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ABSTRACT

Are sectorial relations among nonprofit organizations, business, and government truly dependent, or are they instead a complex mix of dependent and independent actions? This working paper is based on a dissertation in progress, which is a comparative analysis of how private foundations influence the reform of urban public education. It compares the role of Chicago-based foundations during three phases of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act--development (1986-88); passage (1988-89); and implementation (1989-93). Specifically, the research seeks to identify the nature and consequences of the behavior of 10 Chicago foundations regarding the development, passage, and implementation the Chicago Reform Act. The participant-observation study obtained data through interviews and document analysis. The Chicago case demonstrates that the true balance between sectorial independence and dependence lie somewhere in the middle. Four examples of foundation behavior are presented that illustrate how independence and dependence have coexisted in Chicago's scenario of sectorial relations. As with so many issues in complex, fast-moving public policy arenas, it may be that ambiguity and uncertainty are unavoidable. One figure is included. (LMI)

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**SECTORIAL RELATIONS & CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM:
A Preliminary View from the Foundation Sector**

A WORKING PAPER

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Without Permission of the Author)**

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The starting point for any serious consideration of the place of nonprofits in the American polity is to accept the policy implications of the scholarly recognition of sectorial interpenetration: that the nonprofit sector is a dependent sector, not an independent one. The choices that lie before it--and before the public as it seeks to redefine the role of government and its relation to the universe of private institutions--have primarily to do with the types and consequences of various kinds of dependency. (Peter Dobkin Hall, 1992, p. 106)

Hall urges us to abandon the rhetoric of nonprofit sector independence. While his observation of significant interpenetration between the sectors makes sense...the ideal of nonprofit independence seems to me vitally important and not worth abandoning. Also, it is not clear from Hall's argument that interpenetration between sectors is the same as loss of independence. (Mark Moulton, University of Chicago, Course Memo, March, 1994)

Introduction

This is a working paper, written in the midst of intensive field research for my dissertation. As such, it is a preliminary document, testing publicly for the first time questions and hunches woven together from the literature and my own data collection. Ideally, this paper will prompt readers to challenge me to dig deeper and/or differently as I continue my research and analysis.

I am grappling at present with a major theoretical question in the nonprofit literature, and a question that looms as one theme for my dissertation. Simply stated, are sectorial relations truly dependent, or are they instead a complex mix of dependent and independent actions? This question emerges from the recently documented interpenetration of money, people and ideas among the three sectors--nonprofit, business and governmental--of the American social welfare system. Leading scholars, such as Peter Dobkin Hall (1992), believe that sectorial interpenetration and interdependence go hand-in-hand, but acknowledge that more research will be required on the "types and consequences of various kinds of dependency" before the true nature of relations between nonprofits and the other

ectors is well understood.

The first half of this paper sorts through the ideas, writings and analysis that drive this paper's theoretical question. After a brief overview of my dissertation, I turn to a substantial discussion of what we know about sectorial interpenetration and interdependence and its relation to foundations. The second half of the paper is devoted to preliminary insights Chicago offers about the relations among foundations, other organizations in the nonprofit sector, the business sector, and governmental sector. Central to this discussion is an attempt to uncover more knowledge about the true nature of sectorial interpenetration and interdependence. As this final section will show, the Chicago reform story has much to say about the theory of sectorial interdependence and its implications for foundation strategy and tactics in the educational arena.

When this paper begins to focus on Chicago, it treats foundations as distinct from the nonprofit sector. Thus, the traditional three-sector model of the American social welfare system is expanded to four sectors--foundation, nonprofit, governmental and business. The logic in doing so is sound. One of the early lessons from my Chicago research is that the analysis of sectorial relations makes most sense when organizational sub-sectors are the unit of analysis. Entire sectors, especially the nonprofit sector, are too large and diverse to offer much value as an analytical unit. For example, there are over 1.4 million nonprofit organizations in the United States, including organizational types as diverse as social clubs, business associations, labor unions, political parties, political action agencies, funding intermediaries (eg: foundations), churches, and service providers (Salamon, 1992). While each of these organizations operate as legally recognized nonprofits, their missions vary

widely. The business and governmental sectors could be similarly partitioned, but I will not do so since they are not the focus of my analysis. Whenever possible, however, I will try to specify the type of governmental or business entity with which foundations are interacting.

Dissertation Overview: Private Foundations and Public School Policy

My dissertation is a comparative analysis of how private foundations influence the reform of urban public education. More than examining foundation operations, it grapples with how foundations do and do not contribute to the public purpose when they become deeply involved in urban education policy. To explore this issue in detail, the role of Chicago-based foundations in public school reform will be compared. Specifically, the study explores their role in three phases of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act: development (1986-1988); passage (1988-1989); and, implementation (1989-1993).¹

A two-part question drives the investigation: *What was the nature, and what were the consequences, of the behavior of Chicago foundations regarding the development, passage and*

¹ Signed into law in December 1988, and enacted in July 1989, the Reform Act's major elements at the school level include: (1) creating local school councils (comprised of 6 parents, 2 community members, 2 teachers, 1 non-voting student, and the principal) that have the power to hire and fire the principal, control the school's discretionary budget, and develop a school improvement plan; (2) removing principals' tenure rights and placing them on four-year, renewable contracts; (3) giving principals more authority to hire and fire teachers, and define the school's curriculum and pedagogy within standard parameters and with assistance from an advisory teacher committee; and (4) shifting control of State Chapter I funds from the central office to local school councils based on per pupil eligibility.

At the central office level, the act created a 28-member School Board Nominating Commission, with all but 5 mayoral representatives "bubbled-up" from local school councils. The Commission nominates candidates for mayoral appointment to the 15-member board. A 7-member interim board, chosen independently by the mayor, was in place during the act's first year. A national search for a superintendent and a 25 percent cut in the administration were also mandated. Finally, the existing School Finance Authority, a state-established oversight body, was given new authority to monitor implementation of the reform act.

*implementation of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act?*² The first part looks at what shapes and drives foundation behavior from both inside and outside foundations, with special attention to organizational characteristics, sectorial interpenetration and interdependence, and the scope of reform policy. The question's second part examines the ramifications of foundation behavior from literature-based perspectives on foundations and public affairs.

This is a participant-observer study--from 1986-1992 I was the lead education officer, and subsequently a consultant, for the Joyce Foundation. As a result, personal experiences, knowledge and reflections will figure prominently in my final analysis. I am attempting to "triangulate" my personal understandings with three types of data. Individual observations and perceptions on the role of foundations--gathered through interviews--is the first type of data. The second type is the general trends in grants and personnel activity of a large group of Chicago foundations. These trends are being determined by reviewing foundation tax records and annual reports, with interviews providing information on personnel activity. The third type is statements and actions regarding the goals, objectives, strategies and tactics regarding reform of three individual foundations--the Chicago Community Trust, Joyce Foundation, and Woods Fund of Chicago. These data are being gathered through a review of each foundation's internal documents and intensive interviews with foundation personnel.

This paper draws on each of these data sources. At this time, however, all information is presented in an anonymous form. All interviews are being conducted with the guarantee that no specific attributions will be made until approved by the respective

² The highlighted terms are defined in a standard manner: *nature* refers to "the essential characteristics and qualities of a person or thing;" *consequences* refers to "something that logically or naturally follows from an action or condition -- *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Third Edition, 1992.

interviewee.³ Moreover, the three foundations have been promised that nothing from their internal documents will be conveyed in an attributable form without their approval. The necessity of these agreements speaks to the sectorial interdependency underlying Chicago school reform, not to mention the intense political nature of the process and its leading actors.

Sectorial Relations: Emerging Theory

The frame for my dissertation is the consequences of private money in the public policy process. As conveyed in several significant works, this issue is really the dilemma of shifting roles and responsibilities between public and private entities in the modern welfare state. During the 1980s, many scholars woke up to the fact that the line between the public sector (government) and private sector (nongovernment) had become increasingly blurred (Ostrander et al., 1987). Never a static demarcation, the division of public and private responsibility for social services became more fluid in the 1980s, and should become even more so across the 1990s (Ostrander et al., 1987; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

Defining the sectorial structure of the American social welfare system more specifically than public and private, scholars have tended to talk about three sectors: government, considered public; business or market, considered private; and, nonprofit or voluntary, also considered private. The three sector-metaphor, first advanced by Theodore

³ During the fall of 1993 I conducted one round of interviews with leading actors in the Chicago school reform movement. Thirteen individuals were interviewed, representing the foundation, nonprofit and business sectors. Future interview rounds will include representatives from the governmental sector (both educational and elected officials).

Leavitt (1973) and the Filer Commission (1977), was originally based on the assumption of sectorial independence. Now, the nonprofit sector is thought to be highly interdependent with the other two sectors (Salamon & Abramson, 1981; Salamon, 1987; Ostrander et al, 1987; Odendahl, 1990; Van Til, 1990; Dobkin Hall, 1987 & 1992).

If truth be told, historians might find the burst of scholarly attention during the late-1980s to questions of sectorial relations a little surprising, if not ahistorical. As documented by two historians, scholars have long understood that the United States has depended on a mixture of private and public initiative to meet its social needs. Robert Bremmer, in his classic work on the history of American philanthropy (1960, 1988), indicates that charity served as a bonding force in American communities before governmental processes were established. Private do-gooders, in other words, were at work on public problems well before the Republic was founded. Merle Curti (1957 & 1958), in advocating philanthropic studies as a worthy scholarly endeavor, writes that philanthropy is both an index and agent of the national character: "an emphasis on voluntary initiative in spotting social evils and taking the first steps to remedy them has helped give America her national character" (1958, p. 433).

Nonprofits & Public Policy: Recognition of Weak Theory

So why the sudden attention in the late-1980s to sectorial interdependence? Simply stated, developments in the early-1980s revealed fundamental weaknesses in theories regarding the nonprofit sector. Although Bremmer and Curti, among others, had documented a longstanding interaction between the public and private sectors, this knowledge did not translate into theories about the more specific issue of nonprofit sector

behavior and its relation to a changing governmental sector.

According to Dobkin Hall (1987, 1992), two developments across the 1980s prompted recognition that nonprofits were not independent of government and business. The most significant of these developments was President Reagan's attempt to shift greater social service responsibility to the nonprofit sector (and to state and local governments), but without recognizing the significant dependence of nonprofits on federal funding (largely for the delivery of governmental services). At roughly the same time, nonprofits were going through organizational changes--rooted in the 1969 Tax Reform Act and financial crisis of the late-1970s--which were altering their nature and practices. These simultaneous changes in intersector relations and intrasector practices prompted many in the nonprofit community, and a few scholars, to search for a better understanding of the nonprofit sector and its relations with government.

Susan Ostrander and Stuart Langton edited a volume of essays in 1987 by many of the leading scholars and analysts on the nonprofit sector and its shifting relations with the public sector. The common message from these essays is that more powerful theories are needed regarding the nonprofit sector. The central task in developing more robust theory, summarizes Ostrander, is to identify relationships which reflect interdependence among the three sectors. Ostrander stresses that new case studies of sectorial relations should be "historically and perhaps locally specific and embedded in a social-political-economic-cultural context and the ongoing dynamic of change" (p. 128).

Clues for Theory: Educational Historiography & Organizational Theory

Dobkin Hall, in a 1992 revision of his essay for Ostrander & Langton's volume,

pushes the thinking on "the crisis in nonprofits scholarship" to a new level. In a compelling fashion, Dobkin Hall likens the current weakness in nonprofit research to that of educational history several decades ago. He identifies the problem as Bernard Bailyn identified it for education historiography in *Education in the Forming of American Society* (1960): "...the problem was not an absence of research, but the failure to pursue historical research within a theoretical framework that looks at the structural and functional relationship between education and other sectors of social, economic, political, and intellectual activity" (Bailyn, pp. 3-4; quoted by Dobkin Hall, p. 99).

Providing a clue for how to conceptualize new theory, Dobkin Hall urges that "organizational fields," as described by Paul J. DiMaggio & Walter W. Powell (1991), become the unit of analysis for nonprofit research. An organizational field is defined by DiMaggio & Powell as "those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products" (pp. 64-65). Somewhat simplified, an "organizational field" for a case study of Chicago school reform would be *all the public and private sector organizations responsible for and participating in the formation, development and implementation of public school reform policy.*

Dobkin Hall also offers a clue for how to categorize the complex sectorial relations that comprise the "organizational field" of Chicago school reform policy. Drawing on scholarly evidence, he highlights three types of sectorial links: fiscal ties, overlapping career patterns, and substantive connections (pp 100-104).

If the nonprofit sector is tied structurally to government and business as sources of revenue and personnel, as well as serving as a conduit for services

essential to both, it is also substantively connected...There is hardly an area of federal activity--foreign affairs, race relations, economic policy--in which the primary intellectual paradigms and consensus-building activities have not originated in the private nonprofit sector. (Dobkin Hall, 1992, p. 103)

These three general categories, in a modified form, are useful for a case study of Chicago school reform. Preliminary data, including my own professional experiences, suggest that sectorial relations in Chicago should be analyzed in terms of *the movement of money, the interactions between professionals, and the flow of ideas.*

Stepping beyond Dobkin Hall, I contend that these relations should be analyzed across and within four sectors--foundation, nonprofit, business and government--not the standard three. The most important reason for doing so is that much of the story regarding intersector relations in Chicago deals with interpenetration and interdependency between nonprofit agencies and foundations. Fortunately, it is logical to deal with foundations as a separate sector from nonprofits. While foundations and other nonprofits fall within the same organizational category for federal tax purposes, they are distinct entities in several ways. Most obviously, other nonprofits must raise or earn funds to do their work; whereas, most foundations live on an endowment of donated funds and do their work when they fund nonprofits.⁴ In this regard, Dobkin Hall offers a powerful concept for distinguishing foundations from other organizations:

Foundations are unique in that they are *legitimacy*-maximizers rather than

⁴ There are four types of grantmaking foundations (listed here with number of entities and dollar value of grants in billions as of 1989): Independent (28,699; \$6.0); Corporate* (1,587; \$1.4); Community (282; \$0.4); and, Operating (1,452; \$0.1). Community foundations typically have an ongoing fundraising program, but also have substantial endowments. Operating foundations typically run programs, for which they often raise funds. *NB: the corporate category only includes the funds that corporations give through their corporate foundations; direct corporate giving totalled about \$6 billion in 1989. (Salamon, 1992; Renz, 1991.)

revenue-maximizers. The forces to which they are most subject do not involve sufficiency of financial resources. They involve internal agreement on mission, objectives, goals, and programs and seeking congruence between those internal agreements and the expectations of external constituencies--government agencies, legislators, the courts, the press, professional and trade associations, scholars, donees. (Dobkin Hall, 1992, p. 225).

The Foundation Sector: Independence or Dependence?

What has been the tendency in the foundation scholarship on the independence-dependence scale? Dobkin Hall's concept of legitimacy maximization implies inherent dependency: although not revenue dependent, foundations are dependent on both internal and external forces for legitimization. More simply, the preceding half-page reminds us of the most fundamental aspect of foundation dependency: their money does nothing, except earn interest and pay administrative expenses, unless it is given away; foundations *enable*, their grantees *do*.

Despite these examples of interdependency, the literature on foundations, and most of the rhetoric of foundation leaders, speaks first and foremost to independence. One of the big ideas running through the writings on the role of foundations in public affairs is the concept of the democratic ideal. Simply stated, this holds that foundations' vital social role is to facilitate a free and wide-ranging debate of public issues and ideas, thereby helping to preserve America's democratic ideal. James Joseph, president of the Council on Foundations, believes that the value of foundations is far greater than the money they give. More importantly, they are "a free standing alternative voice in the governmental process, providing independently organized consideration of the public interest" (Joseph, 1987, p. vi). Similarly, Jane Mavity and Paul Ylvisaker (1977) argue that the greatest benefit of foundations' playing in the public affairs arena is that they "provide the government and

citizenry the reinforcing effects of a relatively independent third force" (p. 817).

The independence-dependence issue also shows up in the foundation literature as the dilemma of a shifting public and private frontier. Ben Whitaker (1979), in his history of foundations, states that a major dilemma for the few foundations in the 1960s and 1970s that took an active role in social change was knowing where to draw the public-private line. Without being aware of it, they often failed to limit their work to governmental change and funded government replacement or alternatives. Paul Ylvisaker's comment about the Ford Foundation's support of voter registration in Cleveland during the 1960s--which prompted Congress to stiffen foundation regulations in the 1969 Tax Reform Act--is apt: "They fell into a trap of their own making. Voter registration should be a function which the government carries out automatically" (Quoted in Whitaker, 1979, p. 227).

Popular discussions about the role of foundations frequently entail a celebration of independence. This past November, for example, I was part of a talk show on Chicago's public radio station (WBEZ-FM) that was intended as a primer on Chicago foundations. Four current foundation staff were also on the program. Based on reviewing a tape of the program, I know that we spent about one-quarter of the 40-minute show discussing the "independence and freedom" of foundations as their unique and critical characteristic. While I started the panel down this path, I was quickly echoed by each of the other panelists. In retrospect, as this paper indicates, I am not sure we were correct.

A Theoretical Conundrum with Practical Implications

A theoretical conundrum exists. A significant group of scholars have been calling since the late 1980s for policymakers and other practitioners to "accept the policy

implications of the scholarly recognition of sectorial interpenetration: that the nonprofit sector is a dependent sector, not an independent one" (Dobkin Hall, 1992, p. 106). At the same time, many scholars acknowledge that there is a significant gap in our theoretical understandings of interpenetration and interdependence. Most of these scholars concur that we lack conceptions for describing, explaining, predicting, evaluating, or prescribing the appropriate interplay of public and private (Langton, 1987).

Another aspect of the conundrum is that much of the scholarly discussion and analysis of sectorial interdependence has dealt with nonprofits as a monolithic sector. Recalling that our understandings of nonprofits took a big step forward in the 1980s when scholars moved beyond general discussions of public-private, we may now gain additional knowledge about sectorial interpenetration if we again fine tune the unit of analysis. By using nonprofits as the unit of analysis, we may be masking the real nature of interpenetration and interdependence. Instead, our analysis needs to operate simultaneously at multiple organizational levels. We need to pay attention to "organizational fields"--that is, all the organizational sectors working on an issue. At the same time, as much as we are concerned with nonprofits, we need to focus on particular types of organizations within that diverse sector. Thus, an exploration of relations between the foundation sector and other sectors in the "organizational field" of public education policy, may help extend the important work of Dobkin Hall and his colleagues.

A more focused, multi-level analysis should address one other aspect of the theoretical conundrum: the fact that scholars talk about sectorial interdependence while practitioners, at least in the foundation sector, still celebrate sectorial independence. My

hunch, as a former grantmaker, is that this gap will diminish when scholars can link their theoretical observations to strategic and tactical considerations for grantmakers. Chicago's current school reform movement may provide scholars the necessary insights to make such linkages.

Chicago School Reform: Sectorial Independence & Dependence?

Several months of field research on the role of foundations in the Chicago school reform movement suggests that much can be said about both the theory of sectorial interdependence and its implications for foundation strategy and tactics, at least in the educational policy field. While my comments are preliminary, I believe the following indicates that the Chicago reform story has theoretical and strategic lessons for both scholars and practitioners concerned with public-private responsibility in the American polity.

At the heart of this paper and the theoretical conundrum that ended the preceding section, is the push and pull of the paper's two opening quotes. The first, from Dobkin Hall, cites scholarly recognition of sectorial interpenetration and calls for acceptance of the policy implication: nonprofit sector dependence, not independence. The second quote--from Mark Moulton, a fellow doctoral student at the University of Chicago--challenges us to consider whether sectorial interpenetration necessarily means a loss of independence. Moulton's fear, which he expands on later in the quoted memo, is that the "*ideal* of nonprofit independence" should be preserved, as it has enabled foundations and other nonprofits to contribute mightily to society. Moulton ends his memo saying, "It is hard to imagine what Chicago, for instance, would have become without them." I bet that my foundation colleagues on the

radio program would have agreed with Moulton's argument.

In an attempt to make sense of the push and pull between interpenetration and independence, I now draw on preliminary evidence from the Chicago school reform movement. I look first at the nature of sectorial interpenetration in Chicago and second at the nature of interdependence; the intent is to sort out the true relations between the two.

A Tentative Model: The Organizational Field and Sectorial Relation

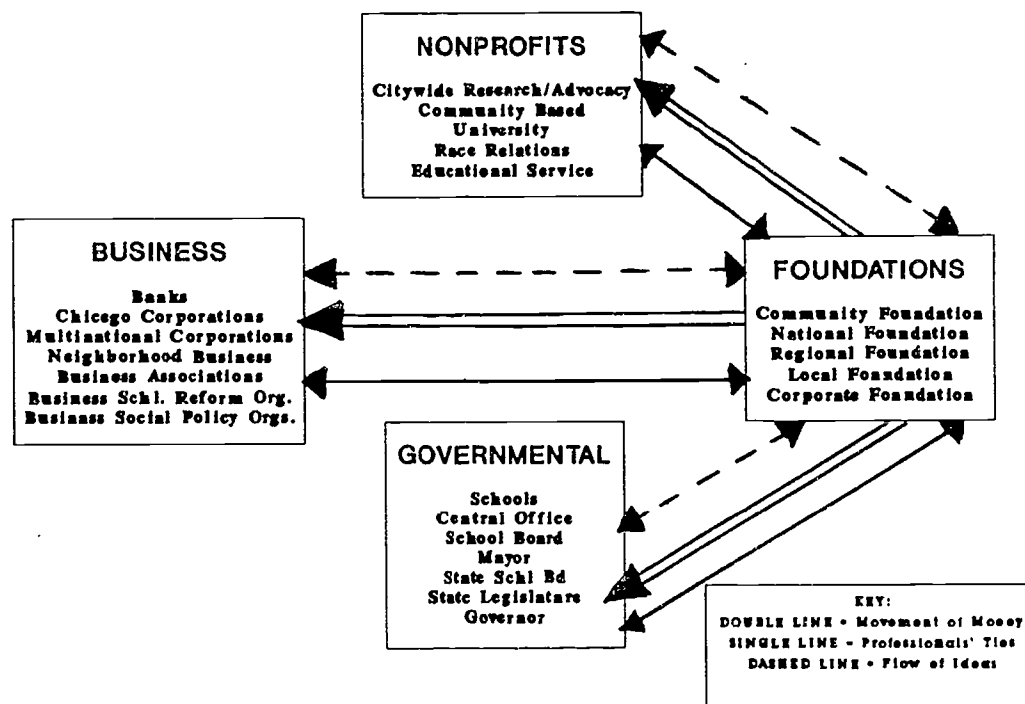
I present below a simple model of the "organizational field" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) for my case study of Chicago school reform. Although a preliminary conception, it was determined as DiMaggio & Powell's theory suggests, and meets their criteria for defining an organizational field:

The structure of an organizational field cannot be determined a priori but must be defined on the basis of empirical investigation. Fields only exist to the extent that they are institutionally defined. The process of institutional definition, or "structuration," consists of four parts: an increase in the extent of interaction among organizations in the field; the emergence of sharply defined interorganizational structures of domination and patterns of coalition; an increase in the information load with which organizations in a field must contend; and the development of a mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise. (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 65)

In Figure 1, the boxes depict the four major sectors responsible for and participating in the formation, development and implementation of the 1988 Chicago school reform act. Listed within each box are examples of the specific Chicago organizations in each sector. The lines connecting each of the four boxes (sectors) represent the three general categories of interpenetration suggested by my Chicago data. The double line depicts the *movement of money*; the single solid line depicts *relations between professionals*; and, the dashed line depicts the *flow of ideas*.

Two caveats must be stressed regarding Figure 1. First, it does not yet convey anything more than the existence of an organizational field, its sectors and sectorial interpenetration. Later versions will convey the degree of interpenetration, as well as the nature of interdependence. (The rest of this paper discusses some of what I know regarding these issues.) Second, because my research focuses on foundations, the chart depicts the relations between foundations and each of the other sectors. It does not, for example, portray the important relations between the business and nonprofit sectors.⁵

FIGURE 1
The Organizational Field of Chicago School Reform Policy:
Sectorial Interdependency (The Foundation Sector View)



⁵ My dissertation focuses on institutions that have grant making as their primary mission. Corporations that do not have a formal foundation or professional donation staff are not examined. This distinction matches those drawn by national analysts of philanthropy (see footnote 4). More importantly, this distinction is reality-based: Through much of the reform movement, Chicago's foundation and corporate communities have operated largely independently of each other. Readers should understand, however, that the business community was a leading force in the movement that brought the reform act and has played a major role during its implementation, as Dorothy Shipp (1994) has documented.

Relations Among Sectors: The Foundation Perspective

Sectorial interpenetration been a characteristic of the Chicago school reform movement. It occurred in terms of money, people and ideas. A brief review of grantmaking and staff activity between 1986 and 1990, for example, will make the degree and nature of interpenetration clear.

Movement of Money:

Chicago's ten most active educational foundations made over \$13 million in grants from 1987-1990 for school reform related initiatives.⁶ The vast majority of these funds, in dollar total, went to nonprofit organizations, most notably research and advocacy organizations with a citywide focus, universities, community based organizations, and educational improvement agencies. The school system and individual schools, representing the government sector, received a much smaller share of funds than the nonprofit sector. The Mayor's office received one grant, in 1987 for Mayor Washington's Educational Summit. While the business sector received no direct funding, its nonprofit educational point organization--Leadership for Quality Education (LQE)--received several grants during this period, the largest of which was \$250,000 for a \$1.0 million-plus program to support community based organizations to organize and train local school council candidates.

Six sets of behavior, some of which might be considered contradictory, characterize the funding patterns during these years and speak to interpenetration, mostly between the

⁶ The ten foundations, in alphabetical order: the Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Tribune Charities, Field Corporation Fund, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Harris Bank Foundation, Joyce Foundation, John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Woods Charitable Fund (now the Woods Fund of Chicago). In any of the years examined, these foundations represent over seventy-five percent of all foundation support for Chicago school reform.

nonprofit and foundation sectors. The first two--that the foundations reacted to the Act, but also helped set the stage for it--describe the fact that foundation support for initiatives related to the decentralization of the Chicago public schools jumped after the Act's passage. Nevertheless, several foundations helped set the stage with well-timed grants to citywide advocacy groups and community organizations that were central to the Act's development and passage. The third behavior characteristic--that most foundations hedged their bets on reform--describes foundation behavior throughout the 1987-1990 period. Even amongst the most active educational foundations, reform grants never consumed more than 30 percent of their total education portfolios. The final three sets of behavior convey the major responsibility Chicago's foundations assumed for the Act's implementation: first, they provided strong support for activists and organizers; second, they awarded several grants to the school system, but few directly to local schools (the governmental sector); third, their funding for educational improvement programs⁷ grew as the implementation focus broadened in 1989 and 1990 beyond issues of governance to issues of curriculum, instruction, and school organization.

Although only one of these last three sets of behavior entail grants for schools or the school system, all three sets represent interpenetration in the governmental sector. Recalling the longstanding problem activist foundations have had distinguishing between public and private responsibility (Whitaker, 1979), it may be that these grants represent Chicago's funders falling into this same trap as the reform act was being developed and

⁷ I include here programs originating with agencies external to the school system, and sometimes external to Chicago: such as, the Coalition for Essential Schools, Comer's adaptation by Youth Guidance, The Algebra Project and The Writing Workshop.

implemented. If it is true that Chicago foundations were feeling burdened by reform's implementation as of 1990 and 1991, one reason may be that they stepped into public territory too quickly in implementing the act. Many foundations quickly took on tasks that governmental agencies were not willing or able to do with regard to training, research and public communication. In retrospect, it may have been wiser for them to advocate for public agencies to invest more financial and human resources in implementation.

Professionals' Relations:

The activity of foundation professional staff from 1987 to 1990 was extensive and characterized by a rare degree of collaboration. Several national funders have commented that an uncommon aspect of the Chicago foundation role regarding the reform act has been its collaborative nature. Moreover, one of the most consistent findings from my interviews has been that foundation staff were uniquely active with professionals in other sectors. Indeed, it appears that the activism of foundation staff regarding reform--hands on work to shape the movement and organizations--may have set a pattern of staff behavior on other issues. The most extensive staff work was with other nonprofits and to some extent governmental sector agencies. Although leaders in the business and nonprofit sectors have had extensive contact during reform, foundation staff had little contact with business leaders until after the reform act's passage; even then, contact was limited and occurred primarily through the business sector's nonprofit associations, LQE and Chicago United.

Examples of actions by foundation personnel from 1986-1990 included, a monthly roundtable of 20-25 funders on school reform; a foundation president serving as chair of Mayor's Summit I and two staff serving on Mayor's Summits I and II (1987-1988); several

citywide conferences on developing and implementing reform (1987, 1988, 1989 & 1990); three foundations collaborating on the creation of a school reform journal (1989); two foundations collaborating on a citywide conference to establish mechanisms and standards for gauging the progress of school reform (1989); twenty foundations collaborating on a joint small-grants fund to assist local school councils and community groups (1989); several foundation staff sitting on LQE's grant distribution committee when it funded community based organizations for the 1989 local school council elections (1989); one foundation assisting the interim board with its transition task forces and search for a new superintendent (1989); and, one foundation staffing the first year of the School Board Nominating Commission (1989-1990).

It is telling that foundation presidents are mentioned only once in this listing, and there is no mention of board members. My interviews reveal the wide-spread view that foundation professional staff--as opposed to foundation presidents or board members--were the most influential factor in shaping foundation behavior toward reform. To quote one of my informants, a foundation board member, "this is an issue that the staff brought the boards along on." Informants outside of foundations report that staff were the foundation personnel they interacted with the most during the movement. Nevertheless, as formerly one of these "activist staff," I believe that this finding needs probing. There were important interactions along the way within each major foundation among professional staff, executive directors and board members. As one informant put it, "staff were in the lead, but we wouldn't have been out there without our board's backing, and, in the larger foundations, the backing of presidents."

It is important to mention, but impossible to elaborate on at this point, that an emerging question in my research is whether foundation staff were too close to the reform movement. Several of my informants express remorse over this phase of foundation history in Chicago. Most critically, they feel that foundations may have contributed to an overly narrow and rigid reform movement, one that did not achieve all the educational change it might have had a wider range of ideas been circulating immediately before and after the act's passage. These informants wonder if the closeness between key nonprofit leaders and foundation staff helped to foster this limited vision and design for school reform. On the flip-side, several other informants do not look back on the reform movement as limited or rigid; they believe that the closeness of foundation staff to the reform movement helped the reform agenda focus appropriately and thus ensured the movement's survival for these past five to six years. This issue, of course, is being explored as I continue my research.

Flow of Ideas:

Certainly one of the most important lessons to be drawn from the tumultuous history of the modern world is that ideas matter. Although the optimistic efforts of twentieth-century social and economic planners to base public policy on the social sciences may have been premature, the impact of broad intellectual constructs about the possibilities and purposes of nations has been undeniable. And in times of social reconstruction, ideas take on particular importance in shaping events. (Dobkin Hall, 1992, p. 109)

Chicago certainly has been in a phase of social reconstruction these past 6 to 8 years, at least regarding its schools and school system. And, ideas have mattered. However, the flow of ideas--where they originate, how they move, how they change, where they end up, and in what form--is difficult to map. Any analysis of sectorial relations in Chicago must attempt to map this flow, though ultimately these findings will be more controversial than

those for the movement of money or the relations of professionals. Ideas matter more than money--at least limited pots of foundation money--and the "many fathers of successful ideas" will want credit, prompting scrutiny of any evaluative mapping of idea flow.

Ideas regarding school change in Chicago did not originate with the foundations, at least up through 1990. My informants are nearly unanimous on this point, with one or two notable exceptions. The majority view is captured by the statement: "Beyond vague desires for systemic change, local control of schools, and using education reform to improve city life, the conceptualization and specifics for reform came from outside the foundations. Most foundations had not spent much time thinking about what they wanted schools to be." Another informant stated, "there was a lot of muddling along. I'm trying to avoid giving post hoc order that wasn't there. We didn't have clear goals until the plan and players were known."

Nevertheless, several informants believe that ideas flowed freely among the business, nonprofit and foundation sectors, at least once implementation began. As one informant, a non-grantmaker, put it: "All our ideas about reform were being shaped in the fire. They [foundation staff] were there in those early days after the act's passage with the rest of us, planning and working for reform's implementation." Another informant stated, "it was a very messy process, regarding the flow of ideas. Influence was going both ways [between nonprofits and foundations]. Ideas were coming from all sources, some stuck and got money, others didn't."

Certainly, as the movement evolved, the multi-directional flow of ideas increased. One simple reason appears to be that, as foundation staff learned more by actively

participating in the movement, they began to develop their own reform ideas. While there are obvious benefits to this development, several informants emphasized its negative consequences. Rated highly in the early days for "listening to grantees, being patient and being flexible," foundations are perceived as having become overly directive as reform matured. In the last couple of years, a few foundations have been seen as implicitly, if not explicitly, setting the citywide reform agenda, rather than enabling educators, community residents, parents and concerned citizens to do so.

Independence or Dependence: What is the Balance?

The Chicago school reform story, it seems, supports the calls by Dobkin Hall and other scholars for "acceptance of nonprofit dependence." At the same time, the Chicago story verifies the "independence rhetoric" of current foundation leaders, and underscores doubts that interpenetration and interdependence necessarily go hand-in-hand. Chicago tells us, most importantly, that the true balance between independence and dependence is somewhere in the middle, which is typically the case when two extremes are contrasted.

In closing this paper, I highlight four preliminary examples of how independence and dependence have co-existed in Chicago's scenario of sectorial relations. In so doing, I am responding to Dobkin Hall's plea for examinations of the "types and consequences of foundation dependence." The first example, looks at the "organizational field" as a public policy field, and how this sets up dependence for foundations. The second example addresses the most fundamental source of foundation dependence: the "giving and getting" nature of grantmaking. The third example looks at independence and dependence in the flow of ideas, expanding on the discussion of idea interpenetration. The last example

provides insights into how the problem of independence-dependence influences the pluralism of citywide policy dialogues.

1. Dependence in a Public Policy Arena:

This study's "organizational field" represents Chicago's educational policy arena. The Chicago foundations that chose to be on this field were there because they had the goal of systemic change. These foundations became involved with a public policy movement because they saw it as the only way to achieve their vague desire for systemic change. Continued grants for isolated school improvement programs or individual enrichment, they reasoned, would not improve the overall quality of schooling, or help to improve city life. Achieving such a lofty and complex goal, however, placed Chicago's foundations in a position of dependence: there is no way they could achieve this goal on their own, or even in small groups. Several types of dependence seem to have emerged.

Priority Dependence -- There is much evidence that foundations in the policy field become dependent on the priorities of other organizations. This might also be called "time-delayed dependence." Prior to the reform movement heating-up, several foundations made grants to a few nonprofit organizations that eventually became central to the reform act's development and adoption. When these commitments were made, however, the goals and objectives (the priorities) of the nonprofits were relatively vague; they did not speak to the specifics of the eventual reform act. Moreover, when the movement did heat up, and these groups developed a specific agenda, several foundations felt locked-in to supporting these groups, even if they did not fully support the reform agenda. Larger factors seemed to be at work, such as a desire for decision consistency, and the need to compromise on specific

concerns if a larger priority (systemic change) was at stake.

Organizational Dependency - Because of these foundations lofty priority, and its complexity, they came to depend on a limited pool of organizations able and willing to advance systemic change. In several cases, foundations provided additional grants to organizations when there was disfavor with particular tactics, when specific priorities did not match, or when the goals and objectives of a previous grant had not been met. Similar flexibility was not necessarily seen for grants unrelated to Chicago school reform. Recognizing this dependency, some foundations attempted to help establish new organizations, but it was difficult to create entities that could quickly develop research and advocacy capacities comparable to more mature organizations.

Political Endgame Dependency -- All policy processes evolve to a political endgame. This is the point at which competing ideas and proposals are tossed into the legislative and executive mill and emerge as policies acceptable to partisan elected officials and constituencies. The Chicago story indicates that foundations do not enter this endgame--or even understand it--and thus become dependent on other organizations.

Most simply, foundations did not participate in the final shaping of the reform act in the state capital during the Spring of 1988. Their reasons were legal (the 1969 Tax Reform Act severely limits foundation's lobbying rights), as well as strategic and philosophical. More troubling, several informants now suggest that foundation staff did not understand the political endgame then, nor do they get it now. These informants believe that foundations fail to recognize the true nature of power in Springfield and how ideas, no matter how solid, become policy. One informant, in suggesting a lesson the Chicago case

offers to foundations elsewhere, stated: "[Foundations] must become more tuned into power relations in the public policy process. They must come to understand the political reality of how ideas become policy."

Taken together, these three types of dependency answer a question that troubles one of my informants. This person wonders, "How did foundations, as independent actors, end up in bed so fast with the reformers after the act's passage?" The answer, simply put, is that independence becomes largely illusory when foundations venture into complex public policy arenas with the goal of constructive effect. The question really should be, "how can foundations avoid becoming dependent on particular advocates in a public policy process, yet still be of use to the process?"

2. The Inherent Dependency in Moving Money:

Sometimes the most obvious, yet revealing, facts are ignored, or dismissed for simplicity when noted. Such is the case with the basic reality of grantmaking. Foundation dependency occurs because foundations depend on other organizations to make their money work. Priority and organizational dependency, for example, arise first and foremost because foundations as structured cannot undertake reform initiatives on their own. They must give their money to other organizations to get their priorities moving. Foundations *get by giving*. While a truism, many a grantseeker verifies that it seems forgotten by many a grantmaker.

A small but growing body of scholarly research has begun to examine this revealing, yet oft ignored, fact. This body of work studies philanthropy as a social relation--as an exchange between donor and donee. Joseph Galaskiewicz (1985) seems to have led the charge, by examining business philanthropy in Minnesota's Twin Cities as an urban grants

economy. Blending sophisticated network analysis with case study methods, Galaskiewicz explores the question: "what are the social institutions that support an economy of donative transfers, and how do these institutions influence who gives, who gets, and who gives to whom?" (p. 12) Ostrander and Schervish, in a 1990 article aptly titled "Giving and Getting: Philanthropy as a Social Relation," lay out an exchange theory for the giving behavior of individuals. They argue that most research on philanthropy has tended to look at giving as a one-way street, thereby "obscuring the most fundamental sociological fact about philanthropy; namely, that philanthropy is a social relation of giving and getting between donors and recipients" (pp. 67-68).

3. The Flow of Ideas:

The flow of ideas across Chicago's organizational field of educational policy brought with it much sectorial dependency. As was discussed, at least at the outset of the reform movement, foundations were seen by most informants as dependent on nonprofits for their conceptualizations and strategies regarding educational change.

Idea Legitimacy -- An intriguing aspect of this dependency, and one that worked in multiple directions among sectors, was how each sector depended on the others for idea legitimacy. Recalling Dobkin Hall's identification of foundations as "legitimacy-maximizers rather than revenue-maximizers," it is not surprising that idea legitimacy was especially important for these grantmakers. Indeed, it is the one area where I have clear evidence of foundations being influenced by all the other sectors, not just nonprofits. As one grant officer put it, "the interest of the corporate community in reform was a major influence on our board. It told them this was the real thing." Another foundation was clearly influenced

by Mayor Washington's Summit and the general support that forum seemed to generate for the concept of school based management. In addition, several informants underscored the vital role that a few charismatic African-American parents (who were leaders of fledgling nonprofit organizations) played in legitimizing the idea for foundations that minority parents were willing and able to take on school governance responsibilities.⁸

There is some evidence that foundations performed a reverse legitimizing role. Informants outside of the foundation community believe that foundation support for the leading nonprofit research and advocacy groups helped to legitimize their ideas with the business sector and the government sector (at least with many elected officials). Similarly, the funds and time foundation staff put into three citywide meetings on educational reform in 1987 and 1988, prior to the reform act's passage, also were seen as helping to legitimize the idea for system-wide change and school based management.

Independent Ideas-- Still, as mentioned in the discussion of idea interpenetration there is evidence that foundations had independent ideas regarding reform. Foundation documents suggest that, despite what my informants indicate, foundation staff did have ample ideas regarding reform, prior to and after the act's adoption. A couple of the foundation's ideas did have an effect.

An independent streak was revealed by foundation decisions regarding the support of community organizations to recruit and train local school council candidates. The biggest single effort to do so was the \$1.0 million-plus initiative organized by LQE in 1989.

⁸ Issues of race are surfacing frequently in my field research. They may become one organizing theme for the study. While racial politics have been a noted factor in the Chicago reform movement generally, they also penetrated the foundation community in intriguing and troubling ways.

Substantially funded by foundations, the effort was in many ways a joint effort. However, when LQE decided not to continue the effort for the second elections in 1991, several foundations combined to provide a smaller pot of funds. By the third round of elections, in 1993, foundations had decided not to provide community based support, despite significant pressure from the nonprofit community. While these actions might be seen as an example of dependence on the business sector, they are not. Foundations decided to step back from intensive, community-based support of local school elections largely for their own philosophical and strategic reasons. One of my informants underscored the significance of these actions when he stated, "Without continued funding for organizing, we've lost a means to generate a constituency for various policy fights. During this fall's [1993] school funding crisis, we did not have the institutional capacity to organize parents and community members to demonstrate."

A second example of independent action is the publication *Catalyst*, an award-winning, monthly newsletter devoted solely to Chicago school reform and run by a senior education journalist. Although ultimately a partnership between a nonprofit and three foundations, this publication represents a broader, independent effort by foundations to alter the reform dialogue. The three sponsoring foundations spent six months considering the idea of such a publication before looking around for a nonprofit to produce the publication.⁹ Their shared motivation in establishing the publication was the belief that the school reform movement required ongoing, objective analysis, as well as a means to foster

⁹ Coincidentally, the nonprofit had been thinking about the same idea, and began looking for interested funders about the same time the funders were looking for a possible publisher. Because both parties had well developed ideas for the publication, it took several months of negotiation before a mutually acceptable mission and format was determined.

an open, citywide dialogue about reform's progress and how it could be improved.

At about the time *Catalyst* was supported, several other grants were made to broaden what foundations perceived as a limited reform dialogue. For example, funding was provided for teams of outsider observers, new university-based research and technical assistance centers and consortiums, national reform programs in Chicago schools, and fledgling research and advocacy groups in the African American and Latino communities. In essence, these funders were flashing independence from their long standing grantees who were at the lead of the reform movement. Without cutting back on support for the reform leaders, the foundations were trying to add more voices and ideas into the reform dialogue.

I would be ignoring my data, however, if I did not stress the major lesson Chicago appears to offer about the independence versus dependence of ideas in an organizational field of school reform policy. Simply stated, the majority of foundations' independent ideas regarding reform never had any effect on the reform movement or public policy, either because they could not generate wide support for them, or because they chose to "bury them." The latter occurred early on in the reform movement as a couple of foundations, although more interested in professionally-based school based management than a parent and community dominated approach, chose to "go along with a movement far bigger than us."

One example of an independent reform idea not having a notable policy effect deals with the vital area of teacher development. Several foundations during this period had placed top priority on systemic and institutional change in teacher preservice and inservice training. Despite large investments by these foundations, there has not been a major change

these past 6 years in Chicago or Illinois policy regarding teacher development. Ironically, a couple of Chicago's big foundations may have had their greatest success on educational issues that were not a top priority, but that they were wise enough to support for a mix of civic and strategic reasons. To me, this says tons, not only about idea dependence, but about priority, organizational and political endgame dependence.

4. Independence-Dependence and Pluralistic Policy Dialogues:

Explicit and implicit examples of the consequences of the foundation sector operating either independently or dependently appear throughout this paper. I have not taken the time to highlight them as such. Given that consequences will be central to my dissertation, it is fitting to close with a discussion of at least one consequence of independent and dependent action, and the problem of determining which should guide strategy and tactics.

All my interviewees struggle with the need for pluralistic policy dialogues and the role of private foundations in them. Theoretically, each informant believes that public policy processes should be widely inclusive, but, in practice, they each wonder what this means for getting something done. They struggle with this dilemma in two distinct, but related ways.

First, most informants struggle to balance the dual need for *inclusive processes* and *results*. As mentioned earlier, many people feel that Chicago school reform has survived for 6 years because of a focused agenda and a rallying of support from all sectors. In this regard, foundations are seen as having had rare and vital focus, during at least the first years of the act's implementation. Several informants echo the statement, "Foundations bet on a single horse, but they did so thoughtfully and appropriately." The sense of many

informants is that, if foundations had concentrated on bringing diverse voices to the dialogue rather than on forging an agenda, nothing might have been accomplished. In the troubling, yet honest, words of one grantmaker, "The goal of honest intellectual debate in a political context is unworldly and naive."

Nonetheless, as also mentioned earlier, several informants perceive the reform dialogue as having been too narrow. The foundation sector, they feel, was in "lock step with the movement's leaders" in the nonprofit and business sectors. While acknowledging that successful policy processes must focus at some point, they feel Chicago reform focused too much and too soon. The result, in these informants view, is that foundations, during a key one to two year period, missed a rare chance to push even more far reaching change.

In a similar way, my informants struggle to balance the dual need for *foundation responsiveness* and *foundation agenda setting*. All respondents believe foundations should have agendas. "They are not banks," said one informant. They all worry, however, that agenda setting puts foundation responsiveness at risk. One grantmaker asked, "How can we be sure our agendas are responsive, and not just our own?"

When pressed for strategies and tactics on how to balance these dual needs and ensure pluralistic policy dialogues, my informants all offered ambiguous and uncertain responses. In my seventh interview, when I was again getting vague responses to my question of strategy, I asked the person, a grantmaker, why? The response: "You are getting ambiguity and uncertainty because it is ambiguous, uncertain stuff. It is not realistic to expect a clear model or plan for how to deal with this stuff."

I now see that this ambiguity and uncertainty relates to the push and pull of

independence and dependence. While wanting to be independent in action, and seeing the need for foundations to be independent, these respondents recognize the importance of interdependent action. As foundations in other locales are coming to recognize, they see that collaboration within and across sectors is vital, especially regarding an issue as complex as systemic education reform.

It remains unclear to me whether more robust theory on the types and consequences of sectorial independence and dependence would provide strategic and tactical clarity. As with so many issues in complex, fast moving public policy arenas, it may be that ambiguity and uncertainty are unavoidable. I end with four paraphrased quotes from anonymous Chicago grantmakers on how foundations can strive to ensure pluralistic policy dialogues. While illustrating ambiguity and uncertainty, each quote also speaks to a continual process of balancing and rebalancing independent action with dependent action. Is that the theoretical and strategic lesson from Chicago?

Respond to public will, but understand political will. Make grants that help you understand. Do research, soul search, and read. Be out in the field, listening, watching and asking questions. (Fall 1993 Interview)

Put an array of accessible information into public arenas from scholars and journalists. After the scholars write something, have people who can write well, such as journalists, help put the information out in readable forms. (Fall 1993 Interview)

Run ideas up "public flagpoles." Use forums with a wide range of stakeholders to propose ideas and get feedback. Structure programs so that your ideas will move only if others run with them. (Fall 1993 Interview)

Trust and respect the conflicting values among foundations. Reflecting on the reform movement, different foundations with different values for schools and change arrived at the same place at the same time. This informal process should be trusted and respected. Could a better one be designed and implemented? (Fall 1993 Interview)

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