Mobilization For Youth:
A Revolution in Youth Work

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Introduction

This paper will frame Mobilization For Youth in political, social, and economic contexts of the 1950’s and 1960’s, to illuminate the challenges, successes, and the programs eventual merger with local community organizations. Mobilization For Youth sought to combat juvenile delinquency at its roots, in the neighborhoods where gang activity and heroin use were rapidly increasing. The initial scope was the youth living on the Lower East Side of New York City. It was to be a demonstration project to be duplicated around the world. Its goal was to eradicate juvenile delinquency. To accomplish this, it used a saturation model, summoning all available resources, including federal, state, and city funding. It called upon the intellectual resources at Columbia and New York Universities, and other great thinkers of the time. As the program developed, it was transformed into a broader social justice movement, contributing to welfare reform and the civil rights movement of the later 1960’s and 1970’s.

Historical Background

The Lower East Side is located in New York City, New York. Throughout history this area is well known as the first home for many of the arriving immigrants that came to the United States. The Irish were the earliest immigrants in the Lower East Side neighborhood throughout the 1840’s and 1850’s. Next the Germans moved into the area during the 1860’s and 1870’s, and later the Italians during end of nineteenth century. The area was well known as a Jewish Ghetto neighborhood with predominately all European immigrants: Eastern European Jews, Irish, Germans, and
Italians. “Before the influx of Blacks and Puerto Ricans the Lower East Side was primarily a Jewish ghetto” (Sanford, 1982).

During the 1930’s and 1940’s the Jewish ghetto began to break up, Jewish residents left the Lower East Side and moved to Brooklyn and the Bronx, leaving behind the old and economically trapped (Weissman, 1969). As the Jews were moving out, the African Americans and Puerto Ricans began to arrive on the Lower East Side. Most of the new residents did not choose to live in this area, however due to lack of housing in other parts of New York this is where they ended up. This spillover population was seen as having no culture or central identity. During this time, the population of Puerto Ricans and African Americans increased 250%.

Living on the Lower East Side during the 1950’s was difficult for many reasons. Because of the diversity of its residents there were many clashes about differences between cultures, religion, and politics. The impact of war was also affecting the community, many of the “good” young men were taken away from the community, and leaving the area without good male role models. An increase in gang activity, violence, and drugs use (particularly heroin) was seen as a result of the turmoil in the area. This tension between groups and increase in criminal behavior was compacted by the lack of resources for adults and families in the community. Many residents did not have the income to keep up with the cost of living, therefore living conditions in the area were substandard.

The idea for Mobilization for Youth began when an individual brought up the concern of juvenile delinquency within the Lower East Side neighborhood at a Henry
Street Settlement House Board of Directors Meeting in June 1957. At the meeting they proposed to research the issue of juvenile delinquency: what it is and how to fight it. A saturation approach to helping the area fight juvenile delinquency was created and funding was acquired to help set up Mobilization for Youth, the program officially began in 1962.

Methods

Researching the Mobilization for Youth program led to a wide array of historical documents: papers, letters, case notes, correspondence, proposals, budgets, news reports, and memos, all contained in the Social Welfare Archive, University of Minnesota. These were from records contained in the files of the Henry Street Settlement, United Neighborhood Housing papers, and the Lower East Side Neighborhood Association. Articles from scholarly journals and writings were also located using search engines through Lumina, at the University of Minnesota Library. A third primary source was an interview and a brief video documentary done with Professor Michael Baizerman, PhD, University of Minnesota. Professor Baizerman worked as a community activist with Mobilization For Youth, and these researchers are very grateful and indebted to Professor Baizerman for his vivid insights and reflections on the program and a historical background of the timer and events surrounding Mobilization For Youth.

Data collection led to extensive discussions and synthesis of the information, a group presentation of Mobilization For Youth, and this paper. The authors note this paper should be viewed as a preliminary look and discussion of Mobilization For Youth. The program was enormous and the documentation found in the archives extremely
extensive. It is the authors’ feelings there is much research yet to be conducted on
Mobilization For Youth.

One area of note, although research was seen as a critical piece of the program, little evidence documenting research results was discovered. One thought was more of this information may be held in archives at Columbia University, which were not accessed for this project.

The following is an example of one of the areas covered and notes recorded for this project.

Mobilization for Youth’s Social Issues and Public Policy Committee 1963-64, statement on the Policy of Mobilization for Youth with respect to public issues: Mobilization for Youth is the first large-scale demonstration project in the country for the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency. (Mobilization for Youth Records, Box 81:14).

View of Youth in the Social, Economic, and Political Contexts

During the 1950’s and 1960’s, the concept of teenager was being formulated, with discretionary time and consumerism emerging as critical social constructs, manifesting in economic and political concerns (M. Baizerman, October 18, 2007). In cities across the United States, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, this burgeoning population of youth was viewed as pre-delinquent, unaffiliated, and ripe with self-defeating attitudes.

Around the world, rapidly growing youth movements, Hitler Youth for example, were becoming more concerning. Communist scares fueled moral panics. The end of WWII swept the U.S. with prosperity and hope, but unfortunately for many, the deteriorating conditions in congested neighborhoods led only to deeper despair, as discrepancies in economic and educational opportunities became more pronounced.
Suburbia was invented, as large numbers of mainly white, middle class families, found new homes, better schools, and safer communities within driving distance of their jobs, which still predominately remained in the larger cities.

During the 1950’s, poverty, welfare, and civil rights issues began to percolate and receive national attention. In 1954, the Supreme Court, with Chief Justice Warren, ruled 9-0 in Brown v. the Board of Education, stating, “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” The case was argued successfully by Turgood Marshall, who later, in 1967, became the first African American to be appointed to the US Supreme Court. This overturned the 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson ruling, which allowed for segregated schools.

Several theories of juvenile delinquency were predominately recognized. The first viewed delinquency as an individual issue, a character or personality flaw in the individual related to substandard parenting. Second was that of social control, with the focus on inadequate discipline at home and school. Thirdly, there was the group approach, illuminating group pressure at the root of delinquent behavior. And forth, the community approach, which pointed at “certain contradictions and deficiencies inherent in the organization of community life.” (United Neighborhood House, box 58)

Charles Wright Mills, an American sociologist, wrote several timely works during this period. His work influenced the architects of Mobilization For Youth. The Power Elite (1956), was concerned with the responsibilities of intellectuals in post WWII society. He advocated for “relevance and engagement vs. disinterested academic observation.” He spoke of 3 tenants: 1) a public intelligence apparatus; 2) challenging policies of the institutional elite; 3) focus on three areas or definitions of reality,

Spearheading the research portion of Mobilization For Youth, in 1960, Cloward and Ohlin, published their seminal work, *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. In focusing on pressures influencing deviant behavior, the authors construct a new explanation of delinquency, the “theory of differential opportunity systems.” According to Mobilization For Youth documents, Cloward and Ohlin developed their approach to delinquency based on two previous theoretical perspectives, Emile Durkheim and later Robert Merton, which discussed the sources of pressure that can lead to deviance; and Shaw, McKay, and Sutherland, “in which social structure features regulate the selection and evolution of deviant solutions” (Mobilization For Youth, Master Annotated Bibliography, box 84, p. 4). Juvenile delinquency was now emerging as a social problem which could and must be eradicated.

Previously, at the turn of the 20th century, psychology, psychiatry, and criminology were moving into an era of “more modern theorizing dominated by science methodologies and technologies,” and France (2007) went on to state, “Science, and especially the emerging new medical disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, offered an alternative empirical approach that would explain and understand individuals’ relationships with modern society” (France, p.27) Examining understandings of adolescence and delinquency theories, France (2007), credits the work of psychologist G. Stanley Hall, in 1903, as illuminating the role of science in understanding youth, which resulted in framing questions of youth development in science and moving the
field of criminology into a positivist perspective. Hall saw adolescence as a time of “psychological and emotional transition to adulthood,” which remains with us today (France, p.27). Lombroso, 1876, has been referenced as influential in moving these theories into practice (France, p.28).

In discussing youth and delinquency, Hamilton and Hamilton (2004) concluded, “Placing juvenile justice and positive youth development in the same sentence is somewhat like mixing oil and water” (Hamilton, p.77). This appears similar to findings of Cloward and Ohlin. While researching Mobilization For Youth, they uncovered numerous challenges to issues related to combating juvenile delinquency. As initial program approaches were evidenced as incomplete, a more comprehensive, multidimensional approach evolved.

**Program Theory**

Mobilization For Youth was a unique program for its time that stood on ground-breaking principles. First and foremost, they believed that juvenile delinquency and its related problems were social issues that needed to be addressed. They did not blame people for their position in society; it blamed society for not giving equal access to opportunities, particularly people living in poverty. Mobilization For Youth believed that society should provide education, counseling, job training, placement and support necessary to ensure positive development for youth. In that, they saw the structure of society as the most important determinant of behavior. Social and economic opportunities were necessary to succeed. Without positive outlets in their lives, youth turned to delinquent behavior as a way to succeed. They also saw racism as a
fundamental flaw in society and maintained that breaking down barriers between ethnic communities is essential in their quest to eliminate juvenile delinquency.

To address society’s problems contributing juvenile delinquency Mobilization For Youth developed a systematic approach to the issues. They developed a multi-pronged approach to tackle these issues. Mobilization For Youth did not focus on the symptoms of the problem alone, but they believed that crime and delinquency could be reduced through comprehensive community partnerships, actions and treatment services with a reflective element and an action research component. Democratic group processes were valued in the work of Mobilization For Youth. They believed that to be successful, the program needed to tap into the practical knowledge of community residents, who experience the reality of everyday live in the community. To be effective, they believed that social change should be initiated by the poor.

Outcomes

The founding theorists of Mobilization For Youth, Richard Cloward and Llyod Ohlin, (1960) summed up the agency’s approach to social change in their statement, “If the gap between opportunity and aspiration could be bridged, delinquency would be reduced.” This approach was translated into ambitious, action-orientated goals. With their ultimate goal was to fight delinquency in the Lower East Side neighborhood by increasing the legitimate opportunities available for youth and their families. They believed that promoting acceptable youth behavior through social and economic opportunities would decrease delinquency. They saw the current system as socializing people to have minimal expectations of youth and their community. It was critical to transform the system to impact change. Opportunity for youth was created through
programs that were comprehensive, coordinated and offered chances to explore new avenues. Employment options, neighborhood services and recreation programs were a way for people to get involved in group actions and decision making.

Mobilization For Youth’s aim was to involve residents directly in improving the community, economic opportunities and the schools in the Lower East Side neighborhood. The agency planned to address social justice issues by establishing autonomous groups of neighborhood residents, motivated by the disparities facing youth. They also hoped that these groups would continue to help the community after the agency was gone. They envisioned “democratically functioning organisms, which helps itself as much as possible through its own resources.” (Henry Street Settlement Records, box 79) In order to form these grassroots collectives, it was important to improve communication amongst residents. One of the ways they intended on improving communications was to address the racial tensions that existed on the Lower East Side.

Mobilization For Youth valued research and evaluation. (Henry Street Settlement Records, Box 79) To be effective in their work combating juvenile delinquency, they acknowledged that they needed to understand its causes. To address the core interests of youth and to allow flexibility in programming, they used action research. They aimed to become a demonstration model for other communities in the U.S. dealing with similar problems. Because they wanted to revolutionize the way we thought about and treated social problems, a replicable and fundable model was an important goal of the agency. This would allow for a large scale expansion of the program in urban areas throughout the U.S.
Activities and Intended Outputs

Because the philosophy of Mobilization For Youth included a saturation approach to juvenile delinquency, the activities it provided needed to encompass many aspects of life on the Lower East Side. Originally the program started with five key components: Research and Evaluation, Educational Services, Employment Services, Services to Individuals and Families, and Community Development. Legal Services was added two years into the program. What follows is a brief description of the programs, including an overview of each component with its intended outputs and examples of activities.

Research and Evaluation

The Research and Evaluation component of Mobilization For Youth when proposed consisted of three types of research; basic research on substantive issues, evaluation of the entire program, and evaluation of specific service programs (Henry Street Settlement Records, Box 79). They used the youth in the program to gain a better understanding of issues related to juvenile delinquency.

The basic research component planned to focus specifically on juvenile delinquency, what it is and where it comes from. Four priorities were set for discovering more about juvenile delinquency. These priorities would guide all of the basic research. The first priority looked at who are the delinquents; analyzing the difference between self reported delinquents (those who haven't been caught) and official records of misconduct. The next priority was to look at how adjudicated youth were socialized back into the community after they have served their sentence, including recidivism rates. The third priority was to analyze previously collected data in order to start up the
action program. This created a starting point for assessing the community, and understanding the origins and effects of juvenile delinquency. The forth priority of the basic research component was the beginning of a longitudinal study of the political machine. It considered the reasons behind the shift in political attention from low-income communities to middle-income communities. They found that politicians were able to establish a solid voting block within middle-income communities that didn’t exist in the low-income community.

Another phase of the research component was an evaluation of the effectiveness of Mobilization For Youth. This research model compared rates of adolescent delinquency at various points in the program. The rates of delinquency between communities involved in Mobilization For Youth and similar communities without services were compared. In addition to examining overall crime rates, the evaluation would look at the success of Mobilization For Youth to achieve it's intermediate objectives.

Specific programs within Mobilization For Youth would be evaluated. Two methods of evaluation would be used; first a systematic approach for record keeping would be developed. By having the same forms used by all programs it will be possible to make evaluatory statements about individual services (Henry Street Settlement Papers, box 79) Since some of the programs offered by Mobilization For Youth lend themselves to experimental design, an action research model was planned to guide program development. A method would be developed based on initial information from participants and staff and as the program continued the effectiveness would be assessed and the program would change to better meet the needs of the participants.
Educational Services

Educational Services worked toward helping youth succeed in school and to prevent juvenile delinquency. The intended outputs of this component were to improve the quality of remedial instruction. In addition to improving teaching, the educational services program wanted to improve families’ connections with the school. To achieve these outputs, many services were provided to students, teachers, and parents. One of the services provided to the students, families, and schools was the existence of a home / school liaison. The positions were created and filled in all schools in the area served by Mobilization For Youth, in hopes that by having a person in the school who knew the culture of the families, they would be able to help them navigate the school and its resources. In addition to the added school personal, teachers and school administrators were given training on cultural competence, impacts of poverty, and other issues in the community, to help them understand the daily lives of their students. Early childhood programs were created to help prepare youth for school. Before Mobilization For Youth many students were not ready for school. Numerous other services were offered with the goal of helping youth succeed in school.

Employment Services

As noted previously, youth during the 1960’s had a more discretionary time. The Employment Services program was created to help youth prepare to join the workforce. This component of Mobilization For Youth was the largest and had the most concrete goal: to employ youth. Employment services offered many different programs to prepare youth to join the workforce. Within its job readiness program Mobilization For Youth had many services that helped youth prepare for a job, such as how to dress for
an interview, how to fill out a job application and the importance of being on time to work. In addition to job readiness, job training programs and trade schools were created. These services gave youth the opportunity to learn specific skills they could use to find a job, such as: electrical work, sewing and plumbing. Job placement and retention programs were created to help youth find and retain employment with local businesses. Mobilization For Youth owned its own luncheonettes and gas stations to employ youth. Employment Services was seen a critical piece in Mobilization For Youth’s efforts to combat juvenile delinquency.

Services to Individuals and Families

In their saturation approach to juvenile delinquency, Services to Individuals and Families were created to give more specialized services to the residents of the Lower East Side in need of more assistance. Though the overall goal was to stop crime, they believed a major component of stopping crime was to alleviate the suffering of poverty. The program also attempted to provide positive leisure time activities. Many of the services provided by this component had to do with mental health and health care, including heroine addiction. Group and individual sessions were used as a means to promote healthy lifestyles. Activities such as support groups for drug users and their families, abstinence education, and parenting classes were offered. In addition, fun activities for youth and families were created or enhanced through Mobilization For Youth funding; sports leagues, family field trips, film nights and more. The real goal of the Services to Individuals and Families was to help those not helped through other program components. It was a way to extend the reach of Mobilization For Youth to
families and children who were falling through the cracks of the other programs (box 79, folder 5).

**Community Development**

To eliminate and prevent youth crime, Mobilization For Youth's Community Development programs were designed to organize the people effected by these issues. Social change was to be brought about through the activity of and pressure exerted by organizations of the poor. What society would not do for the poor, the poor must begin to do for themselves.” (Weissman, *Community Development in the Mobilization For Youth Experience*, 1969). Using social change as a tool to engage community residents, the community development program was hoping to change attitudes in the community and create sustainable resources for residents after they were gone. A diverse set of activities were provided by the program that related to many aspects of daily life for the residents of the lower east side. Some activities focused on local change in the community; rent strikes, block clubs, voter registration, and school boycotts were a few activities. Other activities focused on everyday life such as gang work, English classes, and teen social clubs. In addition to working locally, many people of the community rallied around civil rights and joined marches and movements in other areas of the country. Although these activities were not funded directly by Mobilization For Youth, the skills and motivation to do so were inspired by them. Creating a self sustaining community with it's own resources, while affecting social change was the goal for the community development program.

**Legal Services**
As a direct result of action research and lessons learned of the Community Development program, the legal services component to Mobilization For Youth was established (Baizerman). Legal services were created to help those who could not afford legal advice or support on their own. Like the other components of Mobilization For Youth, legal services provided many different types of services and activities for residents of the Lower East Side. Services helped residents navigate the legal system; some areas of focus were tenant’s rights, welfare rights, family violence issues, and support for offenders. Legal Services had fewer goals than the other programs of Mobilization For Youth and their goals were more concrete: to help others navigate the legal system as a means to promote social change and stop juvenile delinquency.

Inputs

An extensive amount of resources were needed to get Mobilization For Youth up and running. The essential elements of the program included dedicated funding, years of important research and a range of dedicated people and willing participants. Ample funding, primarily by the federal (Departments of Labor, Economic Opportunity and the President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency) and city governments (City of New York), National Institute of Mental Health and the Ford Foundation allowed the agency’s founders to think big and plan well. Over $35 million dollars was dedicated to the research and delivery of the programs. The preliminary research that was done for the program was critical in setting the action research precedent. It also defined the need for the program, described barriers and offered possible solutions and ways for the work to begin. The on-going research was critical in keeping the programs and strategies
relevant to the community and funders. This dedication allowed them to build a demonstration model for use in other cities.

Mobilization For Youth relied on middle-class professionals and planners for organizational leadership and access to funding. For instance, their thirty-three member Board of Directors was composed of academics from nearby Columbia University, professional social workers, researchers and representatives from local social service agencies, including the Urban League. The connections of the Lower East Side Neighborhood Association and Board of Directors helped them access and collaborate with settlement houses, city departments and other community institutions to host programs, provide services and ways for residents to get involved. The Henry Street Settlement House acted as the initial fiscal agent for Mobilization For Youth and hosted programs. Grand Street Settlement House, Hamilton-Madison House, Lilian Ward Recreation Rooms, New York City Parks and Recreation and Police Departments, local churches, schools, housing projects and mental health resources joined in partnership to create dynamic programs. In these strategic partnerships, Mobilization For Youth’s launching pad, the Lower Eastside Neighborhood Association, was a key player. They brought their local support of over one thousand individual members, seventy organizational members, four neighborhood councils, three police precincts, a panel of local lawyers, sports and recreation programs, neighborhood volunteers and business associations.

Vital to the success of Mobilization For Youth was their committed and enthusiastic staff. The agency began its work with three hundred employees. This large influx of highly trained specialists and local residents (with experience in
community work) were needed to hit the ground running with the ambitious work of Mobilization For Youth. They had the energy and drive to connect with what they considered to be a challenging, disconnected population of lower-income youth and families in this ethnically diverse neighborhood.

Findings

Youth Development Approach

Mobilization For Youth's saturation approach to stopping juvenile delinquency was based on the theory that delinquency was caused by blocked opportunities; if you could broaden opportunities afforded to youth there would be less reports of juvenile delinquency. Mobilization For Youth felt the best way to broaden opportunities was to create programs that would affect all aspects of life for residents of the Lower East Side. Although published in 1979, the ecological approach to youth development is closely related to Mobilization For Youth's approach to working with and for youth. By addressing all aspects of life, from home and school systems, to welfare rights and racism, Mobilization For Youth tried to use it's influence to change the “village” to help the child.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, there are different systems that all affect a child's life. These systems include: the microsystem, home, school, or peers; the mesosystem, the connections and communication between the microsystem; the exosystem, systems that do not directly affect the child but do affect their lives such as a parents work or community businesses; the macrosystem, political structures, social values; and the chronosystem, how events change affect on the youth over time.
Mobilization For Youth attempted to affect all systems of the ecological model (see appendix A - ecological approach handout) with the exception of the chronosystem. By creating systems for parents to stay connected to their children's schools, as well as their children's' friends' parents, Mobilization For Youth created a network within the microsystem that was a mesosystem. Parents, teachers, coaches, and friends all worked together to help youth. Many of the various community development programs within Mobilization For Youth tried to change the exosystem that the youth lived in via rent strikes or school boycotts. In addition to trying to change the local systems, Mobilization For Youth tried to help people fight political structures and social values of the times to change the macrosystem.

Program Challenges

As with most programs, Mobilization For Youth had its fair share of challenges. They had difficulty reaching youth, accommodating programs to them and because of growing interest and influence of funders, maintaining the freedom of the community groups that they organized to shape their own agendas. (Henry Street Settlement archives, box 84, folder 16) Mobilization For Youth was a radical organization that spent its organizing energy mobilizing people around issues they selected to have a positive impact on their living situation. Though community organizing was a small part of their work (it was only five percent of the budget), it existed at a time when, with Robert Kennedy as U.S. Attorney General, the government was extremely suspicious of
such activities. It was the work of the community development program that made them the object of intense attacks for six months in 1964.

The work of the community development program was controversial because they were using public money to challenge the operations of city and federal programs and institutions. Mobilization For Youth was encouraging the poor to voice their concerns in the public arena through school boycotts, public demonstrations and rent strikes. The power these tactics gave the poor was threatening because it was exposing bias in services and treatment. It drove the institutions into a defensive mode and began an attack that would disable the community development program and alter the agency. In fact, the attack on Mobilization For Youth was spurred on by school administrators. A group of mothers organizing with Mobilization For Youth were making demands for equal access to teachers, school books and better curriculum. The administrators felt under attack and their first impulse was to strike back. Once the New York Daily News picked up the story, Mobilization For Youth officially became a political football for politicians, the city and federal government, as well as the schools and media to toss around.

Mobilization For Youth was accused of many things ranging from having poor personnel policies to committing crimes. Most of the finger pointing was towards the staff. They were thought to harbor communists and radicals amongst the staff. They were said to be misusing public funds. Mobilization For Youth was also accused of hiring paid organizers for extremist causes who were pushing their personal agendas, funding subversive or illegal demonstrations, such as the Harlem riots and the March on Washington. Additionally, the Executive Director was under attack for spending
exorbitant amounts of money on non-essential items. Mobilization For Youth endured FBI undercover agents, wiretapping, media investigations and exposes and were investigated by many public officials who were eager to exploit the situation for their own political benefit.

After multiple investigations into their staff, personnel policies and finances, Mobilization For Youth was cleared off most of the charges and actually commended by the federal government for their work. While New York City officials recommended firings and modifications to their program (to bring them under the control of the city), the Mobilization For Youth Board of Directors implemented very few of the recommendations.

This attack on the community development program exposed funding as a critical weakness of Mobilization For Youth. They relied heavily on federal and city funds for their operating expenses. In fact, almost sixty percent of their funding came from one federal grant alone. These six months of public attack affirmed the notion within the agency that social problems needed to be politicized to be solved. Because of the threat of funding though, the agency became more cautious. In future efforts they worked to conform to the desires of their funders and clients by testing out issues with these groups before actions were pursued. While they had major organizing and fundraising successes after this change, the community development program was certainly left in a compromised state.

At the end of the five year grant period of the agency, Mobilization For Youth struggled to obtain adequate funding to continue the programs. One may speculate that they were unable to shake off the stigma the Community Development program
experienced. Another possible issue may be poor research, evaluation and planning. A 1969 letter from the Office of Economic Opportunity sheds light on this possible factor. The letter notified Mobilization For Youth that their much of the request for guaranteed funding was rejected. A twelve paged letter document was attached detailing the flaws found in their program proposal and supporting research. In it, James Lyday says that, “…too much is attempted and too little is developed with the clear precision needed and or a suggested method of dealing with the unknown.” He ends the letter by stating, “If we are not hard on ourselves in this area only the poor will suffer.” (Henry Street Settlement archives, box 84, folder 2) After experiencing some major blows and seeing a lack of a dedicated funding source, the agency voted to merge its programs with the Henry Street Settlement House.

Program Success

Determining if Mobilization For Youth was a successful program should be easy considering all of the research that was promised in the planning process. However, finding the results of that research today was nearly impossible. Without comprehensive evaluations to study, we will not be able to make a sound argument that the program was a success or a failure. With that said, we do know a little information about some of the programs and their success. For the purpose of this section we will focus on Mobilization For Youth’s success in stopping juvenile delinquency, another section later will touch on the long term impacts of the program.

The employment services program of Mobilization For Youth had an excellent reputation and was seen as one of it’s most successful program. For example, on June
8, 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson had this to say about Mobilization For Youth, this statement was read by his press secretary,

> The program announced today is the latest and one of the most promising in a variety of efforts we are making to bring opportunity to neighborhoods where it has long been absent. The road before us is long, but it lessens with each step. The Mobilization For Youth program has my deep interest and support. (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=2637)

This statement was accompanied by a promise for more funding for the Employment Services program. In addition to the support of the federal government, the employment services program reached many people; 4,567 youth were served at its local job centers, 1,448 youth were involved with the youth job corps, 528 youth received on the job training, and 205 youth participated in trade training (Mobilization For Youth Fact Sheet No. 2). Considering the size of the area, about 107,000 total residents, serving over 6,700 youth in less than five years is one way to display success of reaching youth. Nonetheless, they did not prove that the services were effective.

Another way to track success of a program is through events that did or did not happen during the time. After President John F. Kennedy was shot, there were many riots in low income neighborhoods throughout the country. Surprisingly, no riots were reported on the Lower East Side. Mike Baizerman, who worked with Mobilization For Youth at the time as a community organizer, had this to say about what could have happened,

> When John Kennedy was killed, it was in November and all of us who worked on the streets, we went back out on the streets for a few days to make sure, in our neighborhood anyway, there were no riots. That was a moment when you could evaluate the effectiveness of the organizing; because the neighborhood stayed cool, you know, and channeled politically into acting. The anger wasn't self destructive or destructive in a neighborhood among people who didn't have much to lose.
Although this is not data that was collected and evaluated by professionals, it is useful in our evaluation of a program's impact on the community. The lack of riots in a depressed community at a time when many other areas of the country were rioting, shows us that something in the neighborhood helped people channel their anger and frustration without using violence or destruction. Because of Mobilization For Youth's vast reach in the community, it is hard to say they didn't have an impact.

Without written evaluations to tell us if the programs were successful we are on our own to make a judgment. Mobilization For Youth took on an ambitious goal, to stop juvenile delinquency. Did it reach this goal? No, or the model would still be in use; but it did reach some of its intended outputs. It offered parents resources to help their children in school; it helped youth find jobs and stay off the streets; it provided fun social activities for youth and their families; it brought community residents together to try to improve their daily lives (Weissman, 1969); it provided low income people with a guide to the legal system. Mobilization For Youth did all of this and quite a bit more, but it did not stop juvenile delinquency on the Lower East Side of New York City.

Discussion

Many important questions have emerged from our study of the Mobilization For Youth Program. Today, they frequently continue to resonate in discussions and evaluations of programming for youth. The answers appear to be as challenging and sometimes as elusive today as in the era of Mobilization For Youth.

Mobilization For Youth occurred due to the convergence of a number of critical factors including: the invention of the teenager, the creation of suburbia, scholarly works
addressing the issues of the times including deviant subcultures and the underclass, a liberal Democratic party which ‘owned’ New York, the infusion of federal funds to community programs, Communist scares, talk of totalitarianism, a need to get control of the kids.

Mobilization For Youth was self described as a "mobilization of all forces…building sound patterns of community living" (United Neighborhood Housing papers, 58). It was an all out attack on juvenile delinquency. Mobilization For Youth's 'saturation model' of service delivery continues to manifest in many program models today. Today, wrap around services, a web of services, scaffolding, a seamless continuum of care, continue to appear in various forms of youth programming.

This paper examined building and sustaining coalitions. Social work was seen as a political process. Cloward, reflecting years later, noted the way to effect change was to create a crisis (Cloward, 1970). He discussed at it's peak, a national coalition focused on welfare reform, only had a membership of 25,000. This he felt, would never be enough to effect the systemic changes they were looking for. He stated the only way to do this was to 'break' cities, financially, forcing mayors to demand the federal government support local communities and organizations. In some cases this occurred. Cloward also realized that poverty was a much bigger problem than gangs, and commented, “The gang projects could not really effectively promote institutional change" (1970, p. 14).

"So, did it work? No. What it did was hone different strategies and methods for community organizing" (M. Baizerman, personal interview, 10/18/07). A lesson illuminated in some early reflections on the program was,” Efforts cannot be achieved
by focusing just on youth” (United Neighborhood Housing papers, 58). It has become clear; the issues of juvenile delinquency and poverty must be addressed at a societal level.

**Conclusion**

The hip hop and rock and roll of the 50’s and 60’s may now have been supplanted by rap and R&B, long hair by punk styles, and muscle cars by low riders. Youth still struggle with challenges including discovering who they are, who they hang out with, discretionary time, and consumerism. Too many find themselves facing racism, poverty, sexism, drug abuse, gang involvement, and delinquency. Today this sounds as confounding and similar as to the times in which Mobilization For Youth emerged.

As for those of us working with and on behalf of youth, we must continually be diligent not to ‘frame’ a youth by their issue/s, for example, we work with kids who live in poverty, but they are not, ‘poor kids’; they are kids who have committed delinquent acts, but they are not necessarily ‘delinquents.’ We need to see individuals as complex, and the social milieu in which they live as equally complex and challenging. We must build on the strengths of the individuals and their communities in which they live. As Mobilization For Youth staff learned, the folk knowledge of community residents is to be used as a powerful tool in effecting any lasting social change.

In the midst of storms and sometimes calmer waters, do we take the time to reflect on our work with youth? Do we find the time to get to know youth as individuals, with a voice screaming to be heard? Do we respect their autonomy and their
community as we do our own? Will we do whatever it takes to help all our kids co-create a future and a world where everyone is valued?
Appendices

Appendix A: Mobilization For Youth’s Ecological Approach diagram

Appendix B: Mobilization For Youth Logic Model

(www.smith.edu/library/libs/ssc/curriculum/piven1zjpg.html)

Bibliography


Mobilization for Youth, Fact Sheet No. 2, Program Participation. ERIC # ED001549, 1956, available on microfiche


