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POLITICAL DE-MORALIZATION OF THE POOR: ORGANIZING LOWER-CLASS  
FAMILIES OF THE MENTALLY RETARDED

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ABSTRACT

This paper employs an analytic framework based on organizational incentives to explain the failure of recent welfare reform efforts. The data consists of observations, interviews, and routine in-house reports collected on a federally funded program, Project STAR. The project was developed with the aim of mobilizing lower-class and minority families of the mentally retarded in support of reform of mental retardation services in five cities in the U.S. A service-inducement strategy was pursued by the reform organization to overcome the difficulties of enticing lower-class families of the retarded to participate in organizational activities. This strategy appears to have had several unintended consequences on the reform project. The concern with identifying and providing social services became a major pre-occupation of the reformers. To the extent to which parents did participate because of the receipt of welfare benefits, this diminished the reform organization's autonomy relative to the existing welfare network. A further impact of this service-inducement strategy was political demoralization of the parents of the retarded. The "service" focus appears to have attracted parents the least predisposed towards community change. Once involved in the organization, the impact of organizational activities was of reinforcement of this predisposition. Analysts of welfare reform organizations need to pay greater attention to the cooptative impact of welfare benefits. The data suggests the failure of community mobilization can be explained by the organizational incentives used. The problem reform organizations face is in finding the proper mix of purposive, material and solidary inducements which both recruit and retain participants, at the same time allowing the pursuit of mobilization goals.

INTRODUCTION

An underlying thrust of social policy in the United States

has been to ensure access to the policy-making process of social groups in society. In the case of unorganized social forces, the poor and minorities, the role of government has been to politically mobilize the communities in which they live. (Greenstone and Peterson, 1973). Community organization as a public policy has assumed that professional reform organizations can mobilize unorganized social forces into voluntary associations for social action. With few exceptions, however, efforts at community mobilization of the lower-class have met with little success. (Clark and Hopkins, 1968, Rose, 1970, Helfgot, 1974). This paper examines the internal dynamics of a national effort to mobilize lower-class families of the mentally retarded. It is argued that the mobilization strategy of the government-sponsored reform organization provides an explanation for the failure at community organization. The organizational incentives offered to promote community participation among the poor lead to de-politicalization and demoralization. Rather than promoting participation in the institutions of society, government-sponsored mobilization efforts may well foster dependency and social fragmentation. The organization to be analyzed is Project STAR. The organization was developed with the aim of mobilizing lower-class and minority families of the mentally retarded. The group, once organized, was expected to provide a setting for social reform of the social welfare service sector.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study utilizes three methodological strategies: observation, historical records and lengthy personal interviews. The multiple approach adopted in this study was taken, in part, because no single source of data could provide all of the information considered necessary for a vivid analysis of the problem under consideration. (Bouchard, 1976)

For a number of years the author was Research Director of Project STAR. This position provided a particularly strategic position to observe the origin and implementation of this major welfare reform effort. In the role of Research Director the author had complete access to the files and records associated with the development and operation of the project. The position also offered the opportunity to meet and establish friendly relationships with professionals and community representatives in the five cities in which STAR functioned.

SOCIAL POLICY AND MASS SOCIETY

The movement towards the extension of social welfare in the United States has been continuous but slow. With these changes, explanations for the expansion of social welfare have increasingly been of concern for social scientists. Arguments about the causes of the expansion of welfare are varied as well as ideological. In a seminal work Gronbjerg (1977) identifies a number of reasons for the growth and transformation of social welfare. In one sense, the expansion of social welfare is a direct response to poverty. In this "stratification" approach, welfare has developed as a way of helping the unfortunate in our society. Social welfare problems have increased as the public became aware of and concerned with the presence of poor people in our society. Social welfare is a way of responding to poverty and economic dependency.

The welfare expansion can also be viewed from the larger perspective of sociological theories about mass society. The expansion of social welfare is a further step in the extension of "citizenship". The expansion of welfare programs extends the concept of citizenship to include not only political participation, but "economic" citizenship as well. The definition of social welfare has been enlarged so as to encompass conditions other than just stark deprivation. The extension of social welfare becomes part of a larger process of modernity rather than a reflection of the objective needs of the population.

This drift toward encouraging participation by heretofore excluded segments of the population has been developed by Shils (1975) in his discussion of "mass society". According to Shils there is a trend toward the inclusion of sub-groups of the population into the central value system and the cultural symbols of society. This has occurred primarily through the expansion of education, social welfare, and mass communications. Public education, radio, television and social welfare have made possible a closer tie between the central institutions of society, and widely diffused social groups. Citizenship within this perspective, includes access of the various groups in society to the political processes by which social policy is developed.

Historically public policy and the public interest have been defined in terms of the organized interests in society. Theodore Lowi (1969) suggests in his inquiry into public philosophy,

Organized interests pretty much fill up and adequately represent most of the sectors of our lives, so that one organized group can be found effectively answering and checking some other organized group as it seeks to prosecute its claims against society...it is assumed that "counter-veiling" power usually crops up somehow.

The "process" of policy formulation is elevated as the justification for a particular policy. The ends of policy and their consequences becomes a forgotten issue. Governmental action, according to this public philosophy, is to ensure access of the various interests in society to the policy-making process, and to ratify the agreements and adjustments worked out among the competing groups. (McConnell, 1966)

#### MENTAL RETARDATION REFORM

This "mass society" view of social welfare places into perspective the myriad goals and activities of government-sponsored reform organizations. Poverty, rather than being a situation to be eliminated, has become instead a status around which an interest needs to be organized. Social welfare programs, especially those known as "community development", have focused on organizing the poor. Since the poor and racial minorities are seen as an unrecognized force in society, public policy has focused on creating the formation of an organized interest among them. Drawing on a sociological orientation and interest-group political theory, government policy has experimented with community organization and group action to restore a sense of "community" to low-income individuals.

A pluralist view of policy formation explains the content of social welfare policy towards the mentally retarded. Mental retardation policy reflects the activities of organized interest groups in society. The mobilization of middle-class parents of the retarded together with the power of professional medical groups has led to a proliferation of public and private welfare programs with an emphasis on helping a tiny segment of the mentally retarded. (Albee, 1968, Segal, 1970, Fontana, 1978) The programs are based on the assumption of organic damage and permanent deficiency. (Mercer, 1973) This encompasses only a small number of the mentally

retarded. The group which is ignored or "disenfranchised" are basically poor, non-white and mildly retarded. Their mental retardation status is due in some cases to depressed environmental conditions. The large number of minority and lower-class individuals in the "mildly" retarded category has also been attributed to mis-labeling. The President's Committee on Mental Retardation (1968) has expressed the view that a number of the retarded may in fact be "six-hour retarded children".

We now have what may in fact be called a six-hour retarded child-retarded from 9 to 3, five days a week, solely on the basis of an IQ score, without regard to his adaptive behavior which may be exceptionally adaptive to the situation and community in which he lives.

Thus, a mental retardation status may stem from culturally biased instruments. This perspective on mental retardation depicts minority and lower-class retarded as victims of exploitative social, political and educational institutions.

National concern in the late 1960's and 70's with the convergence of race, poverty and mental retardation led to government-sponsored efforts to organize lower-class parents of the retarded. The ultimate objective would be to maximize their influence in welfare and educational policy formation. Developing a level of indigenous organization was seen as a necessary ingredient for interest formation. As Shorter and Tilly suggest (1974)

individuals are not magically mobilized for participation in some group effort regardless of how angry they feel...their aggression may be channeled to collective ends only through the coordinating, directing function of an organization.

It was within this context that Project STAR was developed by the President's Committee on Mental Retardation and the National Urban League, and funded for three years by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The reform project emphasized the need to extend the rights of "citizenship" to lower-class families of the retarded. The project was funded to promote the participation of minority and lower-class individuals in the formulation of programs and services for the retarded; to change the discriminatory

processes involved in labeling minority children as retarded; and to increase the involvement of lower-class and minorities as consumers of welfare services for the mentally retarded.

#### COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION STRATEGY

The community organization efforts began in five cities in 1971. Each of the five sites were awarded approximately \$100,000 a year for each of the three years. In each project there was a director, two social workers, two para-professionals, and a clerical staff. Each local project was to recruit a group of 100 minority and lower-class families of the retarded. The "social action" activities were to be developed by the project staff and families of the retarded, while social services were to be provided by existing welfare organizations in the community.

Once the reform project began its operations, the immediate task was to recruit lower-class parents of the mentally retarded. The first contact with potential members was geared primarily to mobilization purposes. Most observers have noted the difficulties of organizing individuals holding a negative status in society. (Turner, 1968) Joining an organization of welfare clients might be viewed as associating oneself with a status one hopes to escape. In addition, the parents were asked to identify with a group of lower-class parents of the mentally retarded--who were negatively stereotyped in society. The common notion of the poor as "disadvantaged" or "deprived" presented a further unappealing reason for association. Recruitment would probably have been hampered by the self-guilt that burdens many parents of the mentally retarded. An example being a mother in one city who indicated to the staff that her retarded child was "god's punishment for my evil past".

Obstacles to joining the reform organization were also presented by a kind of economic rationality of the poor. Mancur Olson (1965) has suggested a keen logic on the part of the lower-class when weighing social participation.

If the members of a large group rationally seek to maximize their personal welfare, they will not act to advance their common or group objectives unless there is coercion to force them to do so, or unless there is some separate incentive, distinct from the achievement of the common or group interest, offered to the members of the

group individually on the condition that they help beat the costs or burdens involved in the achievement of group objectives.

These obstacles to inducing social participation suggested to the community organizers of Project STAR a mobilization strategy geared to tangible inducement. The reform organization became interested in creating an image of the organization as a sure source of welfare benefits. It was expected that the project would assume importance to the families of the retarded as a conduit for various social and health services. The information and referral services, plus extensive follow-up on referrals, insured there would be a tangible return for participation.

In their first encounter with parents, Project STAR organizers described the reform organization, its local sponsorship, and its goals. The key to success was seen as the ability to convince parents they could get better welfare services for their children only if they joined Project STAR. This was accomplished by showing the potential member the improvements in services (e.g., re-testing for IQ, welfare services, employment programs, etc.) that might result from involvement in STAR. After reviewing the services with the potential member, the STAR staff then proceeded to discuss the parent's experiences with social welfare agencies in the community. They were asked "How helpful were health and welfare agencies in providing assistance to your retarded child?" After some discussion, the parents were asked the crucial question, "Would you like to join with other parents of children having limited capacity in working towards making the agencies more helpful to low-income families?". The organizers found that many parents were quite willing at this point to express an interest in participation. About three quarters of those contacted during this initial recruiting drive indicated an interest in working together with other parents to improve services. After several months of canvassing the neighborhoods, the goal of 100 families per project site was reached.

#### MAINTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION

The willingness of low-income parents to participate in the reform projects, as evidenced by their response to the recruiting drive, is not an unusual response from this segment of the population. Kraft and Chilman's (1966) review of research into organiz-



ing low-income parents indicates that the problem lies not in soliciting an interest in participation, but in bringing the social action program into actuality. The recruiting drive tied together the receipt of material incentives, i.e., health and welfare services, with purposive incentives, i.e., the stated goal of social mobilization and social reform. Why did the parents express an interest in joining STAR? Studies of neighborhood organization among the lower-class suggest that large numbers of poor people can be induced to join voluntary associations, but only in a very restricted set of circumstances. Saul Alinsky's (1946) community drives have been predicated on the expression of hostility and conflict.

The community organizer digs into the morass of resignation, hopelessness, and despair, and works with local people in articulating (or rubbing "raw") their resentments...When those prominent in the status quo call you an agitator, they are completely correct; that is, in one word, your function, to agitate to the point of conflict.

This approach may experience difficulty with welfare clients. Studies of the experiences of welfare clients indicate a relatively high level of client-satisfaction with their case workers. Handler (1971) indicates that this is probably due to the fact that when welfare recipients apply for benefits, they come not as rights-bearing citizens claiming what is entitled to them, but as supplicants. Bailes' (1974) history of the National Welfare Rights Organization suggests that agitation was not a necessary ingredient in eliciting initial participation. What was necessary was the concreteness and individual impact that welfare benefits usually precipitate.

Translating the stated willingness to participate into direct involvement in organizational affairs became a problem for the mobilization efforts. The early history of STAR was characterized by efforts to maintain the interest and involvement of the parents in the activities of the reform organization. An early report from one STAR city (1973) expressed this difficulty of organizing parents of the retarded into groups to discuss their common problems with the welfare system.

A parent group of Chicano families is having a difficult time becoming stable. Many of the Mexican -

American mothers cannot leave their home during the evening due to custom, and their families are large, making it very difficult for mothers to leave during the day. STAR workers are providing baby-sitters when possible, but again, a feeling of doubt exists with these mothers even concerning this service. We are starting to provide extensive individual services (casework) to these families. We are encouraged by the response to this service.

In response to the precarious position of the parent discussion groups, the attention of organizers became directed towards providing increased material benefits to the parents as an incentive towards their participation.

The major benefit that STAR had to offer the lower-class parents was its organizational linkage to existing health and welfare organizations. There were extensive formal and informal relationships that the project had developed with the local human service network. In order to carry out the promises made to deliver welfare benefits, the project staff began to spend most of their time in referral of clients to local service agencies. Records kept at the project sites indicate there were over 1500 referrals for services during the first two years of operation. (STAR, 1973) The demands that this placed on the project is evidenced by the amount and range of activities to follow up on the referrals. To facilitate the delivery of services to the parents, the staff were involved with escorting parents to service agencies, and participating in meetings with the parents and service agency personnel.

This benefit-inducement strategy proved to be an effective incentive towards parents' participation. The strategy worked in that parents started to come to meetings held in the project's offices. The meetings, however, of necessity focused on the basic social problems of the families. A report from one city gave the following assessment of the parent groups:

As the number of participating families increased, the social workers established the first four of Project STAR's planned 8-10 groups. Much experimentation was used to improve member turn-out and group effectiveness. The groups were still in their rudimentary forms, but a start had been made. However, it is still too early in the first stages of the project to report on the best method of conducting the parent groups. We have

found that the staff must first concentrate on any basic problems essential to the survival of the family before its members will agree to regular meetings. Basic problems of existence need attention before the families can begin to branch out into means of bringing about institutional change. (STAR, 1973)

Other project sites were experiencing similar problems of maintaining organizational participation. The dilemma of staff time being monopolized by service delivery activities is documented in an early report from one site.

Sixty percent of the total project time was spent in face to face contact with families of retarded children in pursuit of individual and group referrals. (STAR, 1973)

Parents came to the reform project with a multitude of problems and requests for assistance. Table 1 records the distribution of requests for services made to Project STAR.

TABLE I. Request for Services From Project STAR: 1970-1972

<u>TYPE OF REQUEST</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
Intervention with School System	11.6%
Have Retardate tested or re-tested	14.4%
Vocational training or employment for retardate	21.5%
Summer camp placement	1.4%
Job for family member	4.6%
Food, clothing, housing or financial assistance	10.7%
Assistance with welfare department	8.4%
Counseling	3.9%
Remedial Education	5.3%
Health Care	7.8%
Transportation	1.8%
Legal Services	1.1%
Other	7.5%
	<u>100% (438)</u>

Clearly the overwhelming majority of problems brought to the attention of the reform project has little to do with the political issue of mis-labeled minority children. Only fourteen percent of the requests

were related to the possible mis-classification of a child. The remaining requests had to do with routine social welfare services.

Although social services proved useful in promoting attendance, they also had limitations. Welfare benefits and information had a short lifetime. They could be given to the same person only once. Once the parent received a welfare service, she no longer needed the organization. Thus, the receipt of a specific service by a parent exhausted the influence of that service as an inducement to participation. This presented the reform project with a constant dilemma of scrambling to come up with new methods to maintain the parents in the organization. After welfare benefits lost their drawing power, staff turned toward other incentives to retain parent participation. For example, in the early part of 1971 nine meetings were held in one city with parents of the retarded in attendance. The meetings consisted solely of an audio-visual presentation illustrating methods and techniques for child-rearing. In the similar vein, other parent groups provided a forum for the "Childhood Stimulation Program" of a local University. The staff gave a demonstration on education toys and books for young children. The meetings focused on methods to stimulate pre-schoolers' communication skills.

In all of these inducement techniques, the effort was made to offer certain benefits in the form of information and access to social programs for those who made continued contributions to organizational activities. This became a problem in that the staff were unable to continually link parent meetings or other organizational activities to the receipt of material benefits, or even to information about such benefits. The result was a search for new methods to induce participation. The reform project started to provide "side" benefits and intangible rewards to participants.

The national office of STAR and the local projects had sizeable amounts of money earmarked for "travel and conferences." The national office had \$44,000, while local projects had \$2000 each year in their travel budgets. The money began to be used to "reward" active participants with free transportation, lodging, and other expenses for conferences and meetings around the country. Parents were sent, together with staff, to attend conferences in Denver, Montreal, Anaheim; Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco. Although this inducement proved attractive to the parents, it had distinctive drawbacks. Providing free travel, room and board ran into thousands of dollars a year. In comparison to social welfare services, this was not an expense that the reform project could transfer to local social welfare agencies. The expenses of service-inducements

were mainly borne by local welfare organizations, who provided the welfare benefits. Travel expenditures, however, were borne directly by Project STAR. This type of participation incentive was a major drain on organizational resources, limiting its widespread usage. It therefore, had a limited impact because its use was restricted to proportionally few parents in each project.

A less obvious, but by no means unimportant factor in participation, was the attraction of solidary incentives. (Clark and Wilson, 1961) Solidary incentives are basically intangible in the sense that the benefit has no monetary value, and cannot be easily translated into one that has. These inducements include the act of associating and socializing with members of a particular group. For some of the parents in the reform project, a factor in participation was the attraction of meeting friends (or potential friends), or at least fighting loneliness and boredom. The relative importance of these motives is difficult to measure and undoubtedly varied from member to member, project to project. However, the project appeared to be a way of socializing with one's peers. In one city, for example, the monthly parent meetings were great social occasions, at which refreshments (coffee, cake, etc.) were shared. Parents would often stay after the meeting to gossip and socially intermingle.

While the friendship and social inducements did not create a financial drain on the organizational resources of Project STAR, reliance on them as an inducement for participation had certain costs. There usually were no more than a handful of members who were attracted by this incentive. For those members who were getting together primarily to have a good time, there was little reason to engage in reform or issue-orientated activities. Similarly, those who were primarily motivated by friendship or a desire to end boredom were probably less likely to view racism as a cause for their family's problems. They thus were less responsive to the reform objective of building a level of indigenous organization among low-income parents of the mentally retarded. (Bailes, 1972)

#### SOCIAL SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL AUTONOMY

The activities developed to entice members of poverty groups to participate in community activities appear to have had several unintended consequences on the reform project. A service-inducement strategy was pursued by the social reform organization to

overcome the difficulties of enticing lower-class parents of the mentally retarded to participate in organizational activities. Since STAR was not equipped to provide the services itself, it was forced to rely upon referrals to the existing social welfare organizations for these benefits. Therefore, to the extent to which clients did participate because of these welfare benefits, this diminished STAR's autonomy relative to the existing welfare network. Litwak and Hylton (1962) have suggested that organizational autonomy is dependent upon two factors: interdependency and standardization. Interdependency between organizations occurs when one organization must take another into account if it is to accomplish its goals. The dependency of STAR on welfare agencies for its internal incentives to lower-class parents tied its mobilization goals to the actions of local welfare organizations. Standardized actions refer to behavior which is repetitive in character. The daily routine nature of client referrals between STAR and the local welfare network established a type of organizational linkage that did not previously exist. Organizational relationships between Project STAR and the established welfare agencies that were to be reformed presented a series of constraints that limited STAR's ability to move towards the goal of institutional change. Clients became involved in STAR because of the promise of services. Demands for services were thus coming from both clients and staff. The service-inducement strategy required the ready accessibility of an array of services from the local welfare network. This presented a problem of organizational conflict of interest. The failure to implement reforms can no doubt be explained in part by this dependency. The desire to mobilize the parents of the retarded through the use of welfare benefits generated pressure on the staff. In a real sense, a choice had to be made between confrontation or mobilization. To publicly confront the welfare organizations on their programs and policies would threaten the accessibility and supply of organizational resources that were being used to mobilize the parents. Thompson and McEwen's (1958) analysis of organization-environment interaction suggests that the operative goals of an organization are influenced by a "field" of organizations. While this has been amply demonstrated in economic analysis, the case materials from STAR suggest that the impact can be seen with social welfare reform organizations pursuing multiple goals.

The emphasis in providing service-inducements deflected the use that was made of the meetings between parents. Rather than politically mobilizing lower-class parents, techniques and gimmicks to foster participation in the groups became a major preoccupation of

STAR staff. Since welfare benefits were some of the most effective and cheapest devices, they came to consume an ever increasing proportion of the time and thoughts of the project staff. As Selznick (1960) suggests, solutions to day-to-day problems in organizations often become substituted for the original or professed goals of the organization. This was the dilemma that confronted Project STAR. The preoccupation with welfare services as a means of retaining parents deflected from community organization and became the operative goals of the reform project. The project moved away from a concern with the mobilization of lower-class parents to a primary focus on individual parents and their welfare needs. Table 2 records the number of parent-group meetings held in 1970 through 1972 and the number of referrals for services made on behalf of parents during this same time period.

TABLE II. Parent Group Meetings and Referrals For Social Welfare Services (1970-1972)

<u>YEAR OF PROJECT</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PARENT GROUP MEETINGS</u>	<u>NUMBER OF REFERRALS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES</u>
1970	132	218
1971	55	515
1972	37	624

The inverse relationship between the number of service referrals and parent-groups meetings, documents the movement from a mobilization to a service referral focus for Project STAR.

The shift in emphasis that took place occurred without a conscious decision on the part of the staff or the leadership of the organization. The data in Table 2 indicates the wide variation between official and operative goals. Perrow (1961) suggests that operative goals tell us what the organization is trying to do, regardless of what the official goals say are the aims. The evolution of STAR into a basically service-related organization was mainly a reaction to internal pressures without a reference to a concrete model of where the organization was going.

#### SOCIAL SERVICES AND CLIENT DE-MOBILIZATION

A number of observers have noted that one of the primary

functions of social welfare is social control. Galper (1975) suggests that social services foster particular behavior patterns in clients, both as a condition of usage and as a consequence of service. The basis of his criticisms is the notion that social services are structured as to service the labor market. The Social Security System is an example of a social welfare benefit that compensates for the inadequacies of the labor market and ties people firmly to it. For a variety of social service programs, a return to work status might well be taken as the operational definition of success. The emphasis on work is not the only area in which social conformity is emphasized by social welfare. The rules and regulations of many programs have functioned to regulate client behavior. Regulations have been used to influence sexual conduct, family relations, rights to privacy, budget expenditures, and so on. As one observer noted, being on welfare means the loss of control over one's life. (Mandell, 1975)

The case materials from Project STAR suggest a further impact on clients--demoralization. The maintenance demands of the parent groups, aside from imparting an organization focus on individual service needs of lower-class parents, also appear to have attracted members of the lower-class the least predisposed towards community change. Once involved in STAR, instead of promoting a frame of reference among the parents that was conducive to community mobilization, involvement in the parent groups appears to have had an opposite effect. If they were to be effective in mobilizing parents of retarded children, the STAR organizers needed to enhance a "collective" orientation among participants. If the effort were successful, instead of giving priority to their own private interests, the parents would adopt a view that their interests are tied to the interests of others in a similar situation. The parent groups would provide an opportunity for parents to reinforce each other in efforts to better their social conditions. In addition to this collective orientation, mobilization of the parents would require that participants take a critical or questioning attitude toward the mental retardation status assigned to their child. This was clearly one intended purpose of the groups--to help create situations that exposed the processes that led to a disproportionate number of minority children being labeled as mentally retarded.

In order to get a sense of the impact of group-participation on the perceptions of the parents in the reform organization, a measure of "collective orientation" was utilized. Sumati Dubey (1971) has developed a scale to measure a collective perspective



among lower-class individuals. This variable suggests a larger conceptual scheme to account for basic strategies that the lower-class could adopt to improve their social and economic status. Blum (1965) and his associates posit two possible strategies: individual or collective mobility strategies. A person with an "individual" mobility orientation would believe that the individual is responsible for his plight, and it is he who is responsible for changing it. Consequently, it is his interest which is of paramount importance, not the interests of the lower-class as a social group. An alternate response to individual mobility is "collective" mobility. This strategy would encompass the belief that one's own conditions cannot improve unless additional economic resources, social power and the like are made available to all members of one's social group. As a measure of this variable, the following five items were used to operationalize "collective" orientation:

1. Without sit-ins, lie-ins, and picketing, welfare clients will not get adequate financial help.
2. The only way for welfare clients to get what they want is to organize themselves in a united front.
3. Non-violent demonstrations, like picketing or sitting-in, are the best way for the poor to get what they want.
4. The only way for the poor to improve their condition in American society is to fight violently with the power structure.
5. People treat you right only when they know you can strike back at them.

Respondents were defined as either "individualist" or "collective" depending upon whether they received high or low scores on the scale.

Our measure of participation in the parent groups was based on the attendance records of parents kept by the project staff. There were two categories created to differentiate among the participation rates of parents: never attended, or attended more than one-quarter of all the meetings. It was assumed that attendance at more than one of four meetings would allow the group to have an impact on the participant. Table 3 records the relationship between attendance at parent meetings and the view that one's interests are tied to a larger social group.

TABLE III. Parent Group Participation and Social Problem Orientation

<u>SOCIAL PROBLEM ORIENTATION</u>	<u>PARENT GROUP PARTICIPATION</u>	
	<u>Never Attended Meetings</u>	<u>Attended More Than One-Quarter of All Meetings</u>
Individualist	45%	60%
Collectivist	55%	40%
	<hr/> 100% (64)	<hr/> 100% (111)

If we examine the two groups of parents, those that never attended a meeting, as opposed to those that attended more than one-quarter of all the group meetings held, we notice some differences. The parents who never attended a meeting apparently have a higher collective orientation than those who were participants. In other words, they are more likely to view social change as a collective enterprise. Fifty-five percent of the non-attenders could be considered as having a collective orientation, compared to only forty percent of those who attended the meetings somewhat regularly.

To infer a causal relationship between attendance at meetings and an individualist orientation toward social problems is probably premature. As table 3 suggests, there were a large proportion of parents, 45 percent, who were "individualists," even though they never attended meetings. What we might be witnessing is a process of self-selection. The service activities developed by Project STAR to increase participation might have selectively attracted members of the community that were least predisposed towards a collective solution to social problems. If this were the case, then the impact of the group was probably one of reinforcement.

Another area existed where there was a relationship between attendance at parent group meetings and social orientation. This was the question of whether parents were critical of the retardation label assigned to their child. The parents were asked whether there was any doubt in their mind that their child was retarded. Parents who indicated some uncertainty were asked to explain the basis of their doubt. Those parents who were uncertain gave a variety of reasons for their doubts, such as, "child was not tested

adequately", "child just slow, not retarded," "child retarded because he/she is black or poor," "observation of child outside of classroom." Those that were "uncritical" had no doubt about their child being retarded. Table 4 records the apparent impact of attendance at parent group meetings and criticisms of retardation status assigned to their child.

TABLE IV. Attitude Toward Mental Retardation Status and Parent Group Participation

<u>ATTITUDE TOWARD MENTAL RETARDATION STATUS OF CHILD</u>	<u>GROUP PARTICIPATION</u>	
	<u>NEVER ATTENDED MEETINGS</u>	<u>ATTENDED MORE THAN ONE-QUARTER OF ALL MEETINGS</u>
Critical	67%	56%
Uncritical	33%	44%
	100% (66)	100% (116)

Apparently the parents who attended meetings regularly showed more of a disinclination to view their child's retardation status as a political or racial phenomenon. Those who attended the meetings were less aware of the processes that lead to minority children being labeled as retarded, or at least did not believe that such processes applied to their child.

Any inferences we develop from these data are tentative. The relationships displayed in the tables, while not statistically significant, are analytically suggestive. The data suggest that analysts of social welfare reform organizations should pay greater attention to the cooptative impact of welfare benefits. It appears that the social welfare benefits delivered to STAR parents might have had the unintended effect of reinforcing an already apolitical orientation among lower-class parents. Those who were "active" parents appeared to be less sensitive to the issue of mis-labeled minority children and less supportive of a social strategy of collective action. Although there are no direct data to explain this apparent relationship, a number of theoretical formulations do lay a groundwork for an understanding.

TOWARD A THEORY OF POLITICAL DE-SOCIALIZATION

Cloward and Piven (1965) have highlighted the role of welfare services in socializing welfare clients to a conservative political stance. They argue that client passivity and conformity are encouraged by conditional welfare benefits without adequate procedures for appeal. In general, welfare bureaucracies have been granted discretion in the distribution of various benefits. Handler's (1972) study of welfare policy and federalism suggests that the flexibility or looseness of the welfare system at the lower levels of administration can be understood as a general agreement between the central government and the local community that the "moral reform" of the poor be handled at the local levels. This suits politicians and administrators at the higher level since they are more than willing to avoid taking a stand on controversial questions. The result has been to allow the lowest level of administration to make what are, in effect, decisions as to eligibility for benefits. The regulations governing many welfare services are, therefore, shot through with discretion. In this situation welfare clients are at the mercy of individualized, ad-hoc discretionary decisions.

The discretionary power of welfare organizations is enhanced by the connection between expertise and welfare benefits. The distribution of welfare benefits has increasingly been seen as requiring expert skills. This approach is exemplified by the changes in welfare services during the 1960's. A series of amendments to the Social Security Act promised a reduction in poverty through an intensive effort of trained and skilled caseworkers. However, beyond prescribing that in order to qualify for federal funds, a social worker could not carry more than 60 persons, little was said of the relationship between caseworker and client. The precise nature of the intensive service and how social workers' activities were to reduce dependency were never clarified. (Gilbert and Specht, 1974) This linkage between expertise and benefits extends further the discretion of social welfare organizations over clients. The "scientific" basis of knowledge and techniques has had the effect of shielding welfare bureaucracies from a review by political leaders and public groups.

The enormous discretionary power of welfare bureaucracies over the distribution of benefits has the potential of being an instrument of social control. Ordinarily, a group gains power and increased public benefits through organization, conflict, and political machinery. Today's poor, however, are able to secure benefits through passivity and acquiescence. For example, a number of

observers of health services have noted the relationship between sick role behavior and the receipt of services. The more like a helpless object the patient is, the easier it is for the medical staff to do their work. Lorber's (1975) study of hospitals suggests that for the sake of the smooth and efficient operation of the institution, medical personnel encourage "uncomplainingness" and "undemandingness" in patients. A study of dying patients also found efforts at social control. Nurses scolded, reprimanded, and avoided patients who asked lots of questions, created emotional scenes, or refused to cooperate with hospital routines. (Glaser and Strauss, 1965).

The increased involvement with welfare organizations following participation in the STAR parent groups may have exposed parents of the retarded to influences that reinforced political demoralization. Bureaucratic procedures reinforce the premise that the poor have few rights. The discretion inherent in the distribution of welfare benefits allows the bureaucracies the freedom of arbitrary action. Once the poor have internalized this view of welfare, they become accepting of the vague administrative procedures and conditional benefits. The manipulation of benefits is a powerful mechanism of social control. It can take the form of either the withdrawal of essential resources as punishment for dissent, or selective appeasement, as when certain benefits are granted to the leaders of a community, while the grievances of the larger group remain. Political demoralization appears to occur since the welfare recipient is likely to be overwhelmed with a sense of powerlessness, frustration and resignation. The arbitrary procedures and actions contribute to alienation. The individual moves through life no longer experiencing himself as the master of his own destiny. When this occurs, the client sinks into a state of political and social inertia.

The types of social welfare benefits offered to STAR parents may have possibly contributed to political demoralization. The benefits they received were ones which were not linked to acceptable social roles. Rather, the client categories by which the welfare agencies defined eligibility were "non-roles." Gilbert (1970) suggests that client dependency and fragmentation are reinforced through the use of isolative benefits.

This reinforcing is done by defining eligibility for benefits in terms of unacceptable role categories or non-roles: the clients are unwed; uneducated, unemployed. They are also

unlikely to form groups that associate them with the role failure such a categoric status represents. Collective action is stymied.

### CONCLUSION

Our study of the internal dynamics of Project STAR suggests the utility of an analytic framework based on organizational incentives as a way of studying welfare reform organizations. The major attraction of Project STAR to the lower-class parents of retarded children was the receipt of welfare and health services. The reform project can therefore be described as dependent upon material incentives. Administrators of such organizations are under great pressure to obtain the resources that will provide an inducement to participation. The preoccupation with material incentives from local welfare agencies can account for the eclipse of community mobilization.

Analysis of the incentive system also provides a possible explanation for the failure to successfully organize lower-class parents of the retarded into social action groups. In multi-purpose organizations such as STAR, the organizations's reform goals are not an important incentive and have little impact upon participation. This explains the reluctance of parents to be involved unless there were tangible gains to be made. Given the relative unimportance of the stated mobilization objectives, the organizers were able to be tactically flexible in the types of rewards offered to parents, e.g., services, travel, sociability, etc. The preoccupation with maintaining material incentives, however, resulted in scant attention being paid to the political functions of social services. The price of organizational maintenance was the necessity to adopt activities which may have in the long run, proved inimical to community mobilization. The exposure to increased welfare services through the parent groups appears to explain, in part, the diminished collective orientation of parents and their willingness to accept the mental retardation label assigned to their child.

The reliance on welfare benefits rather than ideology as an incentive for participation was recognition of STAR's weak political position to effect changes in the welfare system. Social change, implied in the ideology of community mobilization, would have been painfully slow, or even an impossible task, given the resources of the reform project. Reforms in intelligence testing and in services for the mentally retarded were only in small part amenable to change from the local level. Most of the mental retardation organizations

in the five sites were part of national and state associations. Local efforts to reform them would most likely have produced minimal reforms in programs for the lower-class retarded. STAR was, however, in a strong position to deliver on the promise of welfare benefits. Its linkages with community agencies made the supply of service-incentives predictable. This was, therefore, a more secure inducement for participation than the promise of institutional reform.

This analysis of one attempt at interest-formation among lower-class families of the mentally retarded suggests a "rational" behavior on their part. The case materials further suggest the failure of community mobilization can be explained by the organizational incentives used. Project STAR's problem appeared to lie in finding the proper mix of purposive, material, and solidary inducements which both recruit and retain members of the lower-class, at the same time allowing the pursuit of mobilization goals.

From the Project STAR experience it appears that the use of welfare benefits to organize lower-class communities may well reinforce passivity and political inertia. This may explain in part, the apparent failure of recent reform efforts to mobilize the poor and extend their social and political rights.

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