Understanding the Political Context of “New” Policy Issues: The Use of the Advocacy Coalition Framework in the Case of Expanded After-School Programs

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ABSTRACT

This article uses the Advocacy Coalition Framework to identify the stakeholders and their coalitions in the arena of after-school policy, which drew much new attention beginning in the early 1990s in many American cities. Using evidence from case studies in five cities, we show how the framework can be extended beyond stakeholder analysis to include identification of core and secondary value conflicts and of opportunities for policy analysis to help strengthen coalitions and pressures for change. Coalitions in each of the cities differ over core values relating to the purposes of after-school programs (academics versus “fun”), but policy analysts can promote common goals by developing options to deal with the secondary conflicts over the relative importance of facilities versus program content, the modes of collaboration between public schools and community based organizations, and the incentives for public school teachers to engage in staffing after-school programs.

INTRODUCTION

Civic leaders and youth advocates long have argued that the nation’s children need expanded and improved programs for after-school hours (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development 1992; US Department of Education 1983). This attention has yielded some new funding, expanded services, and new models of service delivery in some locales. The progress has, however, been characterized by “fits and starts,” and the widespread availability of quality services remains an elusive goal.

Beginning in 1996, leaders in five cities, with the funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, chose the expansion and improvement of after-school opportunities...
as a principle way to improve the health and safety of their youth. After 10 years their success was limited, despite broad endorsement and support from the civic elite and the citizenry at large. Our evaluation of these efforts initially assumed that ideological disagreement about the role of government in providing a service previously seen as one better suited to the family and the market impeded the efforts for expansion.

This assumption was challenged by the results of initial research using open-ended interviews. The initial respondents provided little evidence that competing views of the role of government were at the crux of this policy dispute and pointed to other conflicts in policy beliefs. Applying the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) to the initial and subsequent interview results revealed fissures among those in this policy arena that prevented substantial achievement of the stated goal. The primary conflict was whether the purpose of after-school is to improve academic outcomes through traditional instructional methods or to provide a more holistic and developmental experience aimed at complementing, rather than extending, the typical school day.

Christopher Weible recently demonstrated the utility of stakeholder analysis using the ACF as a tool for understanding political context in a policy relevant manner (Weible 2006). He applied the framework to a long-standing issue of environmental policy, the marine protected area in California. This article demonstrates how the ACF framework allows for a deeper and more accurate understanding of the context surrounding a relatively "new" issue, the expansion of after-school programs in urban areas.

The characterization of this issue as "new" necessitates important caveats; all issues, including this one, have antecedents, but changes in the past several years introduced new actors and caused others to mobilize substantial new resources. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith have noted the utility of the ACF in such a context: "Subsystems may emerge out of a new issue or a new conceptualization of a situation. In such cases, one might expect an initial situation characterized by great fluidity .... But as information develops concerning the seriousness of the problem, its causes, and the cost of remedying the situation, actors tend to coalesce into distinct coalitions ...." (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999, 136). Thus, assessment of the new or changed context is particularly relevant for analysts engaging the issue.

The ACF not only shed light on the nature of the relevant conflicts but also helped identify future analytic work that might contribute to developing compromises and progress in expanding opportunities for youth. Although analysis using the ACF has sometimes highlighted the limits of analysis in political decision making and the role of "external shocks" in stimulating change, more recent work has recognized negotiated agreements as a potential path to policy change and recognized the importance of empirical evidence in resolving conflicts. Recently Sabatier and Weible cited this innovation in ACF theory: "Thus a substantial portion of the conflict must deal with empirical issues—primarily the seriousness and causes of the problem—which, with time and effort, can be at least partially resolved by researchers and other stakeholders from different coalitions" (Sabatier and Weible 2007, 207). The contribution of this article moves beyond the use of the ACF as a tool for mapping stakeholders on a policy subsystem; in addition, the research identifies opportunities for analytic work that might contribute to compromise and progress.

This article is divided into four sections. The first briefly summarizes the key features of the ACF and the methods used to apply it to after-school policy in urban areas. The second analyzes the policy belief conflicts in after-school policy, and the third uses these conflicts to identify the major coalitions in this policy arena. The final section uses the ACF
analysis to suggest analytic work that policy analysts might undertake in order to promote change in after-school policy.

THE ACF AND THE METHOD OF APPLICATION

The ACF was developed as an alternative to the “stages” model as a way to explain policy change. Its key concepts are (1) the “policy subsystem” as unit of analysis, (2) the importance of value conflicts in defining coalitions within a policy subsystem, (3) the enduring nature of these conflicts and the consequent necessary long time frame (a decade or more) for analyzing policy changes, (4) the limited (but still significant) role of analysis in altering the position of actors and the alignment of coalitions, and (5) the opportunities for “venue shopping” among coalition members in order to gain advantage in policy conflicts. The framework also highlights the importance of “external” events (outside the subsystem) in stimulating change.

The ACF postulates that within the policy subsystem, the actors are divided among coalitions, the members of which have different and conflicting values relative to the policy goals. “Policy core beliefs are subsystem-wide in scope and deal with fundamental policy choices.” (Sabatier and Weible 2007, 195) Policy core beliefs lead to “core policy preferences” that “project an image of how the policy subsystem ought to be, provide the vision that guides coalition strategic behavior, and helps unite allies and divide opponents.” They are “the stickiest glue that binds coalitions together” (Sabatier and Weible 2007, 195). “Secondary” beliefs are narrower, concerning detailed rules and budgetary applications within a specific program, the seriousness and causes of problems in a specific locale, public participation guidelines within a specific statute, etc.” (Sabatier and Weible 2007, 196). In addition to coalition members, the ACF recognizes policy brokers, “whose principal concern is to find some reasonable compromise that will reduce intense conflict” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999, 122).

The ACF stresses using a relatively long time frame for analysis, typically a decade or more, in order to observe changes in the alignments and positions of coalitions. The ACF postulates that the impacts of data and analysis will be limited in terms of altering the policy core beliefs of actors and the divisions between coalitions, but more significant in resolving conflicts over secondary beliefs within coalitions. Given the important and enduring nature of core beliefs, and the limited impact of analysis and information, the ACF highlights the importance of other factors, notably, changes in social-economic conditions and in public opinion in bringing about policy change. Finally, the ACF recognizes that coalitions pursue their goals in multiple arenas, sometimes shifting between courts and legislative bodies or between state and federal jurisdictions, a practice dubbed venue shopping.

**Methods Used in the Case Studies**

The ACF was used to organize and interpret the results of interviews conducted and other source material collected as part of case studies in five US cities—Baltimore, Philadelphia, Detroit, Oakland, and Richmond. These cities were sites for the Urban Health Initiative (UHI), a 10-year (1997–2006) Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program aimed at improving health and safety for young people. University-based researchers evaluated the program to determine whether collaborative efforts among interested organizations can develop and implement plans to change service delivery systems for children and whether
such changes result in better outcomes. Nine other cities with similar socioeconomic conditions served as a comparative benchmark (Weitzman et al. 2002).

The UHI cities were not selected randomly and are not representative of all American cities. They are poorer and have higher rates of social pathologies than most large American cities (Weitzman et al. 2002). However, the UHI cities appear to have similar levels of participation in after-school programs as other cities. There is a great similarity in the proportion of children with no or limited after-school activity among the UHI cities (52%), the comparison cities (53%), and all of the 100 largest cities (57%). More prosperous cities show slightly less participation than distressed ones.

The methods used in the UHI evaluation included annual site visits to the cities with in-person interviews with relevant voluntary and public agency leaders, telephone interviews with an additional 6–10 civic leaders in each of the UHI and comparison cities every 18 months, and monitoring of media and other secondary sources for information about relevant changes in the communities. To gain a better understanding of the after-school policy subsystem in each of the UHI cities, additional interviews were conducted with key city and state leaders, relevant historical and legislative documents were reviewed, and local print media were analyzed regarding the leadership for, and funding and planning of, after-school expansion during the 2004–5 period. Although the interviews serve as the primary source of information for these case studies, agency annual reports, city and state budgets, and newspaper articles provided background to each interview and further verification of what was obtained from them.

To begin each case study, a group of at least six key leaders were identified; they were previously known to the UHI evaluation team as persons engaged in issues regarding after school expansion and improvement. These leaders were contacted by e-mail in advance of a site visit and were asked to participate in an interview about the scope and funding of after-school opportunities in their city. Nearly all of those contacted agreed to participate. In each city, on-site interviews were conducted with a member of the school system, a local funder, a leader of a voluntary social service agency and someone in city government. The remaining interviews in each city reflect the different sectors and organizations involved in its policy subsystem. On-site interviews lasted, on average, 45 min and were typically conducted by two interviewers. One of the interviewers took extensive notes. A senior member of the research team, included among this article’s authors, participated in each of these interviews.

The initial round of interviews did not provide evidence supporting the premise that the conflict over expanding after school activities centered on different philosophies about the role and scope of government as hypothesized. Virtually all those interviewed supported a larger role for government in after-school programs. At this stage of the case studies, we recognized the need to alter the framework for analysis and applied the ACF. The ACF concepts were used to guide subsequent interviews and interpret the results of all the interviews and related material.

To ensure that all relevant perspectives were reflected in the case studies, each of the initial interviewees was asked for the names of other leaders who could offer further information about points under discussion. These additional leaders were contacted and asked to participate in phone interviews; nearly three-fourths of those contacted were interviewed. Combining the original group of key informants with those identified through this snowball sampling method, an average of 24 people were interviewed in each city. Table 1 shows the number of interviews in each city by sector.
Table 1
Completed Interviews by City and Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baltimore</th>
<th>Detroit</th>
<th>Oakland</th>
<th>Philadelphia</th>
<th>Richmond</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>16</td>
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</table>

The interviews were guided by a short, semi-structured instrument focused on perceptions of events in the city relating to after-school program expansion and the identification and assessment of the roles played by other actors in this arena; each interview then delved more deeply into areas of the informant’s expertise. As the case study progressed, interviews were used to gain additional information about, or to clarify, points raised during previous interviews or found in legislative documents or the print media. Although the scope of the interviews varied somewhat, common ground covered included questions about positions and actions taken by state and local educational leaders, nonprofit organizations involved in social services and youth development and teachers’ unions, and about the sources of funding sought and secured.

The research team used notes from completed interviews and from the document reviews to identify key themes, including actors, alliances, and objectives, as well as points of conflict. A working document describing the policy subsystem was prepared for each city. These drafts were begun mid-way through the interview process, in order to allow further follow-up within each city to clarify points of information or dispute. To the degree that interviews in one case study city raised issues that had not previously emerged in the other cites, the research team interviewed new informants, or reinterviewed others to investigate these newly identified issues. Once the follow-up interviews were completed, the researchers looked across the case studies for shared and contrasting themes. The research approach applied in drawing conclusions from the evidence is that described by Yin as “analytic generalization” whereby “a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study. If two or more cases are shown to support the same theory, replication may be claimed” (Yin 1994, 31).

In their recent comprehensive review of the ACF literature, Sabatier and Weible note that, “Researchers have modeled the ACF’s belief systems using both qualitative and quantitative methods” (Sabatier and Weible 2007, 196). Quantitative approaches sometimes use content analysis of documents and others use analysis of structured questionnaire responses. For example, Weible’s analysis of marine protected area policy relies on responses to 192 structured questionnaires, scored numerically and designed to test agreement with core and secondary beliefs. The qualitative approaches typically involve applying the ACF concepts to knowledge acquired by the researcher from multiple techniques.
and sources. Some apply the framework retrospectively in the sense that they apply the framework to previously acquired information rather than using it to test hypotheses with specially designed instruments. For example, Litfin’s application of the ACF to Canadian climate change policy relies primarily on a review of public documents and events with no interview or questionnaires relied upon for new data collection (Litfin 2000). An ACF analysis of forest certification in Sweden similarly involved no new primary data collection (Elliot and Schlaepfer 2001).

The approach used in this study occupies a methodological middle ground. Although using fewer interviews (with less structure and no scoring) than some quantitative approaches, we have conducted numerous interviews to collect new data for interpretation using ACF concepts. However, like some qualitative approaches, we are relying on the ACF primarily for its conceptual approach and are applying it to data not collected with instruments designed specifically to test respondents’ conformity to a hypothesized set of core and secondary beliefs.

CONFLICTS IN POLICY BELIEFS: CORE AND SECONDARY

The case studies revealed the nature of the core conflict that separated two coalitions in each city—what role should after school programs have in children’s lives? This core conflict leads to multiple secondary conflicts that also divide the coalitions.

Core Conflict: Developmental versus Academic Educational Strategies

The dichotomy “fun versus academics” may be an oversimplification, but it suggests the different policy core beliefs of the multiple actors. The “fun” core belief might be more accurately rephrased as “developmental” or “holistic.” It is distinguished from that which more narrowly emphasizes “academic achievement,” typically measured through standardized tests and improvements in classroom performance. Those who believe in the developmental strategy do not reject or ignore academic achievement; rather they believe it is only one of a variety of important youth outcomes and, perhaps even more significantly, believe that academic gains result from a wider variety of activities than instruction in the “3 R’s.” According to one such advocate, Robert Halpern:

While after-school programs certainly have a place in helping children come to enjoy and find meaning in reading and writing, it is not their role—nor is it in their interest—to commit themselves to fostering academic achievement in its narrow sense. … Unstructured, unsupervised play can not only be viewed as a right of childhood but has a variety of developmental functions (Halpern 2002, 204).

For those urging a more holistic approach, after-school programs can and should help to make children healthier, happier, and ready to enter the next phases of development. Many such advocates believe that after-school programs can deter children from engaging in risky behaviors, arguing that well-structured programs can help reduce youth crime, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse. More recently, some providers have proposed altering the content of their programs to include nutritional education and exercise in order to lower rates of the newly prominent problem of obesity. Overall, however, the core belief for this coalition remains in the developmental benefits from the activities, even as they might try to “sell” them around the reduction of specific risk behaviors.
Secondary Beliefs and Conflicts

Identification of the policy core beliefs allowed for identification of four secondary conflicts.

Quality versus Quantity

In after-school programs, perceived quality comes in the form of better-trained staff, lower staff to child ratios, and programs of a longer duration. These features raise costs, leading to a choice between using available funds to reach more children or to serve fewer with “better” programs.

Some advocates believe that many nonacademic goals can be achieved at relatively low unit costs. Large numbers of children in need can be reached with programs staffed by older youth, volunteer parents, and community residents, regardless of formal education. Programs can take place in parks and other facilities that can accommodate large numbers of participants with little overhead or maintenance costs.

Professionalism versus Community Jobs

An important aspect of the quality versus quantity debate is the pressure for highly trained, professionalized staff. A related tension is the relative importance assigned to the goal of creating jobs for less skilled community residents versus that of enhancing the professional qualifications (and incomes) of those already employed in schools or social service agencies.

Some after-school program models create part-time jobs for people with relatively little formal training. Coaching sports and accompanying kids on field trips, for example, may be opportunities for parents or teenagers to be paid for a few hours of work per week. In contrast, remedial reading instruction may require teachers with particular qualifications. The type of after-school program selected has direct consequences for whose pockets the new money will fill.

Accountability versus Convenience

After-school program models differ in the importance attached to regular attendance. Some advocates seek formal enrollment with a commitment to attend a fixed number of hours per week and a set number of weeks per term or year. This is often sought when fees are to be paid. Others prefer a “drop-in” model under which youth are free to attend when it is convenient, without any fixed commitment.

More formal enrollment is generally believed necessary to achieve academic goals and necessary for proper evaluation and accountability of programs. Thus, many foundations and government agencies are requiring formal enrollment and evaluation studies of their after-school programs. On the other hand, advocates of drop-in programs emphasize the convenience this offers to parents, and the attractiveness for youth, who can participate when they are most favorably disposed. Some advocates also believe that a lack of “adult structure” is itself a benefit to children, and the imposing schedules and rules will push away the children that need it most (Halpern 2002). Thus, there is a trade-off between formal enrollment and flexibility that is tied to core beliefs about what is of most benefit to children.

Facilities versus Programs

Virtually all those involved in after-school activities recognize they require a mix of physical facilities and staff with proper qualifications. Most also recognize that any single organization does not always have the right mix of facilities and staff. For example, school
boards have many buildings and playgrounds, but employ teachers who leave promptly when classes end. Community organizations may have willing and able staff, but lack a facility to which to bring children. Thus, partnerships are often necessary.

The conflict is not over the need for cooperation, but over the role of each partner. Schools may want a greater say over the nature of the programs to which they make their facilities available, while community groups may feel resentment over school officials setting standards for the way they conduct their programs. Similarly, park officials may be willing to host activities by other groups, but seek control over what is done because of the implications for maintenance and other concerns. And, there is inevitable tension over who controls the money and how the owners of physical facilities shall be paid for maintenance and depreciation. Although funders have sometimes been proactive in setting requirements for appropriate partnerships, the design of an acceptable role for the cooperating agencies has not always been easy. These tensions are exacerbated by the policy core belief conflict between agencies on opposing sides of the “fun versus academic” debate.

THE COALITIONS AND ACTORS

The case studies not only revealed the policy core belief and secondary belief conflicts but also identified the coalitions within the subsystem. Interviewees were asked to identify the individuals or organizations with whom they cooperated in providing services and/or in lobbying for funding and the nature of this cooperation; they also were asked to identify the organizations with which they perceived conflicts. Consistent with ACF, the interviewees identified a group of individuals and entities that comprised a policy subsystem, and these organizations were divided into two coalitions—the academic coalition or the developmental coalition—or were brokers among the coalition members. The coalition members and policy beliefs are summarized in table 2.

Although after-school policy is in some ways a “new” issue, by 2004–5 a relatively mature policy subsystem was evident. The four criteria presented by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith were met (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999, 136). The participants identified themselves as having expertise, they sought to exercise influence over policy for a long period of time, specialized subunits of agencies at multiple levels of government existed, and interest groups specializing in this arena existed. The subsystem participants and their relations to these criteria are covered in the description of the coalitions that follows.

The Academic Coalition

The most powerful players in the academic coalition are the public school systems (leaders and unionized staff). They are joined by state and federal education agencies. They are committed to the policy core belief of promoting academic skills, leading to secondary commitments to programs that emphasize quality instruction for fewer students (typically those needing remediation) as opposed to reaching larger numbers. They also support programs that rely on professional staff, use fixed schedules and require student attendance, and are conducted in school buildings.

The Public School Leaders

Public school systems in the five cities vary widely in size, but they share other important characteristics. Their students are drawn primarily from minority groups; Hispanics and
African-Americans comprised more than 70% of the students in each of these districts. More importantly, their students are not doing well. Among these school districts, not one had more than half of their students proficient in math and/or reading. (Casserly 2004). Graduation rates from these school systems are also abysmal.

Calls for greater accountability have emphasized standardized tests of mathematics and reading, as evidenced by strong Presidential and bipartisan Congressional endorsement in the passage of the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. States must administer standardized tests and set standards of performance on these tests for their students. This strong concern for accountability through standardized tests has two serious implications for school leaders’ goals in promoting after-school programs. First, principals and superintendents look to extended school hours as a way to improve reading and math scores. Second, the use of after-school time for academic instruction may displace pre-existing after-school programs and draw school resources away from a more diversified set of after-school activities.

These impacts are illustrated in Philadelphia. The school superintendent introduced remedial instruction programs that extended the school day for students in need and for
teachers; the programs were mandatory and pre-empted alternatives. Requiring teachers to extend their work day makes them unavailable for non-school-based, after-school activities and affects the ability of non-school providers to recruit teachers to staff their after-school programs. The schools typically pay higher per hour rates than do other after-school providers, so the rapid creation of many supplementary income opportunities for teachers adversely affects the labor market for staff of other programs. Perhaps more importantly, the public schools’ extension of the school day for children inevitably affects parents’ ability to schedule after-school activities, as well as the times during which non-school providers can offer programs. Since the public schools literally define what constitutes “after-school” hours, changes in their schedule have direct and dramatic impacts on the parameters of other organizations’ after-school programs.

**Teachers’ Unions**

The school system leaders are joined by the teachers’ unions, an important political force, in their concern for enhanced academic achievement. At the local level, studies have found them to be the most powerful group in decision making in large city districts, with their influence extending beyond wage issues to include policy matters such as class sizes and the length of the school day and year (Peterson 1976). At the state level, they are among the most influential interest groups in legislative decisions (Thomas and Hrebenar 1996). And in Congress, teachers’ unions and governors are among the most important interest groups on education issues. Yet, teachers’ unions, operating in all of the case-study cities but Richmond, are surprisingly silent on the issue of enhanced after-school programs.

Despite their relative silence, the unions are important players in the after-school policy subsystem. Their impact on after-school policy takes the form of a “nondecision.” Bachrach and Baratz use this term to refer to the ability of some groups to keep items off the agenda of public decision makers (Bachrach and Baratz 1970). Teachers’ unions give highest priority to increasing the base pay or annual salary of teachers. Since resources are always scarce, their nondecision is to give less priority to allocating money for after-school programs. Therefore, teachers’ unions have not been strong advocates of expanded after-school programs (although they rarely voice direct opposition). However, without teachers’ unions’ active support, additional funding for expanded after-school programs is unlikely to come through public school budgets.

Nondecisions in collective bargaining adversely impact after-school programs. First, contract provision make after-school work less financially rewarding than regular instruction (in contrast to overtime earnings in other occupations that are typically higher than the average hourly wages) and give it an economic attraction that is stronger for less experienced teachers than for senior teachers. Second, with one exception, teachers’ contracts in these cities do not set standards for the volume of after-school activity. Only in Philadelphia did the contract specify a minimum annual number (40,000) of after-school hours of activity, an average of 53 minutes each school day at each of the 250 schools (H. Moss, personal communication). That number had not been increased in the memory of any of the individuals interviewed in Philadelphia, indicating a low priority during contract negotiations.

**Federal and State Education Agencies**

Federal and state policies since the mid-1990s reflect these agencies’ alignment with the academic side of the conflict. The 21st Century Learning Center (21st CCLC) program
authorized by Congress in 1994 at the urging of President Clinton began as a relatively small demonstration program operated by the federal Department of Education. The funds would “support efforts by communities to make greater use of school buildings when schools were not in session.”

In 1998, Congress significantly increased its appropriation and created a nationwide, competitive grants program. National funding jumped from $1 million in federal fiscal year 1997 to $40 million in 1998, to $200 million in 1999, and eventually reached $1 billion in 2002. It was given added political attraction by tailoring it to support the federal welfare reform initiative that required low-income mothers to increase their work effort; afterschool programs could supplement childcare funding.

The case study cities illustrate the role of the new federal funding in expanding afterschool programs in ways that supported the academic coalition. In 1998, Baltimore, Detroit, and Philadelphia were receiving no funding under the program; by 2001, funding had grown to $544,000 in Baltimore, $1.4 million in Detroit, and over $900,000 in Philadelphia. In Oakland, funding grew in this period from $158,000 to $1.1 million. Only Richmond did not benefit from the rapid expansion in the 21st CCLC program, primarily because local officials did not seek to participate.

**State Education Agencies**

State agencies have been part of the academic coalition in two ways. First, they administer the federal 21st CCLC program. There is little evidence that states have sought to place their own stamp on this funding; instead they follow federal guidelines and allocate funds to programs linked to schools and emphasizing academic goals.

Second, states can create new programs of their own. However, only one case-study state, California, used state revenues to create a new program (California Department of Education 2007; Children Now 2005). Three elementary schools and one middle school in Oakland were funded through this program in 2002–4. The focus of California’s effort is to create school-community partnerships, thus underscoring the academic role of after-school programming.

**The Developmental Coalition**

After-school expansion has been actively undertaken by a diverse coalition including voluntary and local public agencies. Their policy core belief is providing opportunities for holistic youth development, leading them to support programs that: reach all or most youth regardless of academic performance, are staffed by individuals with a variety of skills and interests including nonprofessionals, are structured for the convenience of the youth and their families, and take place in a variety of settings not limited to classrooms.

**Voluntary Agencies**

The developmental coalition includes four types of voluntary agencies—traditional afterschool providers, child welfare agencies, community and faith-based groups, and specialized groups. Each seeks to actively expand after-school opportunities in ways more consistent with the developmental policy core belief than the academic core belief. At the same time, they are divided by some of the secondary conflicts outlined earlier.
Traditional Providers
The Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the Boys and Girls Clubs are two providers with long histories. The national YMCA is a confederacy of local chapters (Zald 1970). Although the national organization provides technical assistance, a local YMCA must sustain itself with philanthropic donations, membership dues, and fees for services.

The YMCAs have followed America’s more affluent population to the suburbs. For example, in metropolitan Philadelphia, only five of 11 branches or facilities of the organization remain in the city; an even larger share of revenue is derived from the suburban sites. Although the organization has accepted some public funding to subsidize after-school programs for poorer central city children, their dominant enrollment is among families who can afford to pay dues and fees.

The YMCAs’ programmatic emphasis on physical activity is consistent with the core belief of the developmental coalition. Their facilities include swimming pools and facilities for basketball and karate lessons. There has traditionally been limited academic emphasis; however, in recent years, parents and public funders have emphasized “homework help.”

Boys and Girls Clubs began in the United States in 1860; now 3,400 local clubs serve about 4 million youth. Like the YMCA, the organization is a federation of local chapters that have independent boards and are largely self-financing. The chapters generally consist of several recreation centers in metropolitan areas; a handful of chapters lack facilities entirely and run programs in schools, parks, or other locations. Boys and Girls Clubs, because of their stated mission to serve urban areas, have not followed population to the suburbs to the same degree as the YMCA.

Boys and Girls Clubs are also aligned with developmental objectives. Programs typically follow a drop-in model. In recent years, many chapters have incorporated more formal activities clubs, such as Newspaper Club or Model Car Club, that require a longer term commitment. Boys and Girls Clubs vary in their size and community influence. In Philadelphia, the seven citywide sites serve 12,000 youth annually, whereas in Baltimore, the two downtown clubs claim only about 300 members. Costs for these programs vary widely as well; Detroit’s four sites spent $1.4 million in 2004, whereas Baltimore’s annual budget is only about $350,000.

Child Welfare Agencies
These agencies traditionally supervise a network of foster parents and operate residential facilities for children, as well as provide in-home support to troubled families. Some also offer pre-school day care. Although initially established by volunteers and religious institutions, these organizations now are largely supported by contracts with government. As more public funding became available for after-school programs, these agencies recognized this opportunity to expand services.

Child welfare agencies have relatively little to contribute to academically oriented after-school programs, but they are already working with children who can benefit from these activities. For more developmentally oriented programs, however, child welfare agencies can provide staff oriented to counseling and social work. In order to enter the after-school service arena, these agencies have often sought to partner with schools or other organizations that complement their capacity to deliver such services.

Community and Religious Organizations
These organizations share the characteristics of being relatively small scale and serving only a geographic subset of a city’s population. Community organizations usually focus on voluntary efforts to enhance the neighborhood, but some community organizations become
service providers with the funding coming from dues or fees from participants or from government grants. In many urban centers, community groups provide after-school activities for children within their neighborhood. This may be done independently or in cooperation with a government agency, such as a parks department or public school that provides the facility.

Religious institutions are among the most numerous nonprofit entities in the United States. (Salamon 1992). Most large cities have multiple congregations of various faiths operating in even the poorest neighborhoods. Some of these churches sponsor after-school activities for children of their members. Although the activities may include religious instruction, they often are purely social or educational. Larger churches may have paid staff for these programs, but many smaller congregations depend on volunteers. The nature of the physical facilities varies widely, but many such after-school activities take place in buildings without dedicated space for this purpose.

These organizations have tended to pursue after-school programs in ways that are consistent with their core mission, community, or spiritual development. Such programming is more consistent with the developmental strategy. Further, their convenient location and accessibility to the children in need make them desirable for parents not seeking formal commitments; their limited funding, constrained physical facilities, and lack of professional staff make nonacademic programs easiest to establish.

Specialized After-School Organizations
Each of the previously discussed types of organizations engaged in after-school activities as an expansion of services closer to its core mission. However, another set of organizations has the primary, and usually exclusive, purpose to provide after-school programs. Although sometimes including an academic component, these organizations’ goals and programs are more consistent with the developmental core policy belief.

The nature of these diverse entities is illustrated with two examples: Think Detroit and America Scores. Think Detroit was established in Detroit in 1997 by two local lawyers, who were dissatisfied with the scale and quality of the Police Athletic Leagues (PAL) programs. It combines opportunities for sports (mostly baseball and soccer) competition with training in computer use. The number of participants grew from about 120 initially to about 3600 in 2004, with a strong effort to recruit girls and promote gender parity. The teams play at municipal parks, and the organization’s leaders have been active in promoting the renovation of these facilities (E. Mendel, personal communication). There is a small paid staff, but most of the 500 team coaches and referees are volunteers drawn from among the participants’ parents and trained by the staff.

America Scores combine soccer, literacy, and community service by recruiting and training public school teachers as soccer and literacy coaches in urban areas. Founded by a public school teacher in Washington, DC, in 1994, their underlying philosophy is that children will “use the teamwork they learn on the soccer field to support each other as poets and authors in the classroom” (America Scores 2005). Chapters have at least two teams (one girl, one boy) that play soccer 3 days per week. During the other 2 days per week, the children participate in poetry workshops in the fall and literacy-related community service in the spring. America Scores currently operates in 12 urban areas, serving roughly 3,500 children (E. Mendel, personal communication). These organizations emphasize continuity as part of their approach to service delivery and thus prize accountability over convenience. They are relatively new players in the policy subsystem and have not yet developed local umbrella organizations to advocate for their common interests.
Municipal Agencies
Although public school systems are central to the academic coalition, three municipal agencies have roles in after-school services and generally share the developmental rather than academic policy core belief. For each, the provision of after-school services is ancillary to their central mission. Yet each has facilities or resources that have been utilized to different extents for the provision of such services.

Parks Departments
Their names may vary from simply the “Parks Department” to Oakland’s “Life Enrichment Agency,” but nearly every local government has a unit responsible for maintaining and operating public parks. Most city parks departments also operate recreational centers and staff programs at recreational centers located inside public parks (Young 1995). Many of these programs are scheduled during nonschool hours, making them important providers of after-school activities.

Across the five case-study cities, the park systems vary; yet, each operates numerous recreation centers ranging from 174 centers in Philadelphia to nineteen in Richmond. Whereas Oakland spends the bulk of its budget on maintenance of these facilities, other cities such as Baltimore and Richmond invest considerable sums in programs and organized activities.

As actors in the after-school policy subsystem, the leaders of these parks departments enjoy some advantages, but they also have some handicaps. Generally, parks directors view facility maintenance as their main concern. Thus, parks directors typically give highest priority in their budgets to maintenance functions and expand into programmatic activities cautiously. In times of tight budgets, this means limited allocations for after-school programs.

When they do sponsor programs, the parks departments usually follow a model that is oriented to athletic activities, does not impose strict attendance requirements and may be of a “drop-in” form, has relatively high ratios of participants to staff, and uses staff hired because of their skills in a particular sport or activity rather than academic preparation for teaching youth. Examples include open hours at recreation centers for playing basketball or other games and designated children’s times at pools.

Public Libraries
Large cities almost all operate library systems. Although the most numerous clients may be adults, these agencies usually have a children’s division and make available material suitable for younger readers. Like parks departments, to the extent that libraries serve children after school, it is mostly on an unscheduled or drop-in basis. The children themselves decide why they come, and how they will use the libraries.

The case-study cities’ library departments vary in how aggressively their leadership has sought to play a role in after-school programming. Each has a “homework help” program, but they differ in structure and scope. There is little or no effort to monitor use of the services and find ways to make it more attractive or productive.

At least two factors help explain the limited engagement of library leaders in the after-school policy subsystem. First, they see their primary mission as serving adult constituents, and there is little political incentive to divert resources to new children’s programs. Second, the staff is not oriented or trained in serving youth and is not always comfortable with taking on new roles involving spending time with school age children. Although one might expect that libraries would be closely aligned with the values of the academic coalition, only in Philadelphia has there been a clear effort to coordinate with the school system and
familiarize the library staff with the public school curriculum and help them play a more instructive role. The core beliefs of the developmental coalition demand less of libraries as they participate in after-school expansion.

**Police Departments**

The concentration of criminal activity among young men, including adolescents, has meant that police departments are inevitably involved with youth. Thus, most police departments have PAL, in which police officers sponsor athletic activities for youth in their jurisdictions. The PAL programs often require volunteer activity by officers, although in some cities the police departments pay officers to take on these responsibilities (National Association of Police Athletic Leagues 2005).

If the case-study cities are typical, PAL is now a vestigial program. The police departments’ budgets for the programs are quite modest, and the police leadership is not seeking to expand them (nor are mayors pressing police departments to expand this role). Although they have historically played a role in after-school activity, police departments and their PAL programs are not viewed by most municipal leaders as a source of future growth.

In these ways, parks, libraries, and police share a preference for convenience over accountability, one of the key secondary conflicts identified; similarly, since these agencies are not staffed by professional educators, they are likely to use a wider array of skilled and unskilled workers in the provision of services. These agencies’ facilities are not used solely or, even primarily, for the education of children; consequently they favor programmatic activities that do not require classroom settings and are more likely to seek to serve greater numbers of children rather than emphasize enhanced quality. Thus, in regard to the secondary conflicts, these public agencies share a perspective.

**The Brokers**

Elected officials and foundation leaders do not consistently align with either coalition. They can be viewed as brokers, seeking to bring diverse actors together and advocating for more funding—with the foundations seeking to leverage public funds and local elected officials seeking to gain more state and federal support.

**Elected Officials: The Roles of Councils and Mayors**

Previous analysis of spending for a range of children’s services in the UHI cities revealed that local agencies often fund the bulk of their efforts with intergovernmental aid rather than local tax dollars (Brecher et al. 2004). Although not typically willing or able to lend significant new fiscal support to after-school activities, mayors are more often likely to lend political support to the goal of after-school expansion and enhancements. They do so not by taking sides in the policy core conflict, but by helping both coalitions gain more funding from intergovernmental and philanthropic sources and by using their leadership position to coordinate the activities of multiple providers in ways that reach compromises over secondary conflicts.

For example, in Philadelphia and Detroit, mayors contributed political capital to helping promote after-school opportunities. Detroit’s Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick was elected in 2002 with a “Kids, Cops, Clean” campaign slogan. His agenda was shaped by the local arm of the UHI and required city agencies to donate resources in youth, public safety, and sanitation. The Mayor was also outspoken about corporate responsibility, getting donations of technology, materials, or funds from the business community for after-school programs. In
Philadelphia, Mayor Street was interested in after-school programs and youth issues since his days as a city councilmember, and he was a vocal advocate for increased spending on youth in distressed neighborhoods before his election in 1999. The Children’s Investment Strategy (CIS) was a mayoral campaign to increase funding for youth development and prevention services, including after-school programs. As of 2004, CIS was overseeing 150 community and school-based after-school programs, serving a total of 7,000 students, with funding mostly through state and federal grants.

Oakland and Richmond lacked strong mayors, yet local funds played a significant role in providing after-school programs. California’s tight cap on property taxes can be overridden if localities pass referenda authorizing supplementary taxes and advocates in Oakland used this mechanism to enhance funding for children’s services. In 1996, after intensive lobbying and campaign efforts by several youth advocacy groups, Oakland voters passed the “Kids First Initiative” (Measure K) to set aside 2.5% of general funds each year for the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, which makes grants to government agencies and nonprofit youth service providers.

Richmond benefits less than the other cities from intergovernmental aid. This is particularly evident in terms of the federal programs that support after-school programs. In Virginia, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families surplus has not been directed to after-school services, and Richmond’s school district has not received any 21st CCLC funds for this purpose. Accordingly, when the Richmond City Council sought to expand after-school services, it did so with local funds and targeted them to the local parks department, primarily because its programs had low unit costs. Richmond’s Department of Parks and Recreation’s budget grew from $13.2 million in 1997 to $19 million in 2004.

The Foundations

In the 1990s, several foundations identified the misuse of out-of-school time as a major problem upon which they could have a positive impact. The foundations have been national public advocates and forceful local leaders to expand and enhance after-school activities. The common thrust has been to use multiyear grants as leverage to encourage greater public sector support and to upgrade the performance of existing providers.

In the late 1990s, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation worked closely with USDOE pushing for an expanded federal role in after-school program funding. Mott supported the expansion of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers from a relatively tiny program into a nationwide competitive grant program with evaluation assistance, leadership development trainings, and the creation of a regular publication to share best practices. (Collaborative Communications Group 2005).

A more typical foundation strategy is to work in one or more specific communities. As players in local after-school policy subsystems, the foundations generally seek to add capacity, professionalize staff and enhance quality in other ways, and distribute services in ways that target the neediest areas. Three foundations, operating in four of the case-study cities, illustrate these.

Open Society Institute—Baltimore

The After-School Corporation (TASC), a nonprofit institution, was created in New York City in 1998 with a $125 million donation from the Open Society Institute (OSI). OSI viewed improving the quality and quantity of after-school programs as a method to address disparities in educational outcomes between rich and poor families. TASC’s after-school programs are housed in schools, but run by voluntary agencies. They are formal programs,
where children must register. High capacity (over 100 children per site) is required, as is data collection and evaluation.

Based on its perceived success in New York City, the OSI made a commitment to after-school enhancement in Baltimore, where it had been active in other causes. Since 1998, OSI-Baltimore has made $2.3 million in grants to after-school program providers, advocates and researchers. OSI-Baltimore also granted $6.2 million over several years to the UHI arm in Baltimore. This grant funded demonstration programs to develop best practices, gave technical assistance to community-based providers, and leveraged public and private funds for after-school, totaling $40 million by 2004. They also founded the After-school Institute beginning in 1999, which provides technical assistance to start up or expand programs. These grants do not “push” a single model of after-school provision but do make use of quality standards.

William Penn Foundation—Philadelphia
The William Penn Foundation initially worked with the United Way in supporting after-school programs. In 2000, United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania initiated the after-school initiative through a partnership with the city. The program funded after-school programs and received approximately $1 million from the city to increase the number of program slots. The William Penn Foundation chose four neighborhoods in Philadelphia to test these efforts, starting in 2003 with $3 million, and including 31 nonprofit organizations. In addition to funding specific programs, they provide technical assistance and are contributing to after-school research through evaluations of these neighborhood-based interventions. (William Penn Foundation 2004).

The Skillman Foundation—Detroit
In 2003, the Skillman Foundation created the After-School Forum and the After-School Roundtable to provide grants that build the capacity of small to mid-sized providers, in response to their perception that such programs may be preferred by many families because of their low cost and accessibility. The After-School Roundtable brings together public officials, city agency leaders, and advocacy organization heads to facilitate the exchange of best practices and identify barriers to participation in after-school. The Skillman Foundation also created a Youth Cultural Arts Initiative in 2003 to complement the sports and recreation focus of their previous grant making for after-school programs. This initiative gave $2.5 million in multiyear grants to nine new or expanding cultural arts programs in Detroit.

As brokers, local politicians and foundations have been effective in bringing the issue greater visibility and legitimacy, thus resulting in some expansion of services. At the same time, their “ducking” of the core conflict between the two advocacy coalitions has not provided a bridge to consensus that would enable greater and more enduring change.

THE ROLE OF ANALYSIS: INSIGHTS FROM THE ACF

The ACF initially suggested that analysis is most useful in helping achieve compromises over secondary conflicts, but, as noted earlier, more recent reflections have recognized potential for compromises over core belief conflicts based on promoting understanding of the nature of the problem. This is applicable to after-school policy. Analysis will not answer the question of whether academics are more important than other dimensions of youth development, but analysis can be targeted to three issues that have potential to align the interests of the two coalitions—the design of acceptable models for collaboration among agencies,
the design of incentives for public school system participation in non-academic programs, and the design of a viable financing model.

Collaboration: How Can the Players Play Well with Others?

It is hard to imagine a credible scenario for expanding after-school opportunities in which one type of provider gains a monopoly. Rather expansion is likely to require a great deal of cooperation among organizations that have little previous history of cooperative ventures.

The most plausible candidate for large-scale expansion of after-school programs is the public school systems. But even if they wanted to (a doubtful proposition discussed below), the public schools would have a hard time meeting the needs on their own. Although they may have suitable physical facilities, they are unlikely to be able to muster sufficient and suitable staff, and they often cannot sufficiently engage parents and children. The schools are strong candidates for meeting much of the need, but they will require partners from among community-based organizations and municipal agencies.

The experience with the NCLB requirement that schools partner with other organizations indicates that such cooperation can be achieved. But greater expansion will mean going beyond limited demonstrations. After-school programs may become the testing ground for whether substantial joint efforts by public school leaders and community-based organizations (who previously were often harsh critics of the schools) can work together. Analysts could constructively examine the experience of collaboration to identify the most effective models and design politically acceptable variations for wider replication.

Incentives for Public School Leaders to Make After-School More Than an After Thought

Public schools will have to be important players in any successful future expansion of after-school opportunities. Yet, to date, public-school officials have been, at best, reluctant players, avoiding leadership roles in the movement for after-school expansion.

Given intense pressure to improve academic performance, school system leaders are understandably reluctant to take on new responsibilities and advocate that they be held accountable for an even broader scope of services. They have been interested in after-school programs primarily as an instrument to improve academic performance.

Involving public school administrators and the leaders of teachers unions in promoting after-school opportunities is likely to require at least two changes. First, after-school programs must adopt a programmatic model that is, at least in part, consistent with the public schools’ mission of promoting academic skills. Unless the activities include some attention to tutoring or help with homework, public school leaders are likely to continue to view them as a sideshow not essential to their basic mission. Analysts may not be able to help deal with this core conflict, but evidence-based explorations of how compatible the less academic goals of the youth development camp can be with academic achievement could help bridge the divide.

Finally, the politically powerful teachers’ unions are more likely to take on after-school advocacy if its expansion is tied more directly to the economic fortunes of their members. Currently, work in after-school programs is attractive to only a minority of teachers who trade the extra time commitment for wages that are below their regular hourly average. Some creativity designing compensation schemes to be implemented via collective bargaining may be useful to establish after-school work as an accepted norm that
provides more widely sought rewards, but which also opens employment opportunities to individuals without teaching credentials and keeps program cost at politically acceptable levels. Analysis of possible solutions to this dilemma would help create a powerful ally in the political battles likely to be necessary at state capitols in order to fund and implement expansion of after-school opportunities.

Financing: Who Will Pay and How Much?

Expanding after-school opportunities for children in low-income families will inevitably require more public expenditures, regardless of which side of the policy core conflict prevails. The national data presented earlier suggest that more than half (57%) of all urban school age children have either no formal after-school activities or participate only once or twice per week. Thus, "success" in expanding after-school activities to all urban school children would require almost a doubling of the current effort. This cannot happen without a roughly similar increase in the level of public subsidy.

Within the context of an unresolved policy core belief conflict, the recent expansion in activity has been funded largely in an opportunistic, rather than strategic, fashion. Advocates have not argued that money should be provided in a specified manner and then sought it from the appropriate source; instead, funds have been sought from a variety of sources based on where "surplus" or "new" money was available, with the case for support tailored to the sponsor and ranging from promises of reduced crime and teen pregnancy to claims for higher reading test scores.

This is a short-run strategy that is unlikely to be sustained. The one relatively steady source of new money, the federal Department of Education's NCLB legislation, appears to have peaked with annual appropriations falling in the latest years. Given the outlook for growing federal deficits, this program is unlikely to provide the needed funding.

Both coalitions need a clear and feasible model for expanded public funding, and there is potential for them to agree on funding issues. Three funding options can be identified—a social service model, an education model, and a recreation model. The social service model would fund after-school like most social services: that is, a mix of large proportions of federal and state funding. Local agencies might deliver services under state supervision, but little fiscal responsibility would rest with local government. The education model would follow the current pattern for financing public schools: a relatively modest federal role (about 9%) and a roughly equal division between state and local sources with a trend toward a larger state role. The final option would follow the current pattern for parks and recreational services: local governments largely on their own for financing and provision of services.

A good case can be made for any of the options. The eventual choice is likely to depend on the fiscal and political pressures brought to bear at each level of government. The most likely scenario at the federal level in the coming years is for little or no opportunity for a growing fiscal commitment, and local governments (especially those with concentrations of poor families) also face great fiscal strains. This points to the states as the most feasible source of new funding, perhaps through an education model in which states target funds for after-school as they increase their share of public school expenditures. But it remains an open issue whether sufficient political pressure can be brought to bear at the state level to pursue this strategy. Although teachers' unions are a powerful force in state capitols, suggesting a funding advantage for the academic coalition, the teachers have other priorities
(notably higher salaries); the needed political support may be more likely to emerge if some compromise is struck between teachers’ unions and the “fun” coalition to support enhanced funding.

The ability of states or localities to fund new after-school opportunities will depend, in part, on how expensive they are. Programs vary enormously in annual costs per child from about $600 to $4 000 (Kane and Sawhill 2003, 68–9). Sources of variation include the duration of the program, the type of staff used and the ratio of staff to children, the type of facilities used, and the programmatic emphasis.

The prevailing trend among groups advocating for after-school programs is to press for “enhancement” as well as expansion. This takes the form of pressures for greater training of staff, lower child to staff ratios, more academic content, and longer programs that require and monitor regular attendance. Each of these enhancements pushes up the unit cost of after-school programs. To illustrate, national estimates are that conventional programs run by the Boys and Girls Clubs average about $1 000 per year; in contrast, the model proposed in New York City for funding through its TASC has an average cost of about $2 800 per year—and local advocates criticized that as too low (Chen 2005). Analysts should address the trade-off between unit cost and volume of children served. Clearly substandard programs should be avoided, but the evolving standards for after-school programs should be kept flexible enough to accommodate services that can be kept affordable by realistic political standards.

In sum, the policy core belief conflict over after-school programs has impeded the expansion of such programs in cities throughout America. Key stakeholders may not identify explicitly with either the academic or holistic camp, yet their ability to form successful alliances is greatly comprised by this conflict. The ACF proved useful both for understanding the array of stakeholders within the new subsystem of after-school policy and for helping identify an analytic strategy for moving the agenda forward. The framework points to three areas in which objective analysis can lead to approaches that bridge secondary conflicts subject to compromise, thereby strengthening existing coalitions and helping to build bridges relating to core conflicts without necessarily resolving those conflicts.

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