed a typology of program design that emphasizes client agency throughout their

interactions with public bureaucracies and the extent to which programs reflect "fair procedures

and clear rules that protect client security, autonomy, and voice." (Bruch et. al. 2010).

While this line of research is useful in shedding light on how more formal elements of

program design shape client program experiences and broader political behavior, these insights

are limited in deepening our understanding of how NPOs communicate messages about

citizenship and "appropriate forms of political participation." Geography is a key component of

nonprofit service context as a number of NPOs are community-based organizations.

Soss and Jacob (2009) argue that poor neighborhoods reinforce resource deficits and

patterns of political marginalization among the economically advantaged. Yet the policy

feedback research has not considered how neighborhood contexts influences interactions with

welfare bureaucracies and political behavior. For nonprofit community based service providers,

neighborhood context matters. Organizations can engage neighborhoods with community

building objectives or narrow service provision aims both sets of aims can shape how clients

interact with these service providers and political behavior (Marwell 2004).

Community psychologist's concept of "empowerment" is useful in understanding how

neighborhood context can inform non-profit service provision; these scholars situate

organizations within a neighborhood context and examine organizational characteristics and

efforts that "empower" individuals toward action. Empowerment is defined as a process by

which individuals gain control over their lives and a critical awareness of their environment

(Zimmerman et. al. 1992; Zimmerman 1995). On an individual level, empowerment consists of

three components: intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral. The intrapersonal component of

empowerment refers to an individual's perceived capacity to influence and change social and

political systems, while the interactional aspect of empowerment refers to transactions between a person and environments that enable one to successfully master social or political systems. This includes knowledge about the resources needed to achieve goals, understanding causal agents, and a critical awareness of one's environment (Zimmerman et. al. 1992). Finally, the behavioral component of empowerment refers to the actions individuals take to influence their social and political environment.

Within the community context, scholars describe empowerment as including views about the "difficulty associated with trying to exert control over community problems " (Chavis and Wandersman 1990, 57). These views can motivate action or prompt fear of crime and social withdrawal (Chavis and Wandersman 1990). The concept of empowerment may be particularly germane to nonprofit social service providers as these organizations may work to increase awareness of neighborhood conditions and offer avenues for neighborhood improvement.

Proponents of the empowerment theory delineate a set of organizational characteristics that may empower individuals across a set of psychological, economic, and political domains. Accordingly, organizations empower members through a positive strength-based belief system that emphasizes capacity for action, inspiring and talented leadership, strong support systems, engaging core activities, and accessible opportunity structures that incorporate member's voices into decision making (Maton 2008). Collectively, these organizational characteristics can strengthen individuals perceived capacity to influence external environments and equip individuals with resources, knowledge, and skills for action. Nonprofit service providers may possess these organizational characteristics that empower clients.

Community Psychology: Group-Based Belief Systems

For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on how afterschool programs empower parents

through positive belief systems about neighborhood context. Maton (2008) points to the importance of group-based belief systems in imparting psychological "awareness and motivation" needed for action (Maton and Salem 1995; Hur 2006). He and his colleague describe a group-based belief system as "setting's ideology, values, or culture" that can identify behaviors that produce desired outcomes (Maton and Salem 1995; Maton 2008).

Belief systems that "empower" and inspire growth, are strength based, and encourage members to a goal that is beyond self. Clearly defined goals and means for achieving goals inspire growth, while "strengths-based" belief systems emphasize the capacity and strength of each member to achieve goals and identify members as a key resource in goal attainment efforts. Empowering group-based belief systems also encourage members to look beyond themselves and align with a broader humanitarian or spiritual mission. Maton and Salem (1995) contend that group belief systems incorporate members "needs, problems, and potential, and how they can work within the setting to achieve personal goals" (639). Furthermore, group-based belief systems, "provide goals and norms that are capable of motivating, guiding, and sustaining member change efforts" (640).

I broaden this conception of group-based beliefs to include organization's views of the neighborhood, its respective role within the community, and parent's capacity to change neighborhood conditions. I find that the staff at South End and Progress develop an "organizational belief system" in response to the neighborhood context that consists of perceptions of the neighborhood, the organization's role within the community, and parent's roles in addressing neighborhood conditions. These organizations communicate these beliefs systems more broadly through organizational action within their neighborhood context. Parents assess the feasibility of change by observing the organizations response to distressed

neighborhood conditions. Where neighborhood change is evident, greater levels of efficacy among parents follow. This is especially prevalent when the organization offers parents opportunities to engage in community work.

Modeling Responses to Neighborhood Context: How Organizations Shape Efficacy Beliefs

Social cognitive frameworks explored in the organizational context uncover how programs may shape efficacy beliefs and subsequent behavior. Wood and Bandura (1989) define self-efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet the given situational demands" (Wood and Bandura 1989, 408). Researchers regard efficacy as a motivation construct that can influence thought patterns, emotional reactions. inform the use of skills, ingenuity, and resourcefulness (Gist and Mitchell 1992; Bandura 1986; Wood and Bandura 1989). Social psychologists also suggest that external environments can shape efficacy beliefs (Bandura 1986; 1989; 1991). Efficacy around specific tasks can be manipulated by external cues regarding attributes of certain task (i.e. the complexity of tasks, interdependence of tasks, and the resources and effort needed for task performance) and the uncertainty of tasks and environments (risks and dangers) (Bandura, 1986; 1989; 1991). As people become more aware of what causes effective performance and believe that these causes are subject to their control, self-efficacy increases.

Social psychologists also note the importance of modeling behavior, mastery, social persuasion, and emotional arousal in shaping efficacy beliefs (Wood and Bandura 1989; Bandura 1991). Mastery refers to past experiences with a particular task, past success and failures may influence one's perceived ability to execute a task. Modeling—observing the effective strategies of others for managing different situations— may reduce uncertainty surrounding task performance, while social persuasion, through coaching or counseling, can clarify strategies that

may increase performance. Finally, self-efficacy can be augmented by emotional arousal and tension. Individuals may associate a task with negative feelings of fear and anxiety, affecting performance.

Organizations can intervene in the development of efficacy beliefs by offering cues regarding specific task performance, and capability (Gist and Mitchell 1992; Bandura 1991). Organizations can also model appropriate behavior, offer opportunities to master behavior, and help individuals to develop practical strategies for executing task and manage emotional responses to task execution (Wood and Bandura 1989; Mitchell and Gist 1992).

For the parents of South End and Westfield, these two afterschool programs communicate belief systems about neighborhood conditions and the feasibility of neighborhood change through their actions within the community. Parents use their interpretation the program's community involvement to develop their own efficacy beliefs around improving the neighborhood. In this sense, these afterschool programs lead by example by communicating distinct messages to parents about appropriate and effective means of neighborhood transformation. In doing so, these programs set behavioral norms, modeling behavior, and, in one case, offering opportunities for civic and political engagement.

Where the organization is instrumental in changing the community, parents develop stronger efficacy beliefs about community change and, in some instances, translate positive efficacy beliefs into civic and political action. Conversely, when the organization is less active in improving neighborhood conditions, parents express cynicism and weaker efficacy around community change and involvement.

Organizational Belief Systems:

The staff at South End and Progress develop an "organizational belief system" in response to the neighborhood context that consists of perceptions of the neighborhood and the organization's role within the community. Although Progress and the South End Community center are highly valued institutions in their respective communities, the two organizations have distinct perspectives regarding their surrounding neighborhood. The staff at South End considers the neighborhood a threat to the safety of South End residents and views the afterschool program as a "safe haven" for neighborhood children. In contrast, the staff at the Progress afterschool program characterizes the neighborhood as an opportunity for transformation, regards itself as a catalyst of neighborhood transformation, and views parents an integral to improving neighborhood conditions.

South End Center: Protective Safe Haven

In a neighborhood distressed by unemployment, gang violence, and abandoned buildings, the young staff at the South End center regard themselves as a paramount resource to the community. South End staff view the afterschool program as a positive environment for children in a violent neighborhood. John expresses this perspective by characterizing the neighborhood as a "challenged community," contrasting the neighborhood's deteriorating conditions and bad influences with the "light" the center offers.

> "Well, this is, um, what you call, uh, uh, a challenged community. So, you have people on the outside that could care less about recreational things, could care less about school, could care less about behavior, could care less about anything in life. And so, they can be influences to people that's trying to do something, or trying to make something happen, or trying to be encouraging and so forth….. when you don't have a community that's backing it. When you got everybody that's against it….it's a community that needs some improvements, that needs some buildings not boarded up, needs some people, some, some grass, some, some things that's in place. So if we can provide that light or that atmosphere, whereas the kids feel like that they can grow, then that's what we try to do"

The problems that plague the neighborhood shape how the staff view the mission of the afterschool program. The formally stated objective of the afterschool program is to,

> "Provide children a safe, stimulating environment afterschool where they can develop in a positive manner" through "age-appropriate activities that include, social, physical, creative, and emotional opportunities,"

However, the staff rearticulate this general mission in response to neighborhood violence. Providing safety for neighborhood children is the chief objective of the afterschool program. Ms. Kayla restates the mission in her own words.

> "Well, it's, our mission is to basically, to get our community to be more healthier, and like, to provide a place for like teens, cause in this community it's like, a lot going on. So it's kind of like a safe haven for kids so they won't be like   out on street just doing anything. So I mean, I'm just gone be real with you. It's a lot of shootings and stuff going around. Kids be fighting each other. We done had fights that had to come in here. We had to break up some stuff, like, I don't know. I live in this community, but it ain't the most best community, now. So, it's kind of like a safe haven for the kids."

Another youth worker echoes this sentiment. The afterschool program protects neighborhood children from the violence of "the streets,"

> "The mission of the South End Community Center, mmm, mission of the [program] is to provide for the, you know, the community and make sure there's a place for the children to go once they out of school, and have somewhere to go so they won't be in the streets, you know, being harmed. A lot of stuff going around. A lot of killing. So, our mission is to provide a safe environment for the youth when they're out of school and when they're out on summer break, they can come here and play basketball and go swimming, and stuff."

As a "safe haven," the South End afterschool program does minimal community work outside of the center. Its community outreach efforts consist of inviting community members to participate in the programs and activities that are inside the center**.** Ms. Kayla describes "free days." These are opportunities offered by the center to neighborhood residents to use the facilities free of charge. She explains,

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> "We have…the free days where they allow the community and the children to come in and do activities for those who are not members. They, um, have different activities. They have the free things outside for the community such as the basketball court and the new playground they built out back."

For members of the center, additional resources include family nights, professional development services, and fitness and recreational opportunities. Family nights are designed to give parents and children opportunities to spend quality time together. Ms. Celeste, the director of the program describes the family night in greater detail,

> "Yeah, we, the center, the center offers family nights…. sometimes it'll be a family movie night. And then you and your family come in if you're a member or whatever…We watch movies, and we have popcorn and, you know, little refreshments for to you like, sit and watch a movie. On some family nights you bring your family and you come in and we have a game day. And we play all board games…"

Neighborhood change is not a priority for the staff at South End, thus the program's outreach efforts emphasize recreational programming and activities for the neighborhood within the center.   As a safe-haven, neighborhood residents are encouraged to come "inside" to use center facilities and resources and staff do not engage in programming or activities "outside" in the community.

South End's beliefs system regarding neighborhood context is not oriented towards neighborhood change. The staff uniformly emphasize insurmountable neighborhood obstacles and characterize the goal of the afterschool program as providing safety in a dangerous neighborhood context. Consequently, the desired goal and vision of the organization is narrow, focusing primarily on the safety of children enrolled in the program. Parents are not integral in pursuing this goal, the center provides this as a resource to parents.

Progress Youth Development Corp: Community Transformation

In contrast to South End's protective role within its neighborhood, Progress Youth

Development Corp characterizes itself as an avenue of neighborhood transformation in

Westfield. The staff view the neighborhood as a promising community and integrate a faith-

based objective of neighborhood transformation through Christian service. In a sense, the

neighborhood reflects an opportunity to be the "hands and feet" of Jesus. Alice further

elaborates on the staff's mission for the afterschool program,

> "I think it's pretty much to be um kind of be the hands and feet quote on quote of
> Jesus[…] by offering[…]a place to come along side people in the 70843 zip code[…] to
> kind of better bring about the kingdom of God in Westfield."

Lauren also views the neighborhood through a hopeful lens. From her perspective, Westfield is

"a rising " community with potential. She explains why she loves the neighborhood and her

position at Progress. She hopes to empower parents to realize the "hope and potential for their

children."

> "I'm passionate about being apart of a community that's rising and where kids and
> families love to learn and grow and find new possibilities for themselves and life […] So
> I love being a part of the community [...] But um I just love the opportunity to walk along
> side them, to just help them to realize that they have choices and that there's so much
> hope and potential for their children."

Progress achieves the goal of neighborhood transformation through academic tutoring, literacy

instruction, and positive adult mentoring. Together, these elements equip a cohort of "change

agents" to transform Westfield into a "place where success is the norm and families prosper."

Amanda, the director of the afterschool, articulates the program's objective as source of change

for the neighborhood. She offers her version of the mission.

> "I'll give you Amanda version. So its people and programs and those programs, those
> people can involve anybody from volunteers, parents, students, staff, donors, and then the

programs can involve anything from again the academic, the athletic, the arts and sciences, the spiritual formation um any of those types of programs. So the reason that we really want to include all of those people and all of those programs and all work together is for the sake of our students so that they…become healthy students. As they grow up, they have healthy families that can really make a difference in our neighborhood and can really just change those cycles of poverty that we currently see in our neighborhood. The agents of change."

For Alice, who serves as both the director of the creative arts program and a 5th grade teacher in the afterschool program, the program is designed to create and support a pipeline of students that are critical thinkers and potential role models in the neighborhood. Alice believes that Progress students have the capacity to bring back resources to the community. She shares her interpretation of the Progress mission.

"The youth department mission is to meet kids all along that pipeline all the way from 3 years old into college and post college. Kind of walk along side them to give them a network of consistent support in order for them to be able to be critical thinkers to be able to sustain themselves and eventually pour back into their community, to bring resources and be role models."

Derrick, the sports director and 4th grade teacher for the afterschool program also emphasizes transformation as a key program objective. The program is designed to alleviate poverty by changing one person at a time that, in turn, will change the community.

"Its mission is to basically help people come out of poverty too as well try to make success to norm…So the mission is to help like to address the poverty issues spiritually and in a physical sense, in an earthly sense….So um that's… the mission that's targeted in this area so Westfield's transforming one kid, one person at a time so they can um transform the community."

In contrast to South End's marginal role of parents in program objectives, parents play a key role in neighborhood transformation at Progress because they help ensure student's academic success. As David notes, "the parents have to have commitment. And at that point the staff can …. help open up the door [of opportunity]." Parent commitment to student success requires supporting

the student towards academic excellence, which often entails advocating for their children to ensure they have the best educational opportunities and supporting Progress academic programs by volunteering. Parents become a vital determinant of the "culture" of the program through these avenues.

Alice explains the importance of parents in maintaining the "Progress culture."

> "Progress is dependent on people….the culture is only existent if people live it out and so you know just parents are as much responsible to you know maintain and partake and believe the Progress culture and the staff member and student"

Distinct from South End's "protective" organizational belief system, Progress incorporates a positive assessment of neighborhood conditions, characterizing the neighborhood as promising with potential for growth and change. The belief system articulates a clear goal of neighborhood transformation through youth development programming and specifies a role for parents as key supports for students in achieving this aim. Finally, Progress has a broader vision that connects individual level student success to the both the broader spiritual mission of the organization and the long-term neighborhood conditions**.**

Parent Efficacy Beliefs

South End Parents: Despair, Withdrawal, and Retreat

Just as the South End staff expresses concerns about the neighborhood, parents share similar perspectives. Most parents express a pessimistic view about the neighborhood, citing violent crime as its biggest drawback.   Gentrification efforts from organizations, universities, and businesses have marginally improved neighborhood conditions. However, many South End parents still consider the neighborhood dangerous and unsafe for children. Tina moved out of the neighborhood years ago because of crime. She grew up in South End and attended high school near the center. For her the neighborhood has not changed much, it is still "hardcore."

"Yeah, I lived on 64th and Evergreen. And the neighborhood really hasn't changed since I was in grammar school. It's still a hardcore neighborhood. And, I'm just not comfortable like, [my children] just being outside riding their bike. It would never happen."

Crystal, a life long resident of South End, has mixed feelings about the neighborhood. On the one hand, she is aware of the violent crime in the neighborhood. However, she also recognizes positive changes in neighborhood conditions, namely the development efforts of local university. For her, the neighborhood is "up and coming."

"I have mixed feelings. ...I've known the bad and the good parts of the community. I mean, it's a lot of kids gang banging in the community. Um, they shoot. Um, yeah. Um, the good things are the programs like this. It's changing for the better to me, from what I've seen. For the past nineteen years, it's changing. …It's more up and coming. More, it looks much better. It used to look way, used to look raggedy…They been changing stuff. The university. This is their like, this is in their jurisdiction. So they change a lot. They build up a lot. They've knocked down a lot."

For other South End parents, these gradual changes in the neighborhood are insufficient; the neighborhood is not changing fast enough. Christine shares this perspective and compares the neighborhood of her youth to current neighborhood conditions.

"The neighborhood is changing. Not as fast as I would like it to be, but the neighborhood is changing. … When I was growing up, you know, I mean, there's still violence and different crimes going on. I think, um, I think it's getting better. Like I said, it's not getting better as fast as I would like it to, but it's starting to change."

South End's Involvement in Neighborhood Change

The scarcity of youth programs and South End's minimal involvement changing neighborhood conditions reinforces parent pessimisms about the community. Parents at the South End community center are eager to leave the neighborhood and involvement in the center's programs reinforces the perception of the community at an unsafe place for children and families. For South End parents, the afterschool program represents the scarcity of youth enriching activities in very dangerous neighborhood. In many cases, South End's programs are

the only option for parents. This scarcity, along, with persistent neighborhood violence cultivate

a sentiment of withdrawal. Simply stated, parents want to leave the neighborhood because is has

little to offer their children. The center does little to change this view because it is not actively

involved in improving neighborhood conditions. This sentiment is echoed by Sharon, a young

mother of two. In her evaluation of the center and the neighborhood she notes,

> "[The center] really hasn't changed the way I feel about the neighborhood, because to me it's still the same. They, we need, even though you have to pay for this, they don't have any type of special activities for children. You have to pay for, pay for something that cost a arm and a leg. If you can't get help for, there's no activities in the neighborhood for kids. Like the Park District, they don't, they don't even open Park District hours now. So it's best, the best thing you can get and hope for, is to do for is this center, or some type of program where so they help out in the community, but there are none."

For Sharon, involvement in the center's programs does not change her perception of the

neighborhood, because the center is not changing the neighborhood. For her, the neighborhood is

the same and activities for neighborhood children are scarce, resulting in frustration as a parent.

> "[The center] makes me want to move….Yeah, cause it's just, I mean even before then I wanted to move, because it's just so violent over there. It's like I cannot let my kids ride they bikes up and down the street without nobody getting shot or anything. Nothing changed…Well, I mean, I just wish our neighborhood was different because, like at this time it's kind of, I don't want my sons to grow up around there. But at, you know, at the same time, it's like, you know, I'm not making enough for us to move. I know no where is safer, but you know, it's kind of, real dangerous around in our neighborhood."

Tiffani highlights the role of the center in creating safety. Although the center does not change

how she feels about her neighborhood, she values the role the center plays in offering her

children safe spaces to play. She would never let her children ride their bike outside, but she

regards the center as "inside," away from the dangers of the neighborhood. "….We're inside.

You know. Um, they go outside and play in the park here [...]"

Katrina similarly comments on the center's position as a positive safe place for neighborhood residents. The center offers a constructive option for youth who would otherwise do "whatever they can get into."

> "You know it's so much violence going on up and down this area…So when you say the neighborhood, I'm like, well this is a positive part of the neighborhood. I think the neighborhood would be worse off without it. Without the center here. Yeah…Because some of the young men who come here to play basketball, they wouldn't have this place to go? So, where would they go? They would be out there. Doing what? Whatever they can get into."

Christine also notes the role of the center as one of few safe places for her daughter to play. Because of the violence in the neighborhood, the center and family are her only options.

> "It's you know, it's still, you know, kind of rough over there. That's why Jasmine wouldn't be outside or different things like that. That's why she don't have those options to play and things like that. If it's not the center or family then, you know [...]"

The center, as a "safe haven" for the community, does not positively shape parent's perceptions of their neighborhood or inspire individual action towards community change. The center is not the source of neighborhood change, but is viewed as the remaining resource to residents coping with persistent violence. Its "safe haven" focus and inaction towards ameliorating neighborhood conditions, reinforces parents pessimism about the community and weak efficacy beliefs about neighborhood change. Simply stated, South End's after school program reinforces the message to parents that neighborhood resources are scarce and that change is slow, marginal, and unattainable in South End.

Progress Parents: Hope and Community Involvement

The Progress afterschool program communicates a positive belief system about Westfield, namely the feasibility of change and how parents can take part in improving neighborhood conditions. Progress models effective means for neighborhood improvement

through its academic program and community outreach efforts. Westfield residents become

hopeful and invested their community because they see change in neighborhood and are often

invited to partner with the organization in community work. Although Progress parents

acknowledge the dangers of gang violence and drugs within their community, parents see

potential for change and are motivated to action. For instance Brandy, a mother of three,

comments on how the changes in Westfield gives her hope for the children in the neighborhood.

She explains,

> "I mean don't get me wrong Westfield has its issues but to see the impact that Progress alone has on this community […] I look at some of the children who just kind of hang out in the streets or the ones who dropped out of school. I see them and then you know on one hand I'm like wow like feeling kind of hopeless for them but then Progress does this basketball tournament every summer and so the streets are empty because the boys are going to play basketball. So I see how Progress is centered right here but in this radius of this community their having an impact and so to me it says that it may look this way right now but there's still hope."

By getting children off the streets, Progress conveys to Brandy that change is possible in

Westfield.

Naomi, a single mother of three and now part time Progress employee, expresses similar

hopes about the neighborhood. Naomi's mother, who was once a volunteer, first introduced

Naomi to the program. She enrolled her oldest son in the Progress pre-school program years ago.

He is now a fourth grader in the afterschool program. Her program experiences give her

confidence that the neighborhood can overcome violence and crime. She emphasizes the

sacrifices made by the Progress staff to "raise up" the residents of Westfield and hopes that the

"helping" behaviors of the staff will positively influence neighborhood residents to "care about

themselves" and the community at large.

> "[Progress] gives me hope that as a community we can overcome this, this gang culture, this drug culture, and this, this homicide rate. It lets me know that there are people that move their families in this neighborhood when they don't have to. Clearly they don't have to be

here, but they care enough to try to raise us up. So, [I'm] hoping it'll rub off on somebody and hoping they'll learn to care about themselves, and help these people out that's trying to help them."

For Monique, Progress has kept children off of the streets. In addition to diminishing the number of unsupervised children in the neighborhood, she also notes the program's influence on children's behavior and makes a clear distinction between Progress students and neighborhood children.

> "I didn't see a lot of children on the street. You know, at different times of the day I didn't see that. And, I can say that a lot of children in the community are a part of Progress. …. I've seen a big difference in this area when I did live here. I didn't see a lot of kids running up and down the street. Kids were more, the children that I recognize, that I knew were a part of Progress were more well-mannered, well respectful. I knew there was big difference. I knew there was a big difference from a Progress child to a non-Progress kid."

Taken together, changes stemming from the Progress afterschool program and outreach efforts offer cues to parents around the possibility of change and effective avenues for neighborhood transformation. Because the organization has demonstrated that change is possible, Progress parents are optimistic that, collectively, the residents of the neighborhood can change Westfield.

Marshaling Positive Efficacy Beliefs for Civic and Political Action

Positive assessments of the neighborhood and the organizations work within the community were universal across Progress parents. However, a few parents attribute their experiences in the program to their own individual efficacy beliefs and motivation for political and civic action. For example, Rebecca has four children that are enrolled in Progress youth programs and has volunteered at the center and in the pre-school and afterschool program. For her, the program changed the way she views the neighborhood and children. Rebecca now views children as connected to the long-term welfare of Westfield. Her way ensuring the future safety

of the neighborhood is to change the life paths of neighborhood children through a book club.

She explains how and why she started her the book club.

> "I do a lot of more work with the kids in my neighborhood. In the summer time I have a book club. So I go to the library and whatever book I can find…like maybe like six or seven copies I'll get them. We'll all read the book together, we'll all talk about the book together… Most of the kids on the block call me mom. If they're not at school then they're hiding from me they know I'm like 'why are you not in school, go to school [...] So it makes me and it made me realize that just because my kids are okay today first of all they may not be okay tomorrow but the other kids that I'm watching grow up and I'm seeing at this age in 20 years when my kids are 30 these kids are going to also be 30. So I would rather put 15 minutes of time in now to steer them on a different path then when they're 30 I have to worry about them robbing me. So it made me look at the kids and the neighborhood and our surroundings a totally different way."

Rebecca sees investing in children today as an investment in the future safety of her

neighborhood and attributes this shift in perspective to Progress.

In Kevin's case, the organization "did good things for the neighborhood," signaling

possibility of neighborhood change and "it felt good to [be] apart of it." Progress offered

"mastery opportunities" by partnering with Kevin in the neighborhood transformation process

through collective political action. Kevin, a long-time Westfield resident, has 12 years of

program experience; all five of his children have been enrolled in the afterschool program. Kevin

describes how he worked alongside Progress staff to get the "drugs off the street" and to install a

speed bump on the block. This entailed working with local police, calling his local alderman, and

visiting the alderman's office. He shares his experience,

> "They did good things for the neighborhood, and it feel good that I was a part of it. Like putting, we was a part of putting the street bump, the speed bump down. We was a part of getting the drugs off the street, getting the signs up, working with the police department. And that's how it really influenced, cause we all worked together for it […]We had to go up there and talk to the alderman, call the alderman office. The speed bump… without the speed bumps, we would have had a tragedy every year here."

Just as Progress staff view the organization as an avenue for neighborhood transformation, the

parents of Progress view the youth program as a source of change in Westfield. Parents observe

the changes in the community stemming from Progress', adopt the organization's mission of community transformation, and integrate this message into the way they perceive their community and their capacity to change neighborhood conditions. Additionally, Progress offers parents opportunities to become involved in neighborhood transformation and inspires further community engagement.

Conclusion/Discussion

Just as public welfare bureaucracies convey messages about citizenship and political engagement (Schneider and Ingram 1995; Soss 2001; Mettler, 2001), community based nonprofit programs similarly communicate messages about appropriate political behavior. In particular, community based nonprofit service providers send distinct messages about its surrounding neighborhood and effective means to improve neighborhood conditions. These messages are informed by the organization's belief system, a set of beliefs that consists of perceptions of neighborhood conditions, the organization's role within the neighborhood context, and the capacity of parents to change the neighborhood. Positive organizational belief systems can empower parents to parents by providing the awareness and motivation needed for action (Manton and Salem, 1999; Hur, 2006).

South End's belief system characterizes the neighborhood as a dangerous threat to the well-being of families and views itself as a safe haven in the midst of neighborhood violence. Staff do not view the organization as a source of change in the neighborhood, but perceive the program as a valuable resource to neighborhood residents. South End's belief system does not speak to parents' capacity to improve neighborhood condition and, given South End's minimal community building efforts, parents have limited opportunities to engage in community work through their involvement with the organization.

In contrast, the Progress belief system is one of neighborhood transformation. Staff perceive the "potential" of Westfield and view the neighborhood as an opportunity for transformation. The organization is positioned as an agent of community change through the services it provides. Educational enrichment stemming from the afterschool program and outreach efforts, are designed to equip a cohort of students to change Westfield into a prospering and safe community for families.

In both cases, parents internalize these distinct belief systems through the work each organization does within their neighborhood context. In the same way that South End staff describe the protective role of the program, South End parents similarly regard the afterschool program as a "safe haven" for their children. Parents do not, however, view the program as a source of neighborhood change. Any positive changes in the neighborhood are attributed to the efforts of external organizations, universities, and businesses. Conversely, Progress parents view the Progress afterschool program as a catalyst of neighborhood transformation through its outreach efforts. Not only do parents attribute community change to the work of Progress, they can identify their role in these transformation efforts. Parents can support the educational enrichment offered by the program by volunteering in the afterschool program and partnering with Progress in community building work.

Each organization's work in the neighborhood conveys information to parents about the plausibility of neighborhood change and parents assess the work of these programs in developing their own sense of efficacy around improving the neighborhood. Where the organization is actively changing the neighborhood, parents express a shift in their view of the neighborhood, are hopeful in the future of their community, and believe in their capacity to positively affect the neighborhood. As a result, some engage in their own neighborhood transformation efforts, while

others partner with the organization in working with public officials to change neighborhood conditions. South End's limited community work reinforces pessimism about the state of the neighborhood. Because the organization is not actively or effectively changing its surrounding neighborhood, parents are pessimistic about the possibility of change in South End, express fear about the safety of their children in addition to their desire to leave the neighborhood.

This story of "placed based" interpretive effects of NSPs is emerging and incomplete. It describes the content of messages, how they are broadly communicated to the clients and how these massages inform parent's political efficacy beliefs and behaviors. It does not, however, offer deep insights regarding how these distinct organization beliefs arise within these two programs. For instance, the role of program mission in determining the organizational belief system is unclear. Progress offers a more direct connection between the program's mission and its community work as the community transformation objective is closely tied to the program's outreach efforts. The mission is further evidenced by the staff's reiteration of the program's transformational aims.

However, in South End's afterschool program, the tie between organizational mission and community work is less clear. Although the mission of the program is resource and service oriented, staff alter this mission to one of "safety" in a violent neighborhood. This unique reinterpretation of program mission suggests that staff characteristics may inform organizational belief systems and act as a key determinant in the nature of the organization's community outreach efforts. Most of the South End staff are life-long neighborhood residents and have a long history with the center as former students of the youth program and now members of the staff. It may be the case that staff's deeper connections to both the community and center color their perspectives of the organization's role within the neighborhood and modify the formal

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mission of the program.

This "home grown" dynamic is not present among the Progress staff. The program has less institutional history, having been established for less than 15 years in comparison to South End's 30 years in its community. Furthermore, the majority of staff members are not from the target community. Thus, the Progress staff may have different views of Westfield's challenges and potential than Westfield natives. Progress staff are also more diverse and bring various professional and educational experiences in service delivery. Some members of the staff have advanced degrees in nonprofit management and education and have completed various internships and training directed at urban community work. Simply stated, Progress staff are trained to approach distressed communities with an eye for community change in ways that South End staff are not. Although this analysis does not explore the implications of staff characteristics in detail, the future direction of this analysis includes as deeper examination of staff characteristics as key determinates of the "organizational belief" systems in each program.

Multiple Means of Communicating Messages

Evidence suggests that parents relied on the success of organization's community work as a strong cue regarding the feasibility of the neighborhood change; however there are additional paths of communicating cues at each center. Anecdotally, parents and staff at South End discussed crises in the community such as school closings, recent fights at the center, and incidents of violence in the neighborhood. These informal forms of communication may serve as an indirect cue of the organization's belief system. Progress more subtly conveys its transformation aims by printing the mission on all parent materials, from sign-up sheets to permission slips. In a more formal setting, Progress offers select parents exposure to the organization's mission and initiatives through parent leadership opportunities. Parents attend

staff and parent council meetings, where the organizational belief system is clearly communicated and parents are invited to take part in community initiatives.

These findings further contribute to the development the feedback framework by demonstrating that NSPs' organizational belief system about its surrounding neighborhood is instrumental in fostering positive and negative interpretive feedback processes among parents. The prevailing typology obscures the varied contexts and challenges of nonprofit service provision and staff adaptations to these factors, which ultimately shape feedback effects. Thus, integrating a meta-analytic category of program design that incorporates how the agency characterizes its role within its neighborhood context is warranted and useful in enriching our understanding of the interpretive effects of nonprofit program design.

Chapter 6

Resource Effects of Nonprofit Service Provision

Scholars have long explored the determinants of political participation and have largely surmised that individuals choose not to participate "because they can't, because they don't want to, or because nobody asked." (Verba, et. al.1991). Accordingly, political scientists have offered several explanatory models for participation. For instance, the rational choice model of participation posits that individuals calculate the cost and benefits of participating. This voter calculus produces the "paradox of voting," whereby citizens have minimal incentive to participate because the outcomes of elections will be the same whether they vote or not.

The mobilization model of participation solves the participation paradox posed by the rational voter calculus by incorporating social contexts that create opportunity structures for political participation. Political leaders recruit individuals for political participation indirectly through social networks and by more direct means via party contacting. Politicians overcome "rational ignorance" that deters participation by underwriting the costs of gathering information and minimizing the costs of participation through mobilization efforts. They provide information about important issues and subsidize the cost of participation by registering voters and distributing ballots.

Political scientists find that SES structures the level and nature of political mobilization. Individuals with high SES are more likely to experience mobilization through formal institutions and informal recruitment efforts through social networks (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

The Resource Model of participation also draws connections between SES and political activity. Verba and his colleagues (1995) develop a resource model that describes political participation as a function of time, money, and the civic skills, interests in politics, and networks of recruitment that mobilizes individuals to participate in politics (15). These key predictors of political participation are mediated by institutions (family, schools, employment, church, non-political organizations, etc.) which cultivate psychological engagements, serve as locus of recruitment activities, and help develop organization and communication skills that facilitate political activity (17).

The authors find stratification in skill building opportunities and demonstrate that individuals with high levels of education and income are more likely to have the civic skills necessary for political participation. The more affluent and educated are also more psychologically motivated to participate in political activities (Verba and Nie 1972; Almond and Verba 1963). Low-income populations are notably less politically active because they lack the communication and organizational skills for participation. Nonpolitical organizations and voluntary associations level the playing field for this population by offering opportunities to practice skills through "skill acts," engage in political discussions, and form social networks that may lead to recruitment into political activities.

While most political scientists would suggest that low income individuals choose not to participate because "they can't, the don't want to, or because nobody asked," I demonstrate a nonprofit afterschool program design diminishes these barriers to participation by equipping parents with the skills needed to participate and structuring opportunities for political participation. By applying the insights of the resource and mobilization participation models in the context of nonprofit program design, I enrich the extant policy feedback research that

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highlights the skill and resource building effects of public programs. I find that, in the context of subsidized afterschool care, NPOs may not only provide skill-building opportunities, but also facilitate political activity for parents.

Resources for Political Participation

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's resource model (1995b) combines the insights of social stratification theory and economic models of rational choice to identify mechanisms that link socioeconomic status to political activity. They find that SES informs resources available for political action. The authors define resources as time, money, and civic skills. Accordingly, individuals use time to work on campaigns, to write letters to a public official, or to attend a community meeting (272). Time varies as a function of life circumstances where having a full time job, a spouse with a job, having children at home, and preschool children diminishes the amount of free time available for participation. Money, as a resource, can be donated to candidates or political organizations and is concentrated among those who have higher status employment**.**

Civic skills are described as "those communication and organizational capacities that are so essential to political activity" and "citizens who can speak or write well or who are comfortable organizing and taking part in meetings are more likely to be more effective when they get involved in politics." Civic skills are acquired early in life from home environments and through school. These skills can also be developed through nonpolitical organizations such as the work place, voluntary associations, and churches. Participation in these nonpolitical organizations can increase the propensity of the individual to be a political participant because they give him or her an opportunity for training that can be "transferred to the political realm" (Verba and Nie 1972;184).

"Training" for political participation is accomplished by practicing "skill acts," activities that develop skills relevant to participatory acts. These skill acts include attending a meeting where you are a part of decision making, planning or chairing a meeting, giving a presentation or speech, and letter writing (Verba et. al 1993). The authors note that competence derived from practicing skill acts is not synonymous with a subjective feeling of competence, but rather "refers to concrete skills that are germane to participation" (Verba et. al 1993, 476).

Empirical research suggests that civic skill development is stratified. The well-educated are more likely to gain skills through employment and membership in voluntary associations (Brady, Verba, Schlozman 1995). However, skill-building opportunities are more widely distributed in the church context, where the affluent are as likely to engage in skill building activities as the less educated (Verba et. al 1993). Finally, Verba and his colleagues find that once civic skills are acquired and further developed, they are used in voting and time-based participatory acts (Brady, Verba, Schlozman 1995).

Resource Feedback Effects of NPOs

Policy feedback scholars contend that public policies can provide resources for political participation. For instance, Mettler and Soss (2002) suggest that that policies can build or undermine civic and political capacity among beneficiaries by creating material incentives for mobilization (beneficiaries may become active on political issues to protect or expand benefits) and by cultivating civic skills within the citizenry through education benefits. Andrea Campbell (2003) finds that low-income seniors receiving social security are as likely to vote as higher income seniors in the program. Campbell attributes this relationship to their material stake in receiving social security benefits and their membership in nonpolitical organizations and institutions such as the AARP and senior centers, which are targets of the recruitment for

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political activities. Furthermore, these organizations serve as sources of information and venues of political discussions.

I apply the insights of the resource and mobilization models and policy feedback research to nonprofit social service providers. As elements of civil society, I find that NPOs uniquely equip clients for political participation. Like voluntary organizations, nonprofits offer opportunities to organize events, participate in meetings, and discuss politics, all of which build interest and skills for political participation (Brady,Verba, Schlozman 1995). I focus on how an after school program provides resources to parents in the form of civic skills and creates opportunities for political participation. For a select group of parents, parental involvement in an afterschool program is a locus of skill development, where parents have the chance to practice skill acts through parent leadership, volunteer, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, NPOs facilitate time-based, skill intensive political acts such as meeting and deliberating with elected officials for parents.

Resource Deficits Among Progress Parents

To understand how the program confers resources to clients, it is useful identify resource deficits among Progress parents. Table 6.1 summarizes the parent characteristics at Progress.

Table 6.1. Progress Parent Characteristics	
Age	33
Race	100% African American
Marital Status	26% Married
	60% Single Parent
Number of Children	4
Age of Children	12
Education Level	12.9 years
Total Household Income	60% less than $20,000/year
	20% $20,000-$30,000/year
	18% $30,000 and above
Public Assistance	86%

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Political scientists have emphasized how education mediates the distribution of resources by strengthening interest in politics, cultivating civic skills for participation, and providing monetary resources for participation through access to higher paying employment (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). On average, the parents in my sample have less than high school education. Consequently, they are less likely to have developed the skills needed for political activity. With regards to contributing monetary resources to political candidates and issues, the majority of Progress parents have large families, make less than $30,000 annually and most have received some form of public assistance (e.g. food stamps, Medicaid and other means-tested programs). Thus, they are unlikely to contribute to electoral campaigns or issues based causes. Time is also scarce among Progress parents as most are employed and have school aged children, key factors that limit the time available to engage in political activity (Brady,Verba, Schlozman 1995).

Collectively, the characteristics of this subset of parents indicate that they would have lower levels of participation in comparison to other more educated and affluent individuals. In particular, these parents would have minimal opportunities to develop civic skills for political participation given their low levels of education. Furthermore, parents were not exposed to the skill building opportunities offered through church attendance. Church involvement was sporadic and parents that were regular church attenders did not actively serve on committees or participate in church related activities.

In what follows, I demonstrate how the Progress afterschool program makes political action accessible for this subset of parents that would be, by conventional standards, politically acquiescent. Through parent leadership, volunteering, and employment opportunities, a select

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group of parents gain "civic competence." That is, these parents acquire "concrete skills germane to participation" (Verba et. al. 1993, 476). The afterschool program fills skill deficits by allowing parents to hone organizational and communication skills needed for political action. Furthermore, the organization also provides opportunities for parents to participate in politics by facilitating connections with elected officials.

Parent Advisory Council

I. Skill Act 1: Attending Leadership Meetings

Progress offers participatory opportunities for most involved parents. Parents that have developed strong ties with the staff become extensions of program staff, taking on responsibilities in day-to-day program activities and becoming integrating in staff decision-making processes. Once parents gain access to these participatory elements of program design, they engage in skill acts that further develop skills necessary for political action. The Parent Advisor council offers on way for parents to practice politically relevant skills. The Parent Advisory Council is a key deliberative body of the afterschool program where parents can engage in the skill act of "attending leadership meetings" by participating in quarterly meetings to develop policies enacted in afterschool programming. The council's recent deliberative efforts were directed at revising the afterschool program's disciplinary policies. Sheila enrolled her daughter in the afterschool program 3 years ago and was asked to serve on the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) last year. She describes the typical discussions and responsibilities of the PAC which includes setting program rules and requirements for parents and students and managing administrative tasks as the parent welcome center during program hours,

> "With the advisory group, we kind of like get together and we kind of like talk about some of the things we were talking about earlier like the decisions about the rules and regulations of the parents with the kids enrollment we kind of like got the parent, the welcome committee set up through the advisory."

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In the recent revision of the disciplinary policies, parents view the existing policy as too lax. .

Christina's a mother of five and long-time Progress parent describes the limitations of the

previous disciplinary policy and how the program has "tightened up" disciplinary procedures.

> "yeah my opinion was they should um we can use grace but we want to make sure these
> children know what they need to be doing and doing everything else that they want to do.
> So for me as a mother and I'm sometimes kind of strict, there's things that they should be
> doing and if they're not doing them, …. they need to know what the consequences are
> and they need to be reinforced because that's what happens in work. I can't go to work
> and do whatever I want to do I have to do what I'm expected to do. Um I think they
> might may have been a little lenient in the past but I think they've tightened up on them
> probably within the last year."

Along with revising the disciplinary policies of the afterschool program, the PAC acts as a

gatekeeper to the "privilege" of free afterschool care**.** Students who are expelled from the

program have the option of returning to the following semester, providing that they and their

parents meet with the parent advisory council to plead their case, (i.e. demonstrate remorse for

poor behavior and the willingness to improve behavior in the future). Parents are encouraged to

develop plans with instructors on improving their child's behavior. The PAC reviews this plan

and decides whether the student can return to the program. The following is an excerpt from a

council meeting and illustrates the decision-making processes of the PAC and how parents

utilize communication and leadership skills in these meetings. The PAC discusses their recent

decisions around expulsion. Lauren and Amanda act as staff liaisons for PAC and facilitate the

discussions and a parent, Christina, reported to the group. Lauren acknowledges the leadership

authority of the council by implementing their revisions to the discipline policy. As requested by

the council, students with persistent behavior problems were expelled from the program.

> The group sits around a large white table, munching on slices of cheese pizza and
> sipping diet   cokes. Lauren begins the meeting, "We did follow through on the
> behavior initiative suggested by all of you… when we got back in January…"
> Brandy asks, "How many were expelled?" Lauren responds, "Eight, not everyone

decided to take us up on our offer; 6 kids came back. Christina was a part of it…I'll let her tell you more. Sorry to put you on the spot."

Christina then leads the discussion and offers a summary of the action of council members who were present in the meetings. She describes how parents and students were assessed in their efforts to reenter the program.

 "Well we were looking to see some type of remorse. What they would change, what it meant for them to be at Progress…that was a biggie. We got to hear from the parent, what they were going to do to help their child succeed and move forward. It went really well all things considered. The main thing, the one thing we were looking for was body language and that the child and parent really understanding why they were there. We looked at negative body language and whether the child was unresponsive. We were pretty tough. And we know some of the parents, well one, (Brandy is on the council her son was up for expulsion; the Parent Advisory Council decided not the allow him to return to the program) this was not an easy thing for any of us…we had to make hard decisions. She continues, "The two that stayed show the most remorse and understood the depth of what was going on. We had some strict stipulations for them. Once you're back no more strikes, red, yellow, green. We're requiring mom to come in once a month with the child…and she did. Parents should be required to volunteer at least once a month."

Finally, Christina presents the council's view of the program as a privilege that should be valued by the students. Lauren agrees as the two end the discussion.

 Christina responds, "….This is a privilege and kids need to take it…not take advantage of   it…" Lauren adds, "They wear Progress out in the neighborhood we want character displayed outside in other places… Brandy notes, "I have seen a huge difference in the ones who come back… they're realizing this could be it…   and they're one in particular is trying to change… other trying to pull her back, but she's definitely trying hard." Lauren comments, "It's a character building process even to have to do that."

Parents that are members of the Parent Advisory Council gain political competence by regularly

attending meetings where they are key decision makers. In this case, Christina and Brandy were

given the opportunity to present their outcomes of the PAC meeting to the group, practicing

communication skills and leadership, both of which are considered instrumental in broader

domains of political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

2. Skill Act II: Organizational and Communication Skills

Volunteer Opportunities.

In addition to practicing leadership skills through the PAC, some parents also gain

political competence through their volunteer work at Progress. Parents typically volunteer by

chaperoning field trips, volunteering at community events, and through the welcome center. Of

my sample of 16 Progress parents, five parents indicated having regular volunteer roles within

the program. For some Progress parents, involvement in the afterschool program leads to

volunteer opportunities in the other areas of the organization. For example Rebecca is a long-

time Progress parent who first enrolled her daughters in the preschool and then afterschool

program. Rebecca has regularly volunteered in Progress youth programs and the women's

shelter. Her initial volunteer experiences, which were primarily in the men's and women's

shelter. She explains,

> "When I first started to volunteer I… they put me down at the men's center at the time
> they had an employment coordinator, so I assisted him for about a year, volunteering but
> I was doing interview readiness with the people that came in teaching them how to dress
> for an interview, helping them with resumes, doing mock interviews with them, looking
> for work for these people every day. So that was a lot."

Her responsibilities as a volunteer shifted when she began working with women at the women

shelter and in the pre-school program. Rebecca received training on the intake system and

computer software for the women's center and has assumed various roles as needed in the

shelter. In the preschool program, Rebecca also as a teaching assistant, an occasional field trip

chaperone, and a weekly coordinator of food preparation for the pre-school students.

> "Downstairs with the ladies I really just do whatever, you they've trained me on the
> system and they've trained me to do whatever the other people that work here do, so its
> wherever I'm needed I'm able to jump in and do. I don't have to ask anyone for
> instructions or directions. They trust me to just do what I feel like is appropriate at that
> moment. And again I've been asked to assistant teach I guess I can say in the beginners

classroom if the teachers are not, one teacher she'll come and ask me to participate and help uh whatever teachers left to run the classroom for the day."

Rebecca says that her volunteer experiences have made her more patient and compassionate and have equipped her with a host of practical skills. With regards to politically relevant skill acts, she learned new clerical and administration skills and how to teach children and adults.

> "I've learned excel, access, power point because I never felt like learning power point, ever. Which was good because once I started going back to school I needed power point and I've learned how to do a proper resume and help other people do resumes. I've learned how to instruct people to do different things so if I had to teach anything now I know how to approach that situation to teach different groups of people how to do the same thing. So I can teach the kids how to do something, if I had to go teach the adults how to do something, I know how to switch gears and teach the adults downstairs how to do it."

Furthermore, Rebecca has practiced additional communication and leadership skills by writing letters on behalf of men and women at the shelters and coordinating support groups for the shelter guests.

> "I used help to again at the men's center and they used to have a lot of programs where people would come in and help and do a lot of support groups and I would be implementing into setting up the times or the setting for the group and I would actually sit in on the group and assist whoever was doing the presentation."

For Rebecca, Progress's youth program served as a gateway to other volunteer opportunities within the organization that have given her the chance to practice a new set of skills that are portable to other participatory acts. Rebecca has written letters, organized meetings, all of which are skills considered instrumental to political action.

Employment Opportunities

A small subset of Progress parents become employees of the organization. Four parents in my sample of 16 are employees of the organization. Three of these mothers were introduced to the organization first as parent, enrolling their children into Progress academic program, then as volunteers in the organization. Volunteering eventually led to employment opportunities. One

mother works specifically with the afterschool program, while the other three work in other

service areas of the organizations as a caseworker in the women's shelter, a program assistant in

the day-center for homeless women, and as the coordinator of the Progress food pantry.

For some mothers, these employment opportunities equip them with new skill sets that

are relevant to political participation. For instance, Cheryl's work as program assistant in the

women's day center has helped her assist people with traumatic experiences and backgrounds.

This opportunity equips her with skills and also cultivates interests and efficacy in continuing to

do community work.

> "Um, I've learned to, because in the work that I do, a lot of people I see are suffering
> from some type of trauma. Um, I've learned to recognize it and I've learned to, how to
> deal with it. So, um,   yeah. I've learned that a lot of, kind of, I guess, people acting out is
> because of, they're been traumatized."

I asked Cheryl if she felt like these skills were relevant in helping her work with people on

community issues and problems. She further emphasizes conflict resolution skills, which she

believes has given her confidence in expressing her views and offering help in her neighborhood.

> "Um, I think that I am able to resolve conflict. I think I have a gift for resolving conflict,
> because I do it almost every day.(she's referring to navigating conflict among the women
> in the shelter) Through that, I can, I can talk to anybody. So, I think that it's given me
> confidence to say those things I was afraid to say at first. To know that I'm really
> helping. I'm not hurting. I'm helping. I can do it."

In addition to these relational skills, Cheryl has learned a set of administrative and leadership

skills well. She has written thank you letters, supervised volunteers, organized meetings, led

group devotionals, created calendars, and given presentations to her supervisors. Cherly says

these responsibilities have matured her.

> "I've had so much responsibility. Like, before I actually got this position I never felt
> quite like an adult. I always like, man I'm a big ol' kid. I'm still a child. I felt like a child.
> It's weird, but I have to make, I can't just react off my feelings now. I guess that's the big
> difference. I have to consider what I'm saying and I have to a lot of times I have to filter
> what I'm saying. So I just can't say, "I'm grown I can say this." That's a child. That's
> what children do. They say, "I'm grown. I can do whatever I want to do." But, so, I now I
> have to think about things ahead of time. Consequences, reactions, everything.

In addition to maturing her, Cheryl describes these responsibilities helpful outside of Progress. For instance, she talks at length about how her new position has improved her communication skills. She "speaks differently" and tailors her speech and tone to different contexts.

> "It has been really helpful. I have, in the last year I have become a totally different person. I speak differently. I know that I have to, um, like, you know, I'm from the west side of Chicago. I don't speak proper English, but I've learned appropriately at different times. Like, I can switch it up. Like, that says a lot. I can't, I can't just be, "I ain't finna do dat", you know, when I'm speaking to somebody who could possibly, you know, be, we can be linked together to do something better. So, I, I guess I've learned to, um, be aware of my surroundings and adjust to whatever is going on at that particular time."

Finally, Cheryl believes her position at Progress has made her famous in the community. Through Progress, Cheryl serves a positive role model for her children and her neighborhood. She uses her influence to teach her children the importance of helping others and to connect neighborhood residents to the programs offered at the center.

> "I think it's useful because now, um, people recognize me when I leave, in the community., I get a chance to show my children that just because these people look a certain way doesn't mean we're different. Like, you know, they're just going through something so we have to help them. It's our duty. These are our people. This is my community."

She continues,

> "Now everybody knows that I'm Cheryl from Progress. And so, people are learning what Progress is, and people are coming in they's like, you know, they come in and get they're services, and now, you know, their head's a little bit higher. So, I'm like, ok, I'm famous in the community. Yeah, come on down to Progress. So, everybody knows me and this is amazing. Even on my block."

Collectively, these opportunities have allowed Cheryl and other parents to develop communication skills and organizational skills that can be used in the broader realms of political participation.

Parent Involvement as an Avenue to Political Participation

Interestingly, all of the parents from both programs indicated that they voted in the last presidential election. While parents generally regarded voting as basic duty and right, most parents attributed their choice to voice to the racial identity of the candidates, in particular presidential candidates. Other time and skill-based acts like protesting, letter writing, and contacting elected officials were less prevalent and not equally distributed across parents. A subset of parents at Progress indicated that they had met elected officials through their involvement in the afterschool program. Parents with high levels of parental involvement (i.e. participation on the advisory council and extensive volunteer work within the program) were selected to meet city and state elected officials at press conferences, roundtables, and community events. Of the 15 parents interviewed, eight recall having met an elected official through Progress.

Progress recently facilitated parent connections with elected officials through is Mayoral round table the organization hosted in response to the Chicago Public School teacher strike. In the fall of 2012, the Chicago Public School system's teachers union waged a seven-day strike that affected 350,000 students. In response to growing public tension around the strike, Mayor Rahm Emmanuel approached the leaders of Progress about conducting a round table at the organization, giving parents the opportunity to voice their concerns to the mayor directly. David explains how the idea emerged,

> "The mayor's office called us at like eleven o'clock on day two of the teachers strike and said "The mayor is wanting to get out and listen to the stories of parents about how the strike is affecting their families." So, to which I said, like, we of course would like to have the mayor here, however, I also don't want three hundred picketers outside our front door either. We're trying to do our job here. So, we're not the bargaining table for that dispute. We'll let them worry about whose fault it is that we don't have a contract. But if you're giving our parents a chance to speak to the mayor, we'll get 'em there, but I don't want this to be some big press event where it's interpreted to be just a photo op or something like that."

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The Mayor's office agreed, and only permitted one reporter and a camera at the roundtable

event. David instructed his staff to invite working parents in the program to attend. Most of the

parents present at the roundtable were parents with long-term relationships with Progress,

including those who sit on the advisory council and volunteer within the program.

> "So that's when I went to some of our staff and said do you think we can pull this off? I can't get all these parents in the room this fast. Are you willing to take a couple of hours today and we come up with our list that we call and get people to come? They said absolutely. So we did that. We filled the room with parents from our program, in particular we focused on working parents, I was convinced the most, the parents that were suffering the most from the strike were the parents who were working, because they were now having to come up with alternative arrangements for their children. So that's the group we focused on. And so we got them all to come that night."

David continues to explain the format of the roundtable and the topics of discussion. The mayor

sat with roughly 15 parents to hear about how the CPS strike affected their families. Parents were

given opportunities to directly share their concerns with the Mayor.

> "The mayor was supposed to be here for about forty-five minutes. He ended up staying for over two hours listening to their stories [..]And so they, they got a chance to talk about, you know, what their family was like and how the strike was impacted it, their family. And so they heard anything from I moved back in with my Dad with my three boys because my dad's health was failing and I wanted to be there for him. As it turned out, as a result of this strike, he's having to be there for me. And he can barely walk, but at noon each day he's getting up and he's driving the boys over here to Progress from noon to six so they can be here and go do school and learn during the strike [..] but that's not what my dad should be doing. He can barely walk, but he's driving them here. But that's kind of how that happened and by the end of the night the mayor listened to all fifteen stories."

Brandy, a member of the PAC, was in attendance. She shares how she met Mayor Rahm

Emmanuel personally through her involvement at Progress and expresses disappointment with

the mayor and Chicago politics, despite her opportunities to directly express her concerns to the

mayor. Brandy views his visits to Progress as misleading. The mayor brought "hope" for

change, but his tenure in office has been about "pursuing his own agenda." She shares her

perspective,

> "Rahm Emmanuel wants to come in and he wants to you know put Chicago back on the
> map but he wants the perception of Chicago to change and um. You know he he he's
> been here several times you know here at Progress and I've met him personally and you
> know he gives us this idea of hope that you know we're here for you and the people of
> the city of Chicago. He sold us this to I felt like encourage us to vote for him and I I I did.
> I voted for him and now he's in office and he's running his own agenda. I'm like well
> what happened to fixing this and fixing that and what happened to the educational
> system. It kind of went from I want to hear the people to this what I want this is how it's
> going to be."

Cheryl, long-time Progress parent and now employee, also met the mayor the roundtable. She

had the opportunity to share her son's challenges as a specials needs student in the Chicago

Public School system. Cheryl was able to express her appreciation of Progress and similar

organizations in Westfield in addition to concerns about her community and desire for better

programs.

> "The mayor came here for a roundtable and he was asking some of the questions that
> you're asking now. I made it my business to, um, even tell him the story about Ms.
> Lauren, the Preschool director, and my son and the epilepsy. I was trying to let him know
> how valuable a program like this is. Like, we need funds for stuff like this. We need to
> get the kids off the street. Pretty much every parent in that room was saying the same
> thing. The teachers are on strike. What are you going to do about it? We need more
> programs like this. My kid needs extra help."

Rebecca describes her experience at the roundtable and reflects on its purpose. She notes

that Progress usually keeps her and other parents abreast of issues, policies, and events through

weekly newsletters. This included the Mayoral roundtable to discuss the CPS strike with affected

parents.

> Yeah they pretty much try to keep informed on everything um Ms. Lauren, if it's
> something major when she sends out, she sends out a weekly folder with the kids she'll
> put something in there to let us know what's going on and if it's something that's really
> going to affect everybody. Um during the teacher strike they invited the mayor here to
> talk to the parents. And so we had a round table discussion with the mayor. It didn't go

anywhere past the table but you know they opened it up so that we had a place where we felt like we had a voice.

According to Rebecca, the Mayor's visit was symbolic. He "pretended like he was listening, but he really wasn't." The parents in attendance never heard anything from the mayor about the issues addressed during the round table.

> "Things that we said, they were never addressed again. So we had issues about the strike but we had issues about the school system that he told us that he was going to address and we would be hearing back and we never heard anything back again."

In sum, the Progress afterschool program facilitated direct contact with and elected officials and offered a venue for deliberation around the issue public education.

Conclusion

Political scientists emphasize the role of nonpolitical organizations as political training grounds for low-income individuals. By offering opportunities to organize events and attend meetings, these organizations present skill-building opportunities that strengthen civic competence for political action. Parent's experiences at Progress draw attention to how afterschool programs similarly equip parents with the skills needed for political participation. Through volunteering, parent leadership roles, and employment opportunities, Progress offers training on decision-making processes, organizing people and events, and communication skills**.**

This challenges the prevailing argument that policies targeting low-income populations pacify the poor and counters the prevailing description of devolved and privatized welfare state as paternalistic and punitive. On the contrary, Progress parents are given decision- making power to determine program policies and control access to free afterschool. The process by which parents help develop policies equips parents with politically relevant skills that can be used outside of the program.

While feedback scholars underscore the interpretive messages of participatory programs,

namely how these types of programs convey the value of client participation (Bruch et. al 2010; Mettler and Soss 2004), Parent's experiences suggest that consequences of participatory programs extend beyond interpretive messages by introducing individuals to new skills and the chance to practice these skills in program contexts.

Structuring Opportunities for Political Action

In addition conferring civic competence for political participation, I find the participatory elements of design also structure opportunities for political participations that would otherwise be inaccessible to low income populations. Through parental involvement, parents gain access to elected and public officials.

Similar to Marwell's (2004) findings on nonprofit CBOs, parent's experiences with Progress demonstrate the constituency building capacity of NSPs, where elected officials gain access to new networks of potential voters by appearing at press conferences and program events. Interestingly, these resources processes mirror the resources effects of Social Security Insurance, a bureaucratic universal program. In the same way that Social Security connects low-income seniors to organizations that are targeted by political recruitment efforts (Campbell 2002), the afterschool program positions these low-income parents in organizational settings that are prime political recruitment targets for elected officials. The benefits of these connections are not one-sided. Through these connections parents communicate concerns and policy preferences. Parents, who are otherwise political marginalized by large resource deficits and isolated distressed neighborhood contexts, have the ear of people in power.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Novel Application and Contribution

This dissertation begins to advance the theoretical development of the policy feedback framework in the case of nonprofit service provision. While demonstrating the relationship between experiences with public welfare bureaucracies and political behavior outcomes, the policy feedback research offers less clarity regarding the processes behind these relationships. Furthermore, this emerging framework has not been explored in the nonprofit service context. My in-depth qualitative case study begins to fill this gap in the literature by uncovering alternative paths to participation through the program design of two nonprofit service providers that provide subsidized afterschool care.

Nonprofit organizations are becoming the primary apparatus through which the government administers social services to low-income individuals (Allard 2009). As a part of the employment centered focus of welfare reform, childcare services are now an important component of the social safety net for low-income working mothers (Blau 2003). Low-income populations are experiencing new interactions with the state through these two policy shifts, warranting the application of the policy feedback framework to this service context. Thick descriptions from this case study reveal the inner workings of two nonprofit after school programs and point to how program experiences influence the political behavior of a set of low-income parents

Conceptual and Theoretical Development

In elucidating processes within and across these two service providers, I challenge the assumption of uniform program experiences and find a spectrum of parent experiences at each program. I broaden the conceptual range of the program design typology to accommodate these rich nuances. Furthermore, the evidence reveals two sets of mechanisms driving feedback processes, an individual level mechanism of discretion that informs program experiences and broader organizational level mechanisms that shape political behavior.

First Order Mechanism of Program Design

Relational Mechanism of Parent and Staff Discretion

In keeping with empirical descriptions of parental involvement in school systems, program experiences at Progress and South End are a product of parent choice and structured opportunities for parental involvement provided by each program (Epsein and Dauber 1991; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1995, 1997). The voluntary nature of parent involvement at both programs yields a spectrum of program experiences. Unlike client interactions with means-tested programs, these afterschool programs give parents considerable discretion in choosing how they interact with programs. Parents are not required to meet regularly with staff unless child behavior problems arise and receiving afterschool care does not hinge on parent involvement. Consequently, there are varied levels of involvement among parents that are based on individual preferences. One mother chooses to quickly sign out her child while another parent chooses to mingle with the staff and engage in casual conversation.

How staff members relate to parents and more formal opportunities for parental

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involvement is less variable and determined by the service objectives and funding parameters of each organization. At Progress, program guidelines promote "parent partnership" and require staff to interact with parents beyond program time through phone calls and personal contact. The 21st CCLC grant emphasizes community partnerships and parental involvement and requires greater organizational outreach to parents. Furthermore, Progress parents are considered a key component to accomplishing the objective of neighborhood transformation through its afterschool program.

In contrast, South End's more service oriented approach prioritizes professional service delivery to parents. Thus parents lack integral role in achieving program objectives and are not actively involved in service delivery. South End staff members are also discouraged from developing personal rapport with parents as personal ties with parents are beyond scope of professional responsibilities. The program's key funding source, the CCAP subsidy, does not require staff to engage parents or track parental involvement. As a result, the few personal connections that do exist between South End parents and staff are initiated and maintained by parents.

In addition to their distinct approaches in interacting with parents, formal opportunities for parental involvement also differ across each organization.   Beyond observing program activities, the South End staff do not invite parents to volunteer in the program and there are no parent leadership opportunities. Parents have very few options to exercise influence in the program. Progress is far more participatory, inviting parents to volunteer during program hours and to serve on the parent advisory council. Through the PAC, parents exercise formal authority

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in the program and create policies that affect day-to-day program activities.

While parents choose their level of involvement, program staff also exercise discretion in creating program experiences by choosing to expose parents to different aspects of the program. Parents who prefer minimal program involvement experience a distant bureaucratic program at each organization. As parents exhibit greater levels of involvement by developing personal ties with staff, they are exposed to resources, support, and distinct elements of program design. At South End, parents who build personal rapport with staff gain access to support in the form of relaxed payment requirements, transportation assistance, job leads, and resource referrals. More involved Progress parents obtain material resources such as furniture, school supplies, and admission to a private school. Parents that exhibit high levels of commitment to the program are offered volunteer opportunities and a role on the parent advisory council. At both programs, parents are moved into distinct levels of program design based on their personal preferences for involvement and staff discretion.

Second Order Mechanisms of Feedback Processes

<u>Organizational Response to Neighborhood Context and Interpretive Feedback Processes</u>

Organizational Belief Systems

Staff interviews suggest that each program has a distinct belief system that incorporates views of neighborhood conditions and the prospect of change within distressed community contexts. These belief systems also situate parents in community change efforts. Progress adopts a positive change oriented belief system that emphasizes the potential of Westfield, points to the feasibility of improving neighborhood conditions, and characterizes parents as key players

in the success of community building efforts. The organization views itself as a catalyst for neighborhood change through the services it provides to children. South End offers its own unique belief system that characterizes the neighborhood as a dangerous threat to the safety of children and families and an antagonist to the enriching activities offered by the center. Staff view the organization as a safe haven for children and families. Consequently, the program engages in minimal community work and does not facilitate community-building opportunities for parents outside of the center.

Modeling Responses to Neighborhood Conditions

Keeping with the social psychologist's framework regarding efficacy beliefs, these organizations intervene in the development of efficacy belief by modeling appropriate responses to neighborhood conditions (Bandura and Wood 1989; Bandura 1991; Gist and Mitchell 1992). Parents glean lessons about effective means of neighborhood change from the organization's community work. These lessons inform perceptions of task uncertainty around community change and parents adopt beliefs and political behavior accordingly. Where one program is actively changing the community through outreach events and its academic programming, parents note changes in their own perspectives about the neighborhood and are motivated to take action through their own means of community involvement. On the other hand, parents' perspectives at South End point to the ways in which an organization's minimal community involvement can signal the difficulties of neighborhood change. Parents' negative assessments of the neighborhood are reinforced by their perception of the center's passivity towards

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deteriorating conditions. Because change is incremental and the center is not the source of this change, parents express negative efficacy beliefs, despair, and social withdrawal.

Mastery Opportunities

Finally, these service providers can further reduce task uncertainty around political action by offering mastery opportunities for parents. This is most evident in the work of Progress, where the organization has partnered with parents to address neighborhood problems. Over the years, Progress has worked with parents to lobby the public school system to keep neighborhood elementary schools open. Together, Progress staff and parents have engaged the police to diminish drug trafficking and violence in the neighborhood and have worked with aldermen to construct speed bumps on neighborhood blocks. Interviews suggest that this partnership helps some parents identify their role in improving neighborhood conditions and shape parents perceptions of their own individual capacity to change the neighborhood. Moreover, parents gain practical experience with the responsiveness of public officials to these efforts, further informing external efficacy beliefs.

Program Design and Resource Effects

While, interpretive feedback processes more broadly impact parents at both programs, the extent to which nonprofit program design increases civic competence and facilitates political action affects a select group of parents at Progress.

Skill Building Opportunities

Given South End's narrow service objective, very few skill building opportunities or politically relevant resources are available to parents. The program did not offer parents

volunteer opportunities or leadership capacity. However, program design is participatory for the most involved parents at Progress. A select group of parents practice "skill acts" that enhance civic competence for participation (Verba et. al 1993) through volunteering, serving on the parent advisory council, and through various employment opportunities. Parents gain communication, organizational, and leadership skills and apply these skills outside of the program context.

Structuring Opportunities for Political Participation

Along with providing skill-building opportunities, nonprofit service providers can create spaces for political action. In the program's efforts to bring greater awareness of local school policies, the Progress after school program facilities connections between parents and powerful elected officials. A select group of parents met elected officials through press conferences and round tables hosted by the program. Through these opportunities, parents expressed concerns and policy preferences regarding education and the future of community based organizations in Chicago.

Together, these two programs offer alternative pathways to political participation by 1) motivating or discouraging political engagement through organizational cues regarding effective responses to neighborhood context (interpretive feedback processes) and 2) by both providing skill building opportunities that enhance the civic competence and offering venues for political participation (resource feedback processes).

Limitations and Caveats

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This dissertation is a first step in identifying mechanisms of program design that drive feedback processes. The mechanisms that are identified (parent and staff discretion, organization's community building efforts, skill building opportunities, and opportunities for political activity) are not an exhaustive list. Several elements of program design are not discussed at length in this dissertation. First, as mentioned, this analysis does not delve deeply into how staff characteristics affect service delivery. The educational and professional backgrounds of staff at both programs are important in determining their service approach. Moreover, initial analysis suggests that other factors related to the staff's connections to the target neighborhood matters. Home grown staff have a distinct understanding of the neighborhood context and bring that knowledge to the program. Conversely, staff that are not natives of the program's targeted community may bring different perceptions of the neighborhood to work, thus shaping each organization's belief system.

The faith backgrounds of Progress Staff are not deeply discussed in this analysis. As a faith-based organization with Christian staff, various tenants of the New Testament and biblical teachings influence the service approach of Progress. Although its after school program does not engage in explicit proselytizing, how staff deliver services to parents and children incorporates a Christian theology of service to the poor. Further analysis of "faith" as an element of program design at Progress will capture the extent to which faith informs practice and parent program experiences. This level analysis is especially relevant for the growing field of faith based service provision (Etindi 1999; Bane 2000; Greenberg 2000).

Along with understanding how staff characteristics affect program design, additional

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analysis that probes how each organization attracts staff members with particular characteristics will prove useful as well in uncovering further feedback mechanisms. As a long-standing institution in the South End neighborhood, it is plausible that the center draws life-long neighborhood residents and former program participants to the ranks of its staff. In the same way, Progress's faith orientation may attract not only Christian staff, but individuals who have vocational training in the area of urban ministry or faith based community work. It is possible that these two dynamics influence program design and the broader interpretive feedback mechanisms that are intimated by this case study. For instance, the shared understanding of the neighborhood among South End staff and parents may be attributed to both parties' life-long residency in South End and work as a more obscure mechanism of the program's interpretive feedback processes. That is, it is plausible that the mirrored responses of staff and parents to neighborhood conditions stems from an implicit collective understanding of South End.

Finally, professional development opportunities that are designed to improve staff practices can affect client program experiences. I did not have access to staff trainings and meetings at South End and the extent to which the organization offered professional training is unclear. At Progress, I had full access to organization wide staff development meetings, youth staff leadership meetings, and day-to-day staff meetings at the after school program. Program staff consistently communicated norms of service provision, mission, and organizational beliefs systems at these meetings. The staff's strict adoption of the program's mission and similar belief systems regarding the community and parents may be due to the constant professional development around in these areas. Additional collection of comparable data at South End will

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further shed light on the role of professional development in determining program experiences.

Incorporating a third school-based case will strengthen this project by testing the plausibility of the proposed mechanisms in a new organization context. I will also make the case for a larger quantitative study that tests these mechanisms across a wider range of nonprofit service providers.

Self-Selection and Causality

The project's key objectives were to develop deep descriptions of processes within these two programs and to identify plausible mechanisms of program design that influence outcomes. As a result, this project does not delve deeply into questions of causality. I provide descriptions of how parents engage these programs, but offer limited insight regarding why. It may be the case that each program draws a set of parents that would be disengaged or highly involved parents, with or without the program. Parents with limited views of parental involvement may be attracted to South End's service approach and would elect this service model over a participatory program. Conversely, parents who prefer deeper levels of involvement may have sought out a program that accommodated those preferences. The matter of parental preference in engaging programs points to complexities of this service context, in which program involvement is often voluntary and requires little commitment for parents.

Parental preference for involvement may inform political behavior outcomes in numerous ways. In the case of Progress, there is a possibility that the highly involved parents who benefitted from the program's participatory opportunities, would likely be engaged in political activity without the help of the organization. In the same way, parents that are passively tied to

each organization could also have similar levels of inactivity in political realms. Although the question of self-selection is important, it may not weaken the insights of this case study. For many of the parents in the study, these programs reflect their only option for afterschool care. Youth programs are notably scarce in both communities, thus parents have a limited array of programs to choose from.

The emphasis on program design as a mobilizing agent for parents may further diminish parent self-selection concerns. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) describe mobilization as the,

> "the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate…one of these actors have mobilized somebody when it has done something to increase the likelihood of her participation." (26)

With that in mind, the narratives presented in this project underscore how these programs influence the likelihood of parents participating in political activities. On the one hand, I demonstrate how the design of one program makes politics accessible to a demographic that would otherwise, by most empirical accounts, be alienated from political processes. On the other hand, I reveal how the distinct service approach of another organization negatively influences the political beliefs of low-income parents. In this sense, this project reflects a story about organizations and an effort to understand how the program design of nonprofits may act as interventions in mobilization process, fostering positive efficacy beliefs and action or dampening efficacy and reinforcing political acquiescence. Organizations may not determine parents' predispositions to political activity, but the findings propose how organizations by design can build upon them.

Broader Implications

Skeptics of welfare privatization would argue that government contracting to nonprofit service providers endangers the participatory nature of NSPs and co-opts the community building objectives of these organizations (Hansenfeld and Garrow 2012; Smith 2011). Proponents of welfare privatization would argue the opposite and contend that government funded nonprofit organizations reflect a participatory arm of the state that incorporates client voice into programming (LeRoux 2007; 2010). Neither of these claims is fully supported by the findings as one nonprofit service provider is very participatory and politically mobilizing while the other organization offers limited opportunities for client participation. Instead these cases point the complexities of nonprofit sector, where various factors influence service delivery.

In light of this complexity, the question of whether the trend of welfare privatization is the most beneficial for the political behavior of low-income populations is less important. Questions that probe the various factors that shape service delivery are more relevant in exploring this trend in policy administration. For example, gaining insight into how the guidelines of government funding determine the inner workings of agencies may help us better understand how these organizations mobilize or demobilize clients. Similarly, understanding how organizations respond to neighborhood context may shed light on the potentially mobilizing effects of service providers.

The Issue of Government Accountability

Policy feedback scholars make concrete connections between welfare bureaucracies and individuals' assessments of the government. However, in the nonprofit service sector, the role of

the government is obscured. Some would argue that clients do not associate these types of

service providers with the government as a whole. Consequently, clients cannot hold the

government accountable for poor service delivery through forms of political participation. Still,

these findings suggest that nonprofit service providers teach lessons about citizenship and

political participation regardless of clients' understanding of the government's role in providing

services. The insights from these two cases illustrate that these service providers can teach

clients lessons regarding appropriate forms of political behavior, enhance the civic competence

of low-income individuals, and offer venues of political participation. Essentially, the state is

indirectly structuring political voice through these venues of service provision independent of

clients' understanding of how these programs are connected to the government.

Mitigating the Effects of Poor Neighborhoods and Political Engagement

Soss and Jacobs (2009) raise concerns about the multiplier effect of neighborhood

context and argue that poor neighborhoods can demobilize the poor by compounding resource

deficits. However, parents' experiences also demonstrate how organizations can diminish the

potentially demobilizing effects of poor neighborhoods. The Progress afterschool program

indicates that organizations within distressed neighborhoods help parents overcome the resource

deficits, foster efficacy, and structure opportunities for political action. In this sense, the right

kind of nonprofit provider can change the trajectory of political behavior for low-income

populations in isolated poor neighborhoods. In concluding his work on social capital within

childcare centers, Mario Small (2009) draws attention to how organizations in poor

neighborhoods diminish the negative effect of poor neighborhoods on social capital. He finds

that childcare centers maintained ties to information, services, and goods that were instrumental to the wellbeing of mothers. Organizations in poor neighborhoods were connected to strong local political leaders and had more ties than centers in more affluent neighborhoods. He explains that,

> "[..] people in poor neighborhoods would not always seem to do   worse than those in non-poor neighborhoods, because the negative effects of crime, poor schools, and other factors would be tempered by the positive effects of participating in the better connected organizations." (196)

In the same way, the case of Progress Youth Development Corp demonstrates how participation in an organization rich in political resources and opportunities can "temper" the negative effects of poor neighborhood conditions on political participation.

I conclude by revisiting Andrea Campbell's (2012) claim regarding public policies and political inequality. She argues that "democracy is predicated on equal distances from government" and that "some citizens' preferences more likely to be expressed than others." Campbell goes on to say that "public programs themselves shape the ability, interests, and opportunities for citizens to participate politically […] Government itself shapes patterns of political inequality through the designs of public policies." (342)

Taken together, the insights of this study show that nonprofit service providers offering subsidized childcare "shape the ability, interests, and opportunities for citizens to participate politically," in distinct ways. Nuances in program design shape interest in political participation and resources available for political activity. In some cases, NSPs narrow the distance between the economically marginalized and the state and, in other cases, widen this gap. A further

exploration on how these types of program reinforce or lessen political inequality by design is a worthwhile endeavor. Doing so may offer further insights on the features of program design that cultivate political voice among the disadvantaged and ultimately yield policies that reflect the preferences of low-income populations.

Appendix A. Client Interview Protocol

A. Introductory Questions

1) Usually I just start by asking you to tell me a little about yourself?

    P: How long have you lived in Chicago? What brought you to Chicago?

    What about your family? Do you have any children?

2) What brought you to (X agency)? Tell me a little about your circumstances around the time you came to (X-agency)?

3) How did you first hear about this program?

4) How did you choose this agency/program?

    P: Were there other options? P: Were you more comfortable with this

    agency/program than others? Why?

5) Can you tell me about your first experience with agency X? What happened that day? P: Did you have to apply at the agency for the program? Can you explain to me what that process was like for you? (probe for long waits, forms/paperwork, timeliness of agency response, types of questions asked during the app. process were they too personal/considered appropriate, were there clear explanations about the application process)

B. Program Experiences—Self Reflections

1) What were your hopes going into the program? Did you have any personal goals?

2) Has the program been helpful in helpful in achieving these goals? If so, how?

3) Thinking about your life before you started the program, how has your life changed since started/finished the program. What has stayed the same?

4) How has the program most impacted your life?

5) In what ways have your experiences with the program changed the way you feel about yourself?

    P: Your family, Your neighborhood/community

C. Program Participation: Now I want to talk about what it's like being in the program

1) Tell me about the last time you were here at agency X? What happened? Just tell me from beginning to end.

2) Is this usually how your days go here at agency X? If not, what was different this day?

   P: How does your day to day experience with the program change over the course of the week?

3) Was there ever a time where your experiences with the program were different? How was it different? How has the program changed overtime?

4) Are there any specific rules you have to follow or certain expectations you have to meet to stay in the program?

5) What happens if you break a rule?

6) Has there been a time when, you or someone you know in the program broke rule? P: Can you describe what happened?

7) In your opinion, would you consider the program rules reasonable and fair? P: How are they fair/unfair?

   P: What kinds of rules would seem more fair to you?

8) Is there a way to challenge decisions that are made by staff? P: How would you go about raising a complaint to a staff member?

9) If someone in the program were to challenge a worker's decision, how would you think it would turn out?

10) Was there ever a time when you or someone you knew in the program raised a complaint to the agency or had a problem with the program? Can you describe what happened?

    P: How did the staff respond? What did or did not go your/their way?

D. **Evaluation of Staff:** Now I'm going to ask you about the staff here at Agency X

   1) Do you remember your first meeting with a staff member or caseworker? P: Can you tell me about the first time you met a staff member from agency X?

   2) Do you usually contact a specific staff member when you have a concern?

      P: How often to meet with staff? P: What do you typically talk about?

   3) What about your last meeting with X, what kinds of things did you talk about?

      4) Is the staff here usually helpful and supportive? P: Can you tell me about a time when that staff were really helpful/ supportive to you? P: How about a time when they weren't as helpful.

5) Do you feel like your caseworker/staff members listen to you when you have a concern? What kinds of things do they do, that lets you know they're listening. (Probe for an example)

> P: How do staff members respond to your questions or problems?

6) In your opinion, does the staff here have to follow strict rules or are they flexible? Do you they usually work with you? Are some staff members/caseworkers more strict than others?

7) Overall how would you evaluate workers at agency?

> P: Do you feel like you are usually treated fairly?

> P: Do you feel like you are usually treated with respect?

E. Connections to Public Programs

1) During your time in the program, have you applied for public aid (Cash Based assistance, Food Stamps, Medical Card, Child Care subsidy, Public Housing/Section 8, or WIC).

   a. If no, go to Section C

2) How did you apply? Can you describe the application process?

3) Has anyone staff member helped you apply for benefits? How did they assist you?

> P: Offered information about benefits, transportation to public aid offices, assistance in filling out forms, referrals to agencies

4) What about another person involved in the program, how have they helped you apply for forms of public assistance? P: Did they offer advice on how to get assistance? (offer previous probes)

5) Have you ever helped someone else in the program apply for assistance. Can you describe how you helped this person?

6) Overall, do you feel like the staff was knowledgeable of the different public programs available?

7) If the agency is unable to offer you the assistance you need, did they refer to you another agency that could help you? Describe that experience, did you get the help you get needed?

F. Political Beliefs: With the presidential elections having happened this past November, people are interested in how people feel about politics. Now I am going to ask you some questions about how you feel about the government, politics, and being politically active.

A. Broader Politics
1) When you hear the word "politics" what are the first things that come to mind?

2) What about the word "politicians"

3) How about the word "government"

4) What about the word "welfare."

5) In your opinion, do you think welfare is a part of the larger system of government?

B. Political Activity

1) When you think about becoming involved in politics or participating in politics, what comes to mind?

2) In your opinion, how would a person become involved in politics? What types of activities would someone do to become involved?

3) Would you say that you are "politically active"

> P: Can you give me some examples of your political involvement? Probe for frequency and activity over time.

4) Did you vote in the most recent presidential election on November 6th (IF NO GO TO Q5)

> P: Who did you vote for?
> > i. What influenced your decision to vote for that candidate?
>
> P: What about other candidates, were there other candidates in Congress?
> > ii. What influenced your decision to vote for these candidates?
>
> P: What issues were most important to you in this most recent election?

5) What about being involved in your community, what does it mean to be "active" in your community? How would a person become involved in the community?

> P: Would you say you are active in your community? What kinds of activities do you do in your community?

C. Internal and External Political Efficacy
1) In general would you say that government does what the citizens want? Can you give me an example of hen the government has or hasn't done what the citizens want?

2) In your opinion, which groups have the most influence on the government?

> P: How can you tell these groups have influence?

3) How about yourself, how do you as an individual think you can influence the government?

4) Do you feel like public officials care much about what people like you think? Do you feel that government officials listen to people like you?

5) How does the government show it cares about what people like you think?

6) How about the local government? In what ways does the city show it listens to people like you? (P: people in the community like neighbors, churches, and organizations)

7) How would describe your ability to influence your neighborhood schools? Do you think your individual actions matter influencing school policies in your community

8) Tell me about what actions you think would be most effective in getting the (government, schools, and the city) to listen to your concerns.

9) Overall would you say that you have a pretty good understanding of how the government works? Compared to most people out there, would you say that you know a lot or only a little about politics and government?

10) If a group of X clients got together and formed a collective movement, do you think it could actually influence the kinds of policies we get from the government? Why?

G. Program Involvement and Politics
1) Have you become aware of public issues (new public officials, laws, and policies) through your involvement in X?

> P: What kinds of information have you learned?
>> i. Probe for information about local schools, neighborhood issues, and the city of Chicago.
>
> P: Can you describe how you became aware of these issues?
>
> P: How did you get this type of information before you were involved in program X?

2) What about political issues at the state level, have you learned about new state laws through your involvement with agency X?

> P: Can you describe the kind of information you've learned?
>
> P: How did you become aware of x (issue/policy mentioned by respondent)?

P: How did you get this type of information before you were involved in program X?

3) Finally, I'd like ask you about your awareness of national political issues. Have you become aware of national political issues through your involvement in X agency?

P: Can you describe the kind of information you've learned?

P: How did you become aware of x (issue/policy mentioned by respondent)?

P: How did you get this type of information before you were involved in program X?

A. Skill Acts

1) Through your involvement with agency x have you been offered any leadership opportunities? By this I mean—have you ever been offered the opportunity to lead a support group, a committee, or take on any leadership role or responsibility within the agency? (IF NO GO TO QUESTION 9)

2) If so, can you describe your role? What are the kinds of things you do with X?

Probe for specific responsibilities
Probe for these skill acts
a) written a letter
b) gone to a meeting where you take part in making decisions
c) planned or chaired a meeting
d) given a presentation or speech
e) contacted a government official

3) Can you think of the last meeting you had with X group? What were some of the things discussed? P: What was your role in the meeting?

4) How about the last event planned by X group? What activity was planned?

P: How were you involved?

5) In your opinion, what are the benefits of being involved in X group at agency X? P: How about you personally, have you gained any personal benefits from your involvement in X? (probe for social networks, social support, social psych (esteem and efficacy).

6) Have you learned any new skills through your involvement with X agency?

P: Have you found that these skills have been helpful in other areas outside of X? Can you give me an example?

7) Some people say that having these types of skills can help you work with people on a community issues or problems. Would you say that is relevant for you?

        P: Can you tell me a little more? How is this relevant for you?

8) How about with some of the political activities we mentioned earlier like voting, protesting, writing letters to public officials and things like that? Would you say the skills you've learned at X, can help you with these kinds of activities? Can you describe how these skills can help you with activities?

9) Through your involvement with agency x , have you been offered any employment opportunities in the past year? By this I mean—have you ever been offered a paid position with the agency? (IF NO GO TO SECTION H Q1)

10) If so, what is your position? What are your responsibilities?

11) Have you learned any new skills through your position here at agency X?

        P: What kinds of skills have you learned?

        Probe for specific skill acts

        a) written a letter

        b) gone to a meeting where you take part in making decisions

        c) planned or chaired a meeting

        d) given a presentation or speech

        e) contacted a government official

        P: How have these skills have been helpful in other areas outside?

12) Some people say that having these types of skills can help you work with people on a community issues or problems. Would you say that is relevant for you?

        P: Can you tell me a little more? How is this relevant for you?

13) How about with some of the political activities we mentioned earlier like voting, protesting, writing letters to public officials and things like that? Would you say

the skills you've learned at X, can help you with these kinds of activities? P: Can you describe how these skills can help you with activities?

H. Political Recruitment

1) Since your involvement with agency x, have you ever been encouraged by an agency worker to register to vote?

2) Have you ever been encouraged by an agency worker to vote?

3) Have you ever attended a program event where an elected official was present?

4) Have you ever been introduced to an elected official through your involvement with the agency?

5) Since you became involved with agency x, have you ever attended a political rally or demonstration hosted by the agency?

6) Have you ever attended a political rally or demonstration hosted by an organization affiliated with the agency?

This concludes our interview. Thank you for your participation.

Introductory/Background Questions

1) What is your current position?

2) Could you describe your responsibilities with the agency?

3) Tell me a little about yourself, what brought you to agency X? How did you learn about the agency? When did you start working here?

4) What type of work did you do before you came to X agency?

Agency/Program Information

1) Can you tell me about this organization and its mission?

2) What about X program, can you tell me about its mission?

3) Can you describe the services offered through this program?

4) In what ways does the mission of the agency influence how you deliver services and assistance to the community?

Program Participation

1) How do clients usually apply for the program?

   a. What are the administrative procedures for receiving new clients?

2) Once parents enroll their children into your program, what are the requirements parents must meet for their child to continue to participate in the program?

   a. How about for the children in the program?

   b. What happens if parents or children fail to meet these requirements?

Day to Day Operations

Now I want to understand how your program functions on a daily basis. I am going to ask you questions about daily routines, your interactions with parents and their children, and parent's responsibilities in the program.

1) Could you describe a typical work day for you? In detail, describe your daily routine from start to finish.

   a. Does this change from day to day or throughout the week?

b. Does your routine change over the course of the year?

Staff-Client Relationships

Now I'm going to focus on your interactions with children and parents

1) How would you describe your relationship with the children enrolled in the program?

2) Tell me, what's a typical day look like for a child enrolled in the program?

3) Tell me about how you work with these families as they move through the program? How do you engage them?

    a. When you do interact with parents, what kinds of things do you discuss?

    b. How would you describe your relationship with parents? Are your interactions more personal or professional?

    c. Are parents assigned to a staff member to correspond with regularly through our their participation in the program?

    d. Are parents required to meet with agency staff during their time in the program?

Parental Involvement

1. How are parents encouraged to get involved in the program? (Probe for specific examples)

    a. Are parents encouraged to volunteer?

    b. Do parents have a say in the kinds of activities the program does with the kids?

Political Mobilization (Reserved for Executive Directors and Administrators)

Now I am going to ask you some questions about how your organization encourages community and political involvement among parents.

1) Does your organization publicly advocate for particular programs on behalf of poor populations? In what ways?

2) Does your organization seek to educate the public about issues particularly relevant to the interests of poor populations? Can you give specific examples?

2. There are arguments that poverty marginalizes people economically, socially, and politically. Do you think the parents in this program have a voice in their community? (Probe why or why not)

3. Is there anything your organization does to strengthen that "voice."

a. Does the organization encouraged parents to contact elected officials?

b. Have you ever invited an elected official to speak or talk with parents?

c. Do you encourage parents to become actively involved in their community through volunteering or working with others to address a community problem?

d. Does the agency encourage parents to vote?   How about participate in other political actions like signing petitions or demonstrating and protesting?

4. Does the agency provide information about current issues in local, state, and national politics? Information like this would include information about candidate or information about important laws or policies that may affect the community.

Leadership and Employment Opportunities

1) Do you offer parents employment opportunities within the agency?

a. By employment, I mean a paid position with the agency.(What kinds of positions have parents held in the past? What about currently?)

2) Are there formal or informal support groups for parents?

a. Are parents required to attend these groups?

3) How are parent's feedback incorporated in the program?

a. Do you use satisfaction surveys to get feedback from clients? If so, how often?

b. Are there advisory boards or councils where parents are invited to participate?

c. What role do these boards or councils play in agency decision-making?

4) How has parent feedback influenced the program?

a. Has the council/board influenced the day to day operations of the program?

5) Are there leadership opportunities within the agency for parents? In what ways can parents assume leadership roles?

6) Currently, are there any parents in leadership positions now? Describe their responsibilities.

7) Currently, do any former parents serve on the board of directors for the agency?

Closing Questions

1) Overall, how would you describe the environment for parents receiving services?

2) In your opinion, what's the most unique part of this program?

    a.   This agency? What makes this program different from other programs?

3) I'd like to give you a chance to elaborate on anything that you said, or to emphasize anything especially important. Did I miss anything?

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