

***IN THE MIDST OF PLENTY:  
FOUNDATION FUNDING OF CHILD ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS  
IN THE 1990S***

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the role of philanthropy in supporting child advocacy organizations working to improve children's well-being in American society. It is premised on the belief that a fundamental purpose of philanthropy ought to be the support of *public* interest advocacy organizations and other nonprofit groups dedicated to addressing and redressing the political, social and economic marginalization of low income and other historically disenfranchised constituencies. Indeed, without the effort to organize and advance the interests of Abroad, non-commercially oriented citizen constituencies, as Tom Asher argued more than 20 years ago, Apublic needs will be neither defined nor met in a democratic fashion (Asher 1977, 1072). America's well-documented participatory inequalities and the growing influence of money on politics makes this all the more true today (Verba, Scholzman and Brady, 1995).

Despite the importance of public interest advocacy for the representation of under-represented interests, those who've studied philanthropy in American society have generally concluded that: 1) private giving either benefits the already comfortable or has no clear distributional consequences (Odendahl 1990; Margo 1992); 2) most foundations avoid public policy grantmaking (McIlney 1997); 3) organized philanthropy exhibits a strong top-down approach and professional bias, preferring to fund professionals in their service or research occupations rather than the activities or institutions that promote active citizenship (Johnson 1988; Smith 1989); and 4) exceedingly few dollars support progressive social movement organizations or advocacy activities (Jenkins 1996; Jenkins and Halcli 1998);

Quantitative and qualitative data gathered for this study support these conclusions. Based on an analysis of grants awarded in 1991 and 1996 to selected national and state-based child advocacy organizations, interviews with child advocates, and a review of the recent literature on foundation grantmaking for children, youth and families, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- < Child advocacy organizations receive only a tiny fraction of the total funds that foundations spend on basic and applied research, social services, and other non-advocacy activities related to children and youth. In an era of continued reliance on state governments to finance and deliver a host of services for children, state-based child advocacy organizations remain particularly underfunded.
- < When foundations do make investments in child advocacy organizations, they are far more likely to fund softer activities, such as data collection or media outreach, rather than grassroots mobilization, allowable political lobbying, membership development, coalition-building, and other strategies more explicitly aimed at building an active support base for increased public sector investment in children and youth. Foundations did, however, increase their support of leadership development, advocacy training and constituency-building between 1991 and 1996, from \$795,000 to \$5.9 million.
- < Foundations award far more grant money to support specific projects, single-issue organizations, and advocacy around issues of a less controversial nature such the reduction of childhood tobacco use or prevention of child abuse. Although poverty itself is a major factor in determining the overall well-being of children and is closely linked to other social problems, foundations and child advocates do not appear to be attacking poverty itself in any direct, sustained and aggressive way.
- < Few foundations appear willing to fund the types of advocacy activities -- like grassroots constituency-building and increased contacts with key legislative decision makers -- that scholars and practitioners both suggest are necessary if the children=s movement is to develop the political strength it needs for substantially greater impact.
- < Child advocates express a profound dissatisfaction over the ways in which foundations operate, seeing what they believe to be less money for advocacy and a growing trend for foundations to design and direct their own program initiatives. Rarely do they feel that foundations give them the full opportunity and freedom to craft and implement their own program strategies and initiatives.

Tracking Foundation Support of Child Advocacy: Methodological and Conceptual Issues. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine accurately how much philanthropic foundations have invested in child advocacy nationally. This is the case for several reasons. Foundations do not report on their grantmaking in a way that allows for easy identification of grants to organizations engaged in child advocacy. Indeed, although most of the larger foundations do publish annual reports, they are not required to do so, and full grants information may or may not be reported. Reporting by corporate foundations can be particularly spotty. When annual reports are published, grant awards are typically

listed by broad program area, such as education or the arts, rather than by program strategies or type of activities. The same is true for the manner in which foundations report their grantmaking activities to the Internal Revenue Service. It is the rare foundation that structures and reports on its grantmaking program according to such strategic approaches as leadership development, community organizing, public policy advocacy, or media/public education.

Conceptual or definitional issues surrounding child advocacy also make it difficult to map the child advocacy community and therefore to assess the level of philanthropic support for it. What constitutes advocacy for children and how does (or should) it differ from family advocacy? Should advocacy organizations primarily focused on economic security issues, such as family or minimum wage legislation or low income housing development, be counted as a part of the children's advocacy community? Do nonprofits that primarily engage in the collection and analysis of data on children's well-being belong on the map? What about nonprofit agencies that primarily, if not exclusively, deliver social services to children, youth and families? Are professional associations such as the National Association of Children's Hospitals to be considered a part of the advocacy mix for children because they weigh in on particular policy issues that address children's needs along with those of their member institutions? Should government or government-linked entities, such as big-city school districts or the National Governors Association, be considered child advocates when they engage in public education campaigns or engage in administrative or legislative lobbying in ways that impact children? And where should community organizing groups that use issue campaigns to build power for low income families figure into the conceptual picture?

These conceptual issues are thrown further into relief when one considers the contrasting approach to advocacy adopted by many conservative think tanks and policy organizations. Indeed, conservative political activists have tended to operate in strategically different ways, engaging less in advocacy for children and more in advocacy to establish broad national policy priorities (Covington, 1997). Family issues are often invoked to advance a larger agenda that is attentive not only to advancing fiscal and economic policies based on notions of limited government, but also to

establishing the structural rules of the policy game (e.g., terms limits or balanced budget amendments).

Because many of the activities that emerged under the Achild advocacy≅ label in the late 1960s and early 1970s were catalyzed and supported by federal agencies, conservatives, in fact, reacted by forming a variety of institutions and networks to defend parents= rights, promote traditional family values and advance limited government objectives, especially but not exclusively at the federal level.<sup>1</sup> Organizations like Focus on the Family or the Family Research Council emerged (alongside many other conservative policy organizations) to push for government retrenchment, devolution of power to the states, the privatization of key government services, and deregulation of industry. Often, these policy approaches have been woven together into a morally-based narrative arguing that government expansion has imposed unreasonable tax burdens on hard-working American families and suppressed the problem-solving initiative of individuals, households and communities.<sup>2</sup> There has thus been little tradition of child advocacy among political conservatives, except as it has related to larger ideological or policy principals like privatization through school vouchers or teen pregnancy reduction through abstinence education.

Study Methodology. For purposes of this study, I have sought to identify national and state-based child advocacy organizations whose primary mission is to improve children=s social and economic well-being through one or more of the following activities: government and legislative monitoring, administrative negotiation, legislative lobbying (direct and grassroots), class action litigation, public and media education, applied policy research and development, and community organizing. This definition mostly excludes nonprofit agencies that deliver social services under government funding or contracting arrangements. This is important because, as Smith and Lipsky note, when publicly-funded nonprofit organizations engage in political advocacy, they do so knowing that their fate as organizations can be affected by such activities. It is nonprofit organizations= material interests under contracting that Atends to reduce the ideological character of [their] political advocacy and shift it to technical issues relating to rates, funding levels, and regulations≅ (1993, 187).

This definitional approach also excludes research centers -- whether university-based or independent -- that are engaged primarily in data collection and analysis. This does not mean that I hold research in disregard or think that it plays no important role in the policy process. It does mean that I question the utility of throwing every type of organization and activity, without distinction, into the advocacy bin. What is needed is greater analytical precision about the specific contributions and limitations of different types of organizations and activities and, with respect to foundations, greater understanding of which types of organizations and activities get funded and which do not. This is consistent with the view that it is political power that fundamentally determines how and for what purposes public resources are mobilized and deployed (see, for example, Majone 1988; Minkler 1999). From this vantage point, technical expertise, hard data and moral argument may be important components of political action but cannot be a substitute for it.<sup>3</sup>

Given this approach, I identified initially a total of 158 nonprofit organizations thought to be primarily engaged in child advocacy (see Appendix A). A multi-pronged process was used to identify these organizations, including obtaining the organizational contacts and membership lists of such national groups as the National Association of Child Advocates, the Children=s Defense Fund and the Coalition for America=s Children. It was supplemented by Internet searches for the organizations meeting the criteria outlined above, with organizations identified by reviewing the websites and/or membership lists of national organizations and coalitions. The Foundation Center=s grants information retrieval database was also helpful in identifying organizations that were internally cross-coded both as Alliance≡ (e.g. advocacy) organizations and as organizations serving children and youth, with all non-repeating organizational names added to the list.

I then asked the Foundation Center, which systematically tracks and analyzes foundation grantmaking, to conduct a search through its *Foundation Grants Index* database for the purpose of identifying all grants awarded to these organizations at two points in time: 1991 and 1996. This search yielded a total of 792 grants awarded to 103 of the 158 child advocacy organizations originally identified. These grants were then entered into a database program for further analysis, including examination of type of grant support awarded, issue areas funded, type of activities supported, and

other relevant kinds of analyses. Based on a review of grant descriptions, five organizations were subsequently removed from the list. These included Aspira, Child Trends, Child Welfare League, Urban Strategies Council, and We Can.

To supplement the grants data, telephone interviews were also conducted with selected child advocates around the country (n = 12). The interviews with child advocates touched on the following areas: 1) organizational history, mission, activities and accomplishments; 2) views on the components of effective advocacy, the intersection or overlap between child and family issues, and the strengths and weaknesses of the children=s movement; and 3) perspectives on and experiences with the foundation community. A review of the relevant literature, including several recent analyses of foundation grantmaking to children and youth, was also conducted.

Limitations of the data. Beyond the decision to narrow my definition of child advocacy in the ways earlier described (e.g., exclusion of nonprofits primarily engaged in service delivery or university-based or independent applied policy research), there are certain limitations to the data that require acknowledgment. First, the analysis almost entirely excludes local child advocacy organizations because of the difficulty of developing a comprehensive list of advocacy organizations seeking to improve child well-being at the neighborhood, city-wide or county levels. While the inclusion of these organizations would certainly provide a richer and more detailed funding picture, it is likely that many of these groups function as hybrid institutions, combining service delivery with occasional or tightly focused advocacy related to their specific institutional interests and/or those of their clients. As earlier noted, service-based advocacy has certain limitations that can reduce the vigor and/or narrow the focus of advocacy efforts.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the analysis excludes grants under \$10,000 that were awarded to the 103 organizations included in the database. It also excludes grants awarded by smaller foundations. This is because the Foundation Center=s database only includes grants of \$10,000 or more awarded to organizations by sample of 800 to 1,000 of the nation=s larger foundations, now estimated to exceed

42,000. This sample would, of course, include all of the major national, regional and local funders with (and many without) name recognition. Although representing approximately two percent of the total foundation universe, they control more than 65 percent of assets and allocate 50 percent or more of all grants.

Finally, private grantmaking foundations are not the only source of revenue for child advocacy organizations. Child advocates also seek and/or rely on the support of individual donors, membership fees, fund raising events, and, to a more limited extent, the public sector.<sup>5</sup> The grants data thus reflect only a portion of the operating budgets of the child advocacy organizations included in the study. Still, the children's movement is far more reliant on the support of philanthropic foundations than other social movements, and it is likely that child advocates will continue to require an infusion of outside resources to support their work (Richart 1997).

The remainder of this paper is divided into five sections. The first section seeks to establish a broader social, economic and political context within which to discuss philanthropy's current and potential role in improving children's status and well-being in American society. Toward that end, it briefly reviews some of the major policy trends of the past two decades and examines their impacts on children, youth and families. Section two reports and elaborates on key study findings, providing an array of specific information on grants awarded to child advocacy organizations in the years examined. It also reviews and makes comparisons to what is known about child advocacy funding in previous decades. The third section considers the historical and contemporary record of philanthropic foundations in addressing critical social issues and public needs, especially but not limited to children and youth. Section four discusses contemporary issues in child advocacy and explores the links between the perceived weaknesses in the child advocacy movement and philanthropic approaches to improvements in child welfare. Finally, the concluding section offers funding recommendations to strengthen the child advocacy field.

## 1. THE CHANGING POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE: BLEAK PLACE FOR

## CHILDREN

Those who document children=s status in American society seem rarely to acknowledge the *political* causes of child poverty. Indeed, for all of the socioeconomic data collected on children, there is little actual discussion of the role that public policy decisions (and non-decisions) have played over the past two decades in exacerbating child poverty and contributing to poor social, educational and health outcomes for children. A pattern of steady federal and state government disinvestment in cities, for example, has contributed to rising child poverty rates. The federal and state aid component of central city expenditures declined from a high of 44 percent in 1977 to under 23 percent today (U.S. Census Bureau). Federal disinvestment policies were particularly prominent between 1981 and 1993, when the funding of community development block grant money, urban development action grants, general revenue sharing, mass transportation aid, and other discretionary programs fell by 66.3 percent in real dollar terms (Paget 1998). In the city of Detroit, where the child poverty rate exceeds 40 percent, federal funds declined as a percentage of general city revenues from 27.5 percent in 1976 to under six percent just 12 years later.

Other federal policies -- some that well predated the 1980s -- have also played key roles in concentrating low income families and children in inner-city communities. Federal housing, tax and development policies since World War II, for example, have geographically constructed and reinforced the Aghetto,≡ not only creating the conditions for a downward economic spiral in such communities but also making it difficult to construct broad-based political coalitions to address urban problems at the level or scale required (Massey and Denton 1993; Halpern 1995). The impacts of these and other policy (and economic) trends on child welfare have been significant.<sup>6</sup> According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation=s *City Kids Count*, the child poverty rate in the nation=s 50 largest cities increased between 1969

and 1989 from 18 to 27 percent. Nationally, it grew from 15 to 18 percent. Today, in the midst of plenty, the child poverty rate is almost 21 percent, a full five percentage points above what it was three decades ago. In nine states and in the District of Columbia, a quarter or more of children in 1996 were growing up poor, with the percentage reaching as high as 30 percent in Mississippi, 32 percent in Louisiana and 40 percent in Washington, D.C. (Annie E. Casey Foundation 1999). These figures are all the more remarkable given that the United States is currently experience the longest peacetime economic expansion in history.

Considerable variation in state policy commitments also exacerbate and help to explain the extent and severity of child poverty. One recent study, for example, found that state spending per poor child in the highest spending states was over nine times the amount spent in the lowest spending states for Medicaid, over 20 times for the (now-abolished) Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and over 11 times for all of these programs combined (Orland and Cohen 1995). Even where federal entitlement and discretionary programs exist to address or ameliorate child poverty and related social problems, rarely are they taken full advantage of. Approximately 3.2 million children under the age of six who are income eligible for Medicaid were not enrolled in the program in 1994 and low income student participation in the federal School Breakfast program is only just over 39 percent (Foster and Srivastava 1996).

Cross-national comparisons also reveal that children in the U.S. are poorer by far than their counterparts in most other Western democracies. Not only has the child poverty rate in the U.S. been shown to be the highest among 17 countries studied, it was also found to be 50 percent higher than the next highest rate (Annie E. Casey Foundation 1999). To a large extent, such differences reflect the more generous social welfare policies enacted by Western

European countries and Canada. Indeed, we tolerate a much higher level of child poverty than other western democracies. The United States is the only advanced western economy that has no family allowance, no universal health insurance for children and adults, and limited support for early childhood programs (Schorr 1997). Given these and other failures of collective political will, it should not be surprising that, even though children make up just over one-fourth of the U.S. total population, they comprise a full 40.1 percent of those in poverty.

Changing national and state policy priorities -- and their negative impacts on children -- reflect both the political isolation of American cities and, more broadly, the disequalizing political effects of the nation's growing wealth and income gap (Paget 1998; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). As Verba, Schlozman and Brady have so closely documented, there is a systematic bias in representation through participation, with participatory input tilted in the direction of the more advantaged groups in society (p. 512). Their findings are consistent with decades of research on American political participation -- research that has found patterns of political participation to be deeply embedded in the American social structure. Studies of the interest group universe, for example, have shown that the heavenly choir of American interests sings with an upper class accent (Schattschneider 1960, 160). With the thirty year decline in electoral participation and the pronounced class bias in both national and state electorates, it should not be surprising that public benefits flow most heavily to those who need them the least. Myron Orfield's analysis of major metropolitan regions, for example, has found that it is the wealthiest suburbs that derive the greatest benefit from public expenditures, not working-class suburbs or impoverished inner-city communities (Orfield 1997).

The nation=s growing wealth and income gap and the increasing geographic segregation of rich and poor make it difficult to generate political support for Aother people=s children.≡ Without attention to these broader policy trends and political realities, it seems unlikely that the status and well-being of children will substantially improve, especially for the 20 million poor and near poor children living in the country=s most impoverished inner-city and rural communities.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT OF CHILD ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

For the conceptual and methodological reasons described earlier, it is difficult to track overall foundation giving to children and youth, and more difficult still to determine the amounts that individual foundations invest in child advocacy organizations. Foundations themselves do not report their grants by beneficiary group, so grants benefitting children may be spread out across multiple areas such as health, education or human services.

Still, data compiled by the Foundation Center provide a rough indication of grant dollars awarded to children and youth. According to the 1998 edition of the *Grants for Children & Youth*, foundations invested \$2.1 billion to benefit infants, children and youth, mostly in 1996 and 1997 (The Foundation Center 1998).<sup>8</sup> Assuming that these grants were fairly evenly distributed across these two years, just over \$1 billion was invested in 1996 by 896 foundations for whom the Foundation Center maintains grants data. As a point of comparison, the American Association of Fund Raising Counsel reported that total giving by private and corporate foundations in 1996 was \$19.6 billion (1998). Weiss and Lopez provide an alternative number in their recent examination of grantmaking strategies for children and youth. Based on estimates provided by 19 major national foundation, they report

that approximately \$569 million was invested to benefit children and youth in 1996, roughly half of that reported by the Foundation Center (1998).

Snapshots of Giving in the 1990s. Relative to these figures, grantmaking foundations directed only a small percentage of their funds to national and state-based child advocacy organizations in the two years for which grants information was developed. The data show that foundations awarded a total of \$24 million in 1991 and \$58.4 million in 1996 to 103 of the original 157 child advocacy organizations identified for inclusion in the study (see table 1). The latter figure was greatly inflated, however, by a \$19.5 million grant that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded to the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids. If excluded from the analysis, giving to national and state-based CAOs in 1996 totaled only \$38.9 million. This is less than 4 percent of the \$1.1 billion that foundations provided in that year to benefit infants, children and youth and roughly 7 percent of the total estimated amount that just 19 major foundations awarded to child and youth-serving entities.

An additional \$3.3 million in 1991 grants and \$7.1 million in 1996 grants was awarded to four national organizations providing relevant information resources to national and state-based child advocates across the country. These organizations include the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Center for Law and Social Policy, Food Research and Action Center, and the Welfare Law Center.

When examined from the multiple vantage points of issue focus, type of beneficiary organization, national versus local investments, grant type awarded, and range of activities supported, the funding picture is even more troubling. Based on the 1996 grants analysis,\* for

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\* The analysis that follows largely concentrates on the 1996 grants data due to the fact that 50 percent of

example, the foundations that did invest in child advocacy organizations showed a preference to fund relatively non-controversial issues (e.g., tobacco use reduction or child abuse prevention), national child advocacy organizations, and single-issue (or single-strategy) organizations.

Funding by Issue Area. Tobacco use prevention was the issue receiving the most foundation support, owing to an exceptionally large \$19.5 million grant awarded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids. The reform of elementary and secondary education was the issue receiving the second highest support, with foundations awarding \$8.2 million in grants for this purpose, with most of this money directed to organizations whose primary mission focused on k-12 education rather than to child advocacy organizations working on multiple issues at the national or state levels. This was followed by child protection and systems reform (\$5,779,830), and health care (\$1.7 million). Welfare reform (\$880,605), child care (\$732,000), and budget advocacy (\$667,500) received far less support.

Type of Recipient. The grants analysis also revealed a funding preference either for national child advocates or for single-issue or single-strategy organizations, whether at the state or national levels. Out of the 103 recipient organizations, just 27 national organizations received \$39.5 million, or 68 percent, of the total amount invested by foundations in 1996. If the \$19.5

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the 1991 grants data could not be coded by issue area due to insufficient grants information. Still, based on the more limited information provided, the two most heavily funded issues in 1991 were k-12 education reform (\$2.4 million) and child abuse prevention and systems reform (\$2.4 million). As in 1996, welfare reform and child care were issues receiving far less support.

million grant to the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids is excluded, the percentage remains high, at 35 percent.

Foundations directed \$21.1 (36 percent) out of \$58.3 million to multi-issue organizations using a mix of advocacy strategies to improve children=s well-being. Most of these grants, however, were not awarded as general operating support but rather n a project-specific (and therefore issue-oriented) basis. Of this amount, \$12.3 million was awarded to 49 state-based child advocates (which averages to \$233,421 per organization) and \$8.8 million to national multi-issue organizations. The remaining \$37.2 million supported mostly national groups focusing within a single issue area or working to impact child welfare primarily through litigation. Examples include the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kid (\$19.9 million), the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse (\$3.3 million), and the Youth Law Center (\$1.7 million).

General Operating versus Project-Specific Support. With respect to the types of grants awarded, foundations mostly invested in child advocacy organizations on a project-specific rather than general support basis. Interestingly, foundations gave a significantly higher percentage of their grants as general operating support in 1991 than they did in 1996, at 29 percent and 8 percent respectively. This was also the case with respect to organizational development grants, with foundations providing 11 percent of their 1991 grants and 6 percent of their 1996 grants to support such activities as strategic planning and staff development. Conversely, project-specific grantmaking increased from 50 percent in 1991 to 79 percent in 1996.

The decline in general operating and organizational development support may reflect

what many perceive to be foundations= increasing tendency to engage in A strategic grantmaking≅ through the design and implementation their own program initiatives. The issue of general operating versus project-specific support is important for many reasons relating to the ability of advocacy organizations to adapt and respond to shifting political or policy circumstances, take advantage of new opportunities, and/or make necessary institutional or organizational adjustments based on their own experience and learning curves.

Type of Activities Funded. Further data analysis suggests that foundations appear to be far more comfortable funding what might be termed A soft≅ (e.g., general information dissemination) rather than A hard≅ (e.g., direct or grassroots lobbying) forms of public policy advocacy. Although, at 45 percent and 20 percent respectively, a significant portion of the 1991 and 1996 grants included in this analysis could not be coded by activity due to insufficient grants information, the data show that foundations vastly increased their giving to public education and media outreach projects, with funding for this purpose increasing from only \$543,000 in 1991 to \$22.6 million in 1996. While it cannot be ascertained from the grants data whether these funding patterns more closely reflect the strategic priorities or project interests of foundations or child advocates, there appears to be a fairly strong operating assumption that media work and other information dissemination strategies lead to effective public and legislative action.<sup>9</sup>

Foundations did increase their giving in what are often considered by advocates to be key -- but often underfunded -- areas of advocacy activity. Support for leadership development and advocacy training, for example, increased from \$366,795 in 1991 to \$2,571,500 in 1996. Constituency building efforts were also funded at significantly higher levels, with only \$60,000 provided for this purpose in 1991 and \$3.3 million in 1996. And

government monitoring and policy impact projects also received greater support, increasing from \$869,200 in 1991 to \$1.5 million in 1996.

Geographic Distribution of Grants. The grants data also show a high degree of geographic concentration. Of the \$24 million that foundations invested in child advocacy organizations in 1991, \$18.3 million, or 76 percent, was directed to organizations in just five states (California, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New York) and the District of Columbia. An even higher concentration of grant dollars occurred in 1996, with organizations in these same five states and the District of Columbia receiving \$48.7 million, or 84 percent, of the \$58.3 million invested overall.

Comparison to What is Known About Previous Years. Based on the available data, it appears that child advocacy organizations are far more reliant today on foundation support than in early decades. Indeed, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, child advocacy was heavily, and sometimes exclusively, government supported. According to Kahn, Kamerman and McGowan (1972), the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) was one of the single largest sources of public support, spending more than \$7.5 million on 64 advocacy programs in FY 1972. The range of activities that Kahn, Kamerman and McGowan then included under the child advocacy label was quite broad, consisting not only of such traditional advocacy activities as lobbying, litigation and administrative negotiating, but also community planning, neighborhood-based service interventions, and even individual client counseling and referral. Federal funding of these activities were entirely consistent with national urban policy, which placed resident participation, community action, and decentralized service delivery at the conceptual core of government anti-poverty objectives.

While there has been little detailed historical examination of philanthropic support of child advocacy organizations, one longitudinal study of social movement philanthropy found that child advocacy organizations received a total of \$12.2 million in foundation grants between 1953 and 1980 (Jenkins and Halcli 1994). This amount represents 5 percent of the \$245.5 million that foundations awarded to social movement organizations over the 28 year time period examined. Jenkins and Halcli=s data also show considerable fluctuation in child advocacy funding, with 1.21 percent of social movement grants awarded to child advocacy organizations in 1970, 8 percent in 1980, and 3.9 percent in 1990.

### 3. PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY AND PUBLIC NEEDS: AN OVERVIEW

Although an increasing number of foundations are engaged in advocacy grantmaking, the funding patterns described above are consistent with much that has been previously observed about philanthropy=s reluctant stance toward independent, citizen-based advocacy organizations. Indeed, going back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, critics have enumerated a long list of complaints about the failure of foundations to respond to the nation=s most critical public needs, including but not limited to advocacy for children. In a paper prepared for the Commission on Private Philanthropy and Public Needs (aka the Filer Commission), Carey described foundations as Apermanent bureaucracies whose well-paid staffs attempt to impose their ideas of what the problems are...; they are faddist and won=t stick with the tough on-going issues that plague society; they measure progress and success by newspaper stories, sometimes creating issues through grantees that manipulate the press and believing them solved simply because they have become the subject of public debate≅ (Carey 1977, 1111). Carey also noted Athe strong academic bent of foundations, and their willingness to make vast expenditures on new entities -- often foundation-created -- with big boards, high

overhead, well-paid staff, and designed to deal with broad, rather ill-defined problems like the urban crisis or drug abuse without dealing with underlying causes or political realities (p. 1112).

Since the time of the Filer Commission, a small but growing number of scholars and public interest advocates have focused needed attention on philanthropy's current and potential role as a catalyst for social progress and democratic engagement. Their work has shed collective light on the general discomfort that philanthropic foundations have had, both historically and now, with professional advocacy and grassroots citizen action, particularly when it involves efforts to enable and support low-income constituencies to participate in the political process. When foundations have chosen to engage in public policy grantmaking, however, their influence has been most often exerted by developing an infrastructure of expertise. In his historical review of foundation's public policy impact, Smith identified four principal ways in which foundations have sought to alter the public policy environment. They have: 1) created and financed institutions that bring applied knowledge to bear on public problems; 2) catalyzed changes in professional training and development; 3) organized and supported forums for the exchange of information and ideas; and 4) promoted the idea of the social sciences as a valuable tool for public policy decision making (Smith 1989).<sup>10</sup>

When it comes to the support of progressive social movement organizations, Jenkins (1998) and Jenkins and Halcli (1996) have shown that an expanding circle of foundations were funding advocacy and related activities by the 1980s. Still, relative to the number of grantmaking foundations (estimated today to exceed 42,000), the circle remains small, at 146 foundations, with only a tiny fraction of foundation grants directed to social movement organizations.

Between 1953 and 1980, for example, Jenkins found that the highpoint of foundation grantmaking came in 1977, when foundations awarded just .69 percent of their grants to social movement organizations. Updating the analysis to 1990, Jenkins and Halcli found a slight increase in foundation giving to social movement organizations, awarding 1.1 percent (\$88 million) of their 1990 grants to support any Aorganized attempts to bring about institutional change by organizing or representing the collective interests of some disadvantaged or under represented group≡(1996: 4). More recently, the National Network of Grantmakers conducted its own study of Asocial change grantmaking,≡ reporting that foundations awarded a total of \$336 million, or 2.4 percent, to nonprofit organizations in during the year studied (National Network of Grantmakers 1998).

Specifically regarding children and youth, others have suggested that significantly more needs to be done in the realm of constituency-building and anti-poverty initiatives. A recent paper commissioned by the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative examined the steps that foundations might take to advance a quality agenda in early childhood care and education. The common thread in the authors= interview data was the need for Aa more strategic, more forceful, better informed advocacy effort,≡ with over half of the 70 interviewees raising this as an important issue (Mitchell and Shore 1998). The authors also outlined what they regarded as four key challenges that funders and child advocates must confront in order to move an early childhood agenda forward. Among them was the need to stimulate increased public sector investment in children through more active constituency building efforts and to address finance issues by injecting greater realism into public debates about the cost of quality care. Relatedly, they found that more needs to be done to move from public awareness to public engagement.

In another recent paper, Takanishi (1998) took foundations to task on several counts for their approach to child poverty. First, she argued, philanthropy has tended to ignore the structural causes of poverty. Second, philanthropy has taken reactive stances to critical social policy trends. For example, foundations have exhibited far greater willingness to track the effects of the 1996 welfare reform legislation rather than to support active efforts to develop and promote needed policy alternatives. And third, foundations lack a coherent vision of poverty reduction, with foundations taking pieces of the solution -- early childhood care and education, for example, or childhood immunization -- rather than adopting a coordinated approach to child poverty and related social issues.

Weiss and Lopez (1998) also recently examined current grantmaking for children and youth. Based on a series of interviews with the leaders or program officers of major foundations, they reported optimistically that foundations are engaged in a substantial rethinking of their approaches and are developing promising new strategies. Included among them are an increased emphasis on multi-component, often place-based initiatives and the development of national initiatives with complex field-building, policy change and reform goals designed to improve the status of children and youth (pp. 6). They also reported a reduced emphasis on early childhood care and education (0-5), relatively few state-level investments, and expanded interest in asset-based youth development.

What is perhaps most interesting about their analysis, however, is the fact that a very high percentage of the grant allocations of major national and regional funders is awarded to grantees to implement foundation-designed initiatives. Nine out of 18 major foundations distribute 60 percent or more of their grant allocations via staff initiated programs or solicited proposals, including at the high end the Annie E. Casey Foundation (95%), the Edna

McConnell Clark Foundation (95%), the Heinz Endowment (90%), the Eugene and Marion Kauffman Foundation (98%), the Rockefeller Foundation (90%), and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund (95%). Weiss and Lopez regard these new foundation initiatives on behalf of children as a qualitatively different form of grantmaking that moves them away from their earlier funding of multiple and categorical services and toward the development of what they call an A integrated infrastructure.≡ This integrated approach combines A service delivery with education and knowledge development, evaluation and continuous learning, leadership and professional capacity development, communication and dissemination, and public engagement≡ (19).

Weiss and Lopez= panoramic and useful overview of current and emerging funding strategies for children and youth does not, however, probe the implications of foundations= decision to design and implement their own initiatives. In many respects, the A new≡ strategic grantmaking that Weiss and Lopez discern has an historical analogue in the A medical model≡ or A scientific≡ philanthropy practiced by foundations earlier in the century. That model has been said to be a top-down, measured, deliberate, professional and technocratic approach to social improvement, usually involving problem identification, the establishment of objectives by which to measure progress, the design and implementation of a plan to accomplish these objectives, and assessment of results.

More importantly, Weiss and Lopez do not consider any of the limitations of place-based, usually neighborhood-level, initiatives offered as solutions to the social isolation and economic devastation of inner-city communities where so many of the nation=s poor children reside (Halpern 1995). To appreciate these limitations, one needs only to note the strong role that federal housing, tax and urban renewal policies played over the past 50 years in concentrating poverty and isolating the poor. Federal highway programs destroyed

community by running highways through minority neighborhoods. Urban renewal policies led to a net decrease in low income housing stock by destroying four low income housing units for every one they created. And public housing programs helped to assure the social and economic isolation of poor people by selecting sites in areas with no jobs base and little commercial activity.

Now, under conditions of continued federal (and state) neglect, there remains a persistent tendency to ask the most marginalized communities to solve problems not of their own making. Indeed, as Halpern notes, place-based initiatives today reflect many of the same premises and pitfalls of earlier decades, including the tendency to locate the causes of urban poverty and social disadvantage in the people who are experiencing them, to interpret them in terms that do not require adjustment by those who live outside the inner-city (1995, 221). Few attempts are currently being funded to address the political isolation of cities and the need to build bridges between inner-city communities, working class suburbs and middle income communities in support of broader reform agendas at the state and national level.

#### 4. ISSUES IN CHILD ADVOCACY: EXPLORING THE LINKS BETWEEN PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES OF THE CHILDREN'S MOVEMENT AND OBSERVED FUNDING PATTERNS

When one compares the criticisms of child advocacy -- developed by both scholars and practitioners alike -- with the funding patterns and priorities previously described, it is not hard to draw at least some tentative observations concerning the ways in which foundations reinforce, if not create, some of the acknowledged weaknesses and/or limitations of the children's movement. What are those criticisms? They include the failure to develop a politically mobilized constituency for children, the lack of an overarching children's policy

agenda, and relatively weak or unsophisticated efforts to target legislative leaders in the policy change process.

### < **Disconnection from Constituency**

If there is one consistent theme running through the literature and interview data, it is that the children=s advocacy community lacks a politically mobilized constituency, with many suggesting that child advocates need to move from Atraditional≅ to Acivic engagement≅ models of advocacy. While those who articulate this point differ in their emphasis on *who* should be mobilized on behalf of children -- parents in general, business and civic leaders, low income and other historically disenfranchised constituencies -- most agree that, in the absence of constituency, professional advocates will be constrained in their ability to advance anything but the most incremental of reforms.

In their conference paper, for example, Theda Skocpol and Jillian Dickert convincingly argue that the replacement of federated membership organizations by centrally-managed and professionally-run advocacy organizations has reduced prospects for the enactment of significant new national measures on behalf of children and families. While class-based and racially exclusionary, such old-line groups as the National Congress of Mothers and the General Federation of Women=s Clubs were effective in social policy reform precisely because their structure as federated membership associations allowed them both to develop local members and to link them together across states and communities in a broader national movement for change.

The issue of constituency has, of course, been more generally discussed by those

concerned about the ways in which changes in America=s civic and political landscape have impacted on national policy priorities. In this sense, the absence of constituency, although a recognized problem for the child advocacy community, is not unique to it. Margaret Weir and Marshall Ganz (1997), for example, relate declining levels of citizen engagement to the changes in the structure and function of American political parties, the evolution of social movements into Washington-based lobbies, and the media=s growing role in the political process. Not only have these developments weakened the ties between citizen constituencies and public policymakers, they have also significantly reduced opportunities for the public participation of ordinary citizens, especially the poor. Although few seem to discuss what specific remedies are available to bring people back into politics, there is general agreement that a renewed national commitment to vulnerable populations -- included but not limited to children -- will only emerge through organized efforts to activate and link citizens together in larger networks capable of developing and implementing local, state and national reform strategies.

#### < **Lack of an Overarching Policy Agenda**

Another key issue for the children=s movement is the failure to develop a common policy vision or unified agenda capable of substantially improving the lives of America=s children. As Weir and Ganz note, AFrom the 1970s on, advocacy organizations run by professional staff members at the state and national levels found that they could operate most effectively if they focused on single issues that could be addressed with specific insider strategies based on lobbying, litigation and fund raising= (1997, 160). The tendency -- amply demonstrated in Sara Rosenbaum and Colleen Sonosky=s analysis of the child health insurance program -- is to look at what is possible, or winnable, not necessarily desirable.

When nonprofit organizations function both as service deliverers and advocates, the tendency toward more technocratic and specialized approaches to policy reform can be even more pronounced. Significant pressures also exist -- fueled by fund raising imperatives -- to find one's niche in the policy marketplace and to demonstrate impact.

As with constituency-building, issue fragmentation and policy specialization are not unique to child advocacy. In his interesting analysis of public interest liberalism, Michael McCann (1986) analyzes the conundrum in which environmental and consumer advocates found themselves by pursuing specific or narrowly-based concerns. His argument is that the public interest movement has marginalized itself from national politics by staying aloof from those traditional macroeconomic issues of income, wage, price, tax, debt and investment management policies which concern most citizens. For McCann, the public interest movement's inherent narrowness of conceptual concern has deprived it of an ability to speak to the concerns of most Americans and to develop or promote a comprehensive program that specifies the actions necessary to provide welfare for all. Preferring political pragmatism to broad-based vision, the paradoxical result is an admirable ability to win important legislative or public policy battles within a more general political context of losing the war.

McCann's critique of public interest liberalism as little more than an amalgam of diverse and uncoordinated policy efforts can be almost equally applied to the children's movement. Indeed, in concentrating on a number of discrete, if crucial, policy issues, most child advocates have failed to articulate common analytic or moral principles on which to develop a unified social vision, guide action or pursue broad-based reform. Instead, child advocates zero in on discrete policy areas such as early childhood education, immunization

campaigns, medical insurance, and the like. One result is that legislators don't sense that the child advocacy community is unified in its goals and objectives.

As Republican pollster John Deardourff remarked at a mid-1990s conference on constituency building for children, legislative decision makers typically say that they know what the American Association of Retired People wants, but have little idea about what constitutes a child and family policy agenda: AChildren=s hospitals in most states do a good job of going in and defending their budgets. So do a lot of the day-care providers, who have an association that pays for lobbyists. But overall there is no coalition that can give a legislator the kids= agenda for this year and the bills it will take to get them accomplished.= Legislators thus don't see Athat they pay any price for not doing child advocacy= (The Children=s Partnership 1996, 16).

#### < **Ineffective Legislative Advocacy**

The lack of constituency and the failure to develop an overarching and more coherent policy approach to child well-being are both contributing factors to what some also observe to be weak legislative work by child advocates. Based on interviews with 177 state legislators, a report found that most seemed ill-informed about how well children and families were faring in their districts (State Legislative Leaders Foundation 1995). They hear little from their constituents on child and family policy matters, discern no clear legislative agenda for children and families, and hold a somewhat negative view of child advocates as Aelitists.= State legislative leaders also tend to view certain strategies pursued by child advocates as either counterproductive (issuing long written reports) or ineffective (conducting media campaigns).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the report concluded that child advocates are not provided with the training, funding and flexibility essential to successful legislative advocacy. Indeed, one of the report's central findings is that legislative advocacy is neither aggressively pursued nor effectively implemented as a major strategy largely because many, of not most, foundations place restrictions on the use of funds for such purposes. This may explain why almost two-thirds of state-based child advocates reported that they neither organize their supporters by legislative districts nor organize supporters in the districts of key legislative committee chairs (State Legislative Leaders Foundation 1995).

Interestingly, a retrospective study of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Kids Count* program found that, while media coverage of children's issues had increased substantially and a voluminous amount of reliable and user-friendly data had been developed and distributed, few of the *Kids Count* grantees were actually able to cite concrete examples of improved program or policy decisions (Academy for Educational Development, n.d.). In fact, grantees reported that, in the present political climate, positive change in their states and communities would be rare. One Indiana respondent, for example, admitted feeling ineffective at the state level, "Given the mood of the current legislature, while another Washington state grantee felt that "the lack of improvement in this area is due to an overall political climate emphasizing ideology over analysis." In what seems generally to be true for *Kids Count* grantees, this respondent felt that far more influence had been exerted in institutional arenas where agency staff had the discretion to make program or policy decisions.<sup>11</sup>

All of these problems are obviously exacerbated by the way in which grantmaking

foundations direct their resources. Professionally-driven activities, for example, are clearly the preferred route to policy change for the vast majority of foundations that do fund advocacy. According to Jenkins, foundations directed a full 78 percent of their grant dollars to professional advocates and technical assistance intermediaries between 1953 and 1990, but only 14 percent to grassroots social action groups (1996).<sup>12</sup> The data developed for this paper also show a marked tendency among grantmakers to avoid grassroots constituency development activities in favor of more traditional advocacy operations such as public education through media outreach, data collection and dissemination, and technical assistance provision to governmental and nonprofit child-serving entities. The \$22 million provided in 1996 for public education and media outreach purposes, for example, far outpaced the amounts directed to support new leadership development, citizen-based advocacy, membership development, and direct or grassroots legislative lobbying.

Foundations have also likely reinforced the single-issue orientation of child advocacy organizations by organizing grantmaking programs and allocating resources on a categorical (e.g., by program area) rather than a strategic basis (e.g., data generation and dissemination, constituency building, policy development). In addition to single-issue funding, foundations have tended to fund short-term, usually limiting their grants to one or two years, and rarely more than three. Such short-term funding commitments, exacerbated by the shifting program interests of many foundations, work against child advocates' ability to think and act long-term. When foundations add their own program initiatives to the mix, child advocates are often left chasing after program dollars that may or may not fit within their own organizational priorities and longer-range goals.

Finally, another aspect of foundation grantmaking that many argue reduces the

effectiveness of advocacy organizations is their propensity to fund projects rather than general operations. Ironically, such categorical funding may reproduce or reinforce in the child advocacy community the kind of specialized thinking and fragmented approach that many foundations seek to counteract when they fund system reform efforts to increase cross-agency coordination of services to children and their families at the state or local levels. Foundations also provided few resources to child advocacy organizations to support strategic planning processes or fund raising activities that could strengthen the institutional capacities of child advocacy organizations, assist them to think long-term, and develop a more integrated and unifying social vision.

Practitioner Perspectives. Most child advocates who were interviewed (n=12) were willing to be quite probing and candid about what they regarded as the weaknesses of their own community and the ways in which foundations feed into and reinforce them. While the interviews surfaced different strategic emphases and points of view, almost all acknowledged the failure of the children=s movement to build and activate broad-based constituencies for children. One linked this failure to the Aaversion that the child advocacy community has to political action.≡ In her view, child advocates had become:

... very seduced by slick public relations materials and advertising, much of which is brilliantly done. But who is reading it and what is it producing?  
There=s also a lot of soft media work, a lot of >hug a kid today= type stuff.  
I=m quite skeptical...

She added that effective advocacy also means a willingness to challenge the status quo through public actions and events and to be able to use a lot of different strategies, including not only media work but also political mailings, community mobilization, legislative hearings, and other activities.

Others agreed as well that, while media work is important, it has often come to replace rather than support political action. One state-level advocate, for example, questioned the utility of the media for policy change, stating that in the current media frenzy, some child advocates are constantly, almost reflexively, seeking media.<sup>13</sup> Sure it helps to raise consciousness, he stated, but raised consciousness is no guarantee of anything and it shouldn't be confused with policy change. This person continued in some detail to describe what he considered to be the components of effective child advocacy:

Effective advocacy is much more complicated than most people realize. It is very goal-oriented. There is executive branch policy issued by agency staff, there's regulatory reform, and there's legislation. In order to get to any of these end points, effective advocacy means having adequate information to support policy change, building a constituency at all different levels to support that reform, developing a consensus among stakeholders that: a) this is the problem; and b) this is the right solution. And then there is public education to develop broader public support for your advocacy agenda. And then there is doing all the things that are specific to advocacy, including finding or developing the legislative vehicle or policy draft or regulatory language. There is also devoting time to shepherd that vehicle through the legislative or administrative process to make sure that opposing forces are not going to amend or delete what you're trying to do. And finally, there is the monitoring of the implementation to insure that agency directives or legislation takes actual effect.

Another advocate took a different tact, arguing that the strategic use of media was very important to constituency building for children:

Effective advocacy no doubt has several different components and properly sequenced steps. But absent media communications, few others will work. Without resources to buy media access, our recourse is to obtain media

coverage of the issues through stories and op-eds. This is especially critical in our state because of the overlap that exists between media consumers and political activists. Politicians want to be associated with popular effective programs, and so we are targeting the politically active voters through our media efforts. This, coupled with other forms of public or community mobilization, is what we call strategic political reform.

At the same time, this advocate noted how difficult it was to raise money from grantmaking foundations for what he saw as deeply political, if non-partisan, work on behalf of kids. In fact, he explicitly emphasized not having sought the support of major foundations in the interest of maintaining the maximum amount of strategic flexibility for his organization.

Several child advocates also discussed the need for advocates to broaden their base by moving from child to family advocacy and/or to develop a Big picture agenda for children, youth and families. One national advocate with prior state and local experience stated that:

Child advocates haven't yet figured out how to connect the issues they care about to broader public debates, issues and concerns. There is little broad-gauged thinking and strategizing. We are operating too much in isolation from the public at large and we need to figure out how to reframe issues and to communicate more effectively with civic groups. We could and should take lessons in this regard from some of the community organizing networks that have brilliantly reframed the minimum wage issue into a living wage issue.

Other thoughtful self-criticisms included the belief that the children's movement has focused too much energy and attention on problem documentation and not enough on the development and promotion of concrete policy solutions. Given scarce resources and the

need for impact, others acknowledged a tendency for child advocates to gravitate toward the easier issues, or those around which broader-based constituencies can be more easily built. One, for example, asked how a constituency for other people's children can be built, especially when communities are increasingly divided by race and economic status? Another observed that child advocates tend to fall back on the things they know and do well, such as gathering data or writing reports, with one expressing the view that the pot of money increasingly available for data collection and analysis had encouraged more careerists to move into the field. These professionals, he argued, bring a faith in data as a primary mechanism for change, with less emphasis consequently given to community mobilization and citizen activation strategies.

While child advocates demonstrated a clear willingness to examine and critique their own practices, they were also eager to discuss their specific and general frustrations with the foundation community. Common sentiments included: 1) foundations don't really understand or like to fund advocacy; 2) grantseeking organizations often have to twist and turn to fit into foundation priorities; 3) little candor exists between those who fund and those who do the work; and 4) foundations maintain unrealistic expectations about what advocates can produce in return for the relatively small amounts of money provided. In a particularly forceful manner, one child advocate stated:

Unless they themselves are doing it, foundations neither understand nor trust advocacy. They want to put their own programs together or to dictate how we should our work. It is so maddening because we have a long-term track record and can show impact and results in terms of changes in law and public policy, but we still don't get respect for our work. If you look outside of advocacy, the picture is substantially different. When foundations fund the symphony, for example, they don't tell them what music to play. No, they let the artistic director select the programs and design the set and assemble the players in the ways their experience and creative energies

suggest. After our years of experience, one wonders what you have to do to get foundations to believe that you know what you're doing, and to let you do it.

Another stated:

Foundations are stuck in a direct service or research mode. They don't understand or respect the nitty-gritty of advocacy. They say they want to build constituency, but they're not willing to acknowledge that effective constituency building takes time and resources, especially when it involves those who should be at the table but often are not. We get rejections all the time for this aspect of our work. The grants we do get are small relative to the sums that foundations pour into service agencies and systems, yet it always seems like we're held to a higher standard and expected to produce so much more.

Others expressed similar concerns that foundations exert undue influence over their choice of issues, strategies and methods. The following illustrates the frustrations that child advocates experience over foundation-designed programs and the perceived unwillingness of many to let advocates determine how best to move an agenda forward:

Foundations develop funding initiatives and we structure our programs to fit them. We all play this game, and it is a dangerous one. A good, candid dialogue needs to happen, with longer-term thinking about agendas and how to build toward them.

Frankly, we survive by pretending that we are something that we're not. So many of the good things that we've done have happened in spite, not because, of our funding.

Whether intended or not, foundations control the agenda. It is difficult to raise funds so the tendency quite honestly is to evaluate potential strategies and activities according to two basic criteria: can money for this be raised and can we win? These types of questions, however, can turn us in the wrong direction, away from some of the things that may need doing most.

Foundations don't give core support, but this should be a priority so that advocates can figure out, based on past experience and current opportunities, what the mix should be between policy work, outreach, communications, and

base building. Advocates just never get the luxury of putting a program together that makes the most strategic sense.

The funding community has spent so much of its energy giving money to specific issues and projects. And so, part of the question is, are we thinking enough about constituency activation? It is a question of civic engagement, really, but we can't get in under the civic engagement funding programs because we are a child advocacy organization. Foundations think in such boxes, which keeps us boxed in, as well.

Such statements are not only consistent with the grants data reported on earlier, but also with the views that many child advocates have expressed in other settings or through other reports. In *Building a Constituency for Children: A Discussion Among Child Advocates*, for example, child advocates stated that while constituency building for children is valuable and even necessary, it is also time consuming and expensive, requiring far more resources than most foundations are willing to provide (National Association of Child Advocates, 1996). Based on a national survey of organizations that advocate on children's behalf, the 1995 State Legislative Leaders Foundation report also concluded that foundations' unwillingness to support legislative advocacy is the biggest barrier to nonprofit organizations' ability to underwrite a sustained and aggressive legislative advocacy program for kids. As Stephen Lakis, President of the Foundation stated in his introductory remarks to the report, A...the responsibility for getting state legislative leaders more involved will continue to rest with those organizations and individuals who are concerned about children and families.... The philanthropic community must revisit its reluctance to fund effective outreach and education to legislative leaders and those the leaders rely upon for information... (1995, iii).

Survey research conducted on state-based child advocacy organizations in the late 1980s and early 1990s reveals how little financial and organizational capacity many of these groups have to address the issues that confront them, including the enormous challenge of building political clout for children. According to Richart and Bing (1991), the average size budget of

state-based child advocacy organizations in the early 1990s was \$294,454. When the five largest organizations were excluded from the analysis, however, the average budget for the remaining 28 groups surveyed was only \$178,779. Not surprisingly, these child advocacy organizations were severely constrained in their ability to hire both support and program staff. One-third had no full-time administrative staff, for example, while the average number of full-time professional staff was two.

Richart and Bing also note that almost all of the child advocacy organizations surveyed have no hard revenue sources on which to rely, forcing their directors to spend significant time raising non-recurring revenues year after year. This, in combination with short staffing arrangements, undercuts the ability of child advocacy organizations to work up to their full capacity and potential. Since the early part of the decade, however, some progress has been made, at least with respect to the soft money contributions of foundations and other donors.

A 1995 survey of 35 child advocacy groups affiliated with the National Association of Child Advocates found that they raised a total of \$16.7 million to support their work. According to Richart (1997), the mean organizational budgets of these groups increased from \$69,807 in 1985 (n=13) to \$478,571 in 1996 (n=35). Given the considerable limitations imposed by scarce resources and by what many consider to be a difficult political climate, it is a wonder that child advocates have been able to accomplish as much as they have, not only in keeping children's issues in the public eye but also in creating an environment in which children's programs are not even *considered* as potential candidates for the chopping block (quoted in Richart 1993, 30).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Although foundations have increased their grants to child advocacy organization over the 1990s, their record of support for child advocates is not strong. While the 103 grantee organizations included in this study do not represent the entire child advocacy universe, certainly they comprise its organizational core. It is this infrastructure that can and should provide national and state leadership on questions of crucial importance to children, youth and families, working to advance policies and programs capable of substantially addressing poverty and other social conditions that diminish children's lives. In 1996, the collective investment made by some of the nation's largest national, regional and local funders was only \$58.4 million (a figure itself greatly inflated by the presence of a single \$19.5 million grant to the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids). This amount is less than 5 percent of the roughly \$1.1 billion that foundations awarded that same year to institutions serving infants, children and youth.

The grants analysis further shows that when foundations are willing to fund advocacy, they do so in ways that many suggest weakens child advocacy organizations and/or detracts from their ability to build broad-based political support for kids. In 1996, foundations directed only 8 percent of their 1996 grant awards to child advocacy organizations on a general support basis and only 6 percent to help child advocates build their organizations through strategic planning, staff development and resource development activities.

Foundations also continue to think and fund categorically, targeting a majority of their grant dollars either to single-issue, mostly national, organizations or to single-issue projects of multi-issue organizations. In addition to single issue approaches to funding, the data show that foundations also engaged to a very significant degree in single strategy funding,

awarding over \$22 million to support public education and media outreach activities. While public and media outreach may prepare the ground work for, or complement, more direct constituency building and activation strategies, they cannot substitute for sustained efforts to cultivate a membership base, develop community leaders, train advocates, build alliances, and otherwise enable and involve ordinary citizens to contact and influence key legislative and other decisionmakers involved in matters of critical importance to children, youth and families. It is just these kinds of activities that so many suggest will be necessary if the children=s movement is to develop the kind of political muscle it needs to reduce child poverty rates, improve child health and well-being, and rebuild impoverished inner-city and rural communities in which so many of our nation=s children disproportionately reside.

## END NOTES

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1. In their baseline study, Kahn, Kamerman and McGowan (1972) locate the conceptual origins of child advocacy in government-sponsored efforts. They identified four institutional antecedents of the children's movement that, along with civil rights and anti-poverty activism, helped to catalyze professional and lay advocacy on behalf of children. These included the 1969 Report of the Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children, the 1969 establishment of the Office of Child Development (OCD), the 1970 White House Conference on Children and Youth, and the formation in 1971 of OCD's National Center for Child Advocacy.

2. In his interesting analysis of the conceptual moral underpinnings of national politics, George Lakoff writes: "Conservatives know that politics is not just about policy and interest groups and issue-by-issue debate. They have learned that politics is about family and morality, about myth and metaphor and emotional identification" (1996:19).

3. In his examination of the role that persuasion plays in the political process, Majone argues that there are two different modes of policy analysis. The first he calls "analysis-as-maximization" because it focuses on how public resources can be most frequently distributed for maximum effect. This analytical mode is technocratic and considers the relative costs and benefits of particular expenditures. The central concern of the second mode -- "analysis-as argument" -- is how to improve the quality of public discourse and public reasoning processes. Where the former draws on formal methods of proof, rational choice theories, and macroeconomics, the latter sees argument -- including the use of rhetoric, ethics, metaphors, values and evidence -- as central. Indeed, Majone rightfully argues that in a democracy, where almost every aspect of public policy is a legitimate topic of debate, analysts who stick to the task of working out unique solutions to well-defined technical problems deny themselves any significant role in the policy process (1988: xx).

4. A survey conducted in the mid-1980s by the State Legislative Leaders Foundation found that of the 167 responding organizations thought to be multi-issue, nonprofit citizen-based advocacy groups with little or no public funding, only 52 percent actually reported that advocacy was their primary mission. A full twenty-six percent of respondents identified their organizations as service providers. The remaining organizations reported their mission as education, health care or data collection (State Legislative Leaders Foundation 1995).

5. One recent survey of state-based child advocacy organizations affiliated with the National Association of Child Advocates found that federal funding comprised 6.7 percent of all funding to these organizations (Richart, 1997).

6. Certainly, economic globalization and the shift in the nation's unemployment base from manufacturing to services (and from cities to suburbs) have also undermined wages for the majority of families. Between 1979 and 1993, real family incomes fell for families in the bottom three-fifths of the income distribution.

7. According to a new report jointly released by the Institute on Economic Policy and United For a Fair Economy, most households now have a lower net worth than they did in 1983, notwithstanding the stock

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market's record breaking growth over the past two decades. That growth has concentrated both wealth and income to a phenomenal degree, with the top one percent of households now owning more wealth than the entire bottom 95 percent of the population. Meanwhile, the weekly wages of the average worker in 1998 were actually below what they were in 1973 in inflation-adjusted dollars.

8. This figure covers foundation grants made to support services and activities for infants, children, and youth to age 18: neonatal care; child welfare, including adoption, foster care, and prevention of child abuse; child development; prevention and rehabilitation for juvenile delinquency; pregnancy counseling and prevention programs; adolescent parent services; pediatrics and children's hospitals; and children's museums. Also included are youth development services; youth centers and clubs; adult/child matching programs; scouting organizations, and various youth development organizations (The Foundation Center, 1998, iii).

9. To a certain extent, public education and media outreach appear to be funded as a proxy for constituency building, with little strategic or analytic attention given to the fact that media, public, governmental, and electoral issue agendas are only loosely connected to each other and governed by their own incentive structures, processes, and gatekeepers (McCarthy, Smith and Zald 1996).

10. In her study of foundations' public policy influence, Colwell also concludes that foundation approaches to change rest on pervasive assumptions of democratic elitism. Conceptually dividing the nonprofit sector into two distinct levels (high and low), she notes that it is the high-level policy organizations and other elite institutions that receive the bulk of foundation grants (1993).

11. It is disturbing to note that, even with increased public attention to children's issues and the continued strong growth of the U.S. economy, state-level poverty rates for children either increased or stayed the same in 12 of the 17 states where *Kids Count* grantees began their important work in the early part of the decade.

12. Jenkins, however, does not believe that the funding of professional movement organizations has been an unmitigated disaster. On the contrary, by ensuring stronger enforcement or implementation of civil rights laws and other legislation won through grassroots efforts, he views professionalization as having consolidated the social movement gains of the 1960s and 1970s. Still, as Jenkins acknowledges, professionalization contributes little to grassroots participation, and funders' professional biases may have reduced the incentives for constituency building among national and state reform leaders (1994, 1998).

13. State legislative leaders also report that the media do not dominate the legislative process with respect to child and family policy issues, although they do concede that where media coverage influences public opinion, it can encourage legislators to act on child and family issues (State Legislative Leaders 1995, 13).

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