

with a little, and to make something positive out of despair and anger. It would seem to require enormous energy and imagination to overcome reality. Yet even these intangible resources are often depleted in low-income communities. How should we understand the assets of poor communities? They would appear to be more in relationships than in institutions, but even these appear to be very fragile.

As Belmonte (1989) illustrates so beautifully in his ethnographic account of a poor neighborhood in Naples, although there is much that is human, there is little that is redeeming about the need to cope endlessly with hardship and social depredation. Rather such pressures pit people “endlessly against each other in competition for the scarce and irregular resources from which they must derive their livelihood. . . . Every actor must seek his own personal compensations for the defeats suffered at the hands of life” (Eric Wolf, cited in Belmonte 1989:xx, introduction). A reporter visiting a South Bronx housing projects puts it more succinctly: “In Mott Haven the strongest community is one defined by hardship” (Gonzales 1991:A14). While neighborhoods cannot escape their history and their situation, neighborhood initiative nonetheless represents an effort to renounce and to seek mastery over that history and situation. Ultimately, it is this effort itself, more than the forces arrayed against it, that makes neighborhood initiative so interesting.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

In the last decade of the nineteenth century it was not yet settled “on what terms, and on whose, the nation would be industrialized” (Kaminsky 1992:187). The questions of what kind of society the United States would be and what kinds of communities would constitute that society were still open ones. At the same time social trends were foreclosing options rapidly. What was euphemistically called the business cycle was wreaking havoc on the lives of millions of wage laborers. A series of violent confrontations between capitalist entrepreneurs and workers was shaping a pattern of labor-management relations that would last until the 1980s. Rapid, chaotic urban growth, the influx of millions of immigrants, and the liberalization of Protestantism combined to undermine feelings of social order and cohesion. The United States seemed less and

less an "ever-expanding composite whole," a country creating unity out of diversity, and more and more a country becoming fragmented by numerous social forces (Melvin 1987:12).

While many were celebrating mass production and consumption as the highest ideals of a future society, others were concerned that emerging patterns of production and consumption associated with corporate capitalism (particularly with the great industrial monopolies) were undermining traditional ideals of behavior such as local civic responsibility, self-restraint, and prudence (Lears 1983). Writers such as Henry George, in his *Progress and Poverty*, warned of a widening gap in relations between the wealthy and the rest of the population. Corporate capitalism also created unprecedented problems, not susceptible to traditional explanations for and responses to poverty. First among these was widespread unemployment during increasingly frequent and severe cyclical depressions. Unemployment reached 50 percent in some cities during the depression of 1893–1894 (O'Neill 1990). Other problems included inadequate wages to support family well-being, debilitating and in some industries dangerous employment conditions, and chronic job insecurity. As Dawley (1991:339) notes, for industrial workers "hard times were like good ones, only worse." Even during "boom" years a third of the industrial workforce experienced several weeks of unemployment during the year (Sugrue 1993:91).

Even "as it created its own casualties" corporate capitalism was undermining the traditional means families and communities had always had available to cope with problems (Katz 1981:73). A family in distress was less likely than historically to be living in the same community as its extended network of kin, and was more likely to be surrounded only by other families experiencing the same difficulties as it was. Families coped in part by trying to organize themselves as economic units, each family member—children included—playing an important role (Coontz 1988:294). Immigrants strove to recreate elements of their communities of origin in their new neighborhoods, and developed new support mechanisms, such as mutual assistance associations, that fit the new circumstances. When informal coping mechanisms proved inadequate, families were forced to turn to organized charity, often at a cost to their privacy and sense of dignity.

Prevailing explanations of poverty were rooted in a belief that for

the most part individuals "chose" their fate, through their backgrounds, habits, and predispositions. Prevailing responses to poverty were designed to weed out those undeserving of support, and to make sure the deserving were not corrupted by whatever relief was provided. Both explanation and response were incommensurate with the realities of millions of families' lives. Speaking of the response of Buffalo Charity Organization Society (C.O.S.) volunteers during the 1893–94 depression, Shelton (1976:144) notes that "nothing in their experience enabled them to comprehend the situation of people with no earnings, no savings, and no family or friends with the means to help them." They refused to acknowledge the evidence that for many families no amount of effort by children and adults could assure adequate income to meet even the most basic needs. During that same depression New York City's C.O.S. criticized the various newspaper relief funds that were trying to provide rapid, accessible relief to thousands of families, noting that "the results of years of work by the C.O.S. may be swept away in one season of unusual distress by sentimentalists" (Olasky 1992:127).

In the face of abundant evidence to the contrary, C.O.S. leaders continuing insistence on attributing hardship to individual behavior, for example arguing that the working poor needed to learn greater household economy in order to save a few extra pennies in anticipation of downturns in the business cycle, sounded increasingly hollow. (The Chicago C.O.S. established the Penny Savings Society in 1897 to encourage "thrift, self-denial and independence" among the poor, as if lack of these qualities was responsible for their poverty [Kusmer 1973:664]). C.O.S. leaders' continuing worries that "careless" generosity would engender dependence, and that dependence was contagious (spreading from household to household), sounded like rationalizations; so did their argument that providing material assistance to poor families caused the separation of society into classes (Kusmer 1973:661). Their continuing insistence on trying to sort out the deserving from the undeserving poor through objective analysis of individual causal factors seemed increasingly impossible. At any rate C.O.S. case records "often amounted to little more than a systematic listing of middle-class platitudes about the vices of the poor" (Kusmer 1973:668).

More than a few questioned the right of the Charity Organization Societies to make themselves alone responsible for deciding how American

society would interpret and address poverty. Bremmer (1972:54) cites a letter received by Frederick Howe, a trustee of the Cleveland C.O.S., from a local clergyman, raising just this issue:

Your society [wrote the clergyman], with its board of trustees made up of steel magnates, coal operators, and employers is not really interested in charity. If it were, it would stop the twelve-hour day; it would increase wages and put an end to the cruel killing and maiming of men. It is interested in getting its own wreckage out of sight. It isn't pleasant to see it begging in the streets.

The Emergence of Progressivism

It was in this context of change, upheaval, and conflict in many spheres of society that a new reform movement emerged. Progressive reformers questioned, without entirely rejecting, the assumptions, analyses, and methods of the C.O.S.'s so-called scientific charity. It was apparent to them that "individuals suffered as often from the misdeeds and calculations of others as from their own failings" (Bremmer 1972:21). A new type of reform activity, social research (which in some respects was scientific charity's family investigation turned on its head), was demonstrating that unskilled and even moderately skilled wage labor was inadequate to meet basic family needs (Freeman 1992), that millions of families lived constantly on the edge of dependency, and that families usually sought relief from charity organizations or public relief authorities as a last resort (see Katz 1993:48, 56, Polsky 1991:46).

Nonetheless, it was not America's ideals that were perceived to be the problem, but the corruption of those ideals. It was not individual acquisitiveness per se that was the problem with the new corporate capitalism, but excessive acquisitiveness. It was not corporate profit per se that was the problem, but excessive profit. Competition was fine; not so unfair competition. Inequality was natural; it was extremes of inequality that were problematic. Thus, the Progressives sought explanations for poverty that were not as harsh and moralistic as those predominating during the nineteenth century but that did not raise questions about the basic tenets of American society. They sought responses to poverty that protected individuals, families, and local communities from the worst effects of corporate capitalism, but that did not directly contradict its imperatives of plentiful, cheap wage labor and concentration of capital in the hands of a few.

Progressive reform derived energy from growing popular anger at the rationalizations for economic exploitation offered by industrialists; for example their argument that child labor was healthy because it "gave boys and girls a chance to learn a trade" (Philpott 1978:65). It also derived energy from a growing popular anxiety at the realization that the majority of Americans were being turned into "wage slaves," an anxiety fueled further by the widely promoted "fiction that wage labor was merely a temporary condition" for most individuals (Lasch 1991:206).

Progressive reform embodied diverse, and in some cases contradictory, beliefs and concerns. Their approaches reflected an ambivalence that would characterize efforts to address poverty throughout the twentieth century. Progressives had a bias against public social spending, and at the same time rejected charity as the basis for dealing with poverty (see Skocpol 1992). They looked at causal relationships from both ends: "A disorderly family could 'unmake' a decent house . . . but a congested tenement could destroy a good family too" (Philpott 1978:4). Their concern about the horrendous living conditions of tenements and the horrendous working conditions of sweatshops was based in part on the harm these conditions imposed on children and adults, in part on their contagious effects on the local community and on society as a whole (Shelton 1976). Overcrowding, constant exhaustion leading to inattentive parenting, fighting for a toehold, were viewed both as a consequence of economic organization and of social disorganization. Poor people simultaneously needed liberation from social oppression and guidance in desirable norms of conduct (Kirschner 1986). Progressives believed in the need for specialized knowledge in explaining and addressing problems and, at the same time, in the importance of citizens getting together on their own to define and address their concerns and problems. They mourned the passivity of the poor and, at the same time, "marvelled at the heroism of housewives who lugged water by the bucket load up two or three flights of stairs in the battle to keep things clean" (Philpott 1978:64).

Many of the concerns of Progressives had a strongly restorative character, and this was related partly to the backgrounds of the reformers involved. A majority of the early Progressive reformers were "descendants of long-established families [who] felt that their status was now being usurped by new industrial entrepreneurs" (Freeman 1992:199). Many Progressives believed that "urban industrialism had shattered the bonds

that secured the preindustrial order and produced a morally vitiated urban society" (Bauman 1987:8). Some social historians have suggested that Progressives felt not only socially displaced but psychologically alienated from the new corporate culture, with its exploitive relations and its disregard for community (Chambers 1963:111). If they could reconstruct through deliberate effort the locally rooted social world that used to exist naturally, this then could be a vehicle for improving and reuniting society, and helping them reassert their role as stewards of that society. Among the artifacts of earlier eras Progressives sought to restore were the presumably unconflicted relations between more and less advantaged citizens, rooted in part in the carefully constructed paternalism of small community life, and the active expression of local democracy—citizens of each local community getting together to "meet, deliberate, decide and implement," in the spirit of Thomas Jefferson's hundreds of "little republics" (Morone 1990:6).

The restorative instincts in Progressive reform were also a response to massive immigration, which was changing the whole fabric of American society. Immigrants were a ready target for the frustrations, disappointments, and anxieties of growing numbers of Americans. Even the more sensitive reformers felt uneasy about the immigrants, "so different in manners, customs and beliefs from old-stock Americans" (Kirschner 1986:31). The size and social background of the immigrant population was seen to pose a major threat to the stability of the social order. Its "ignorance" of civic duties was viewed as an obstacle to the practice of local democracy (Addams 1965 [1893]:46). Bremmer (1972:10) notes that that "not only pauperism and crime, but hard times, political corruption, intemperance, and pestilence were laid at the door of the newcomers." Not least immigrants were indicted for creating their own little separate communities and for sticking with their own kind (Handlin 1951:273). The neighborhoods in which immigrants concentrated were perceived by those outside and by residents themselves as separate from the larger society of which they were supposed to be a part. One contemporary reformer wrote that "the great mass of immigrants who come to America settle first in urban 'colonies' of their own race" (Daniels 1920:89). This suggested linking poor immigrant neighborhoods to the larger society as an important task.

A Reform Agenda

Progressives sought reforms that were socially conscionable yet realistic alternatives to the social Darwinism of the nineteenth century. They defined as a key problem the loss of constraints on individual acquisitiveness traditionally provided when economic activity had been embedded in a local, self-governing community (Bellah et al. 1985:43). As such, they sought reforms that addressed rampant greed and the decline in social cohesion rather than reforms that addressed the discrepancy in the influence and voice of different economic and social groups. The perceived need for social reconstruction and reunification encompassed almost every societal institution, including corporations, municipal government, neighborhoods, and families. Lack of organization and capacity to address problems was a concern that pervaded all these domains. Jane Addams (1965 [1893]:46) argued that the "policy of the public authorities of never taking an initiative, and always waiting to be urged to do their duty, is fatal in a ward where there is no initiative among the citizens." Another writer plaintively asked, "Must we look forward to an indefinite future of tame submission to saloon-keepers and actual or probably convicts?" (Storey 1969 [1892]).

The Progressive agenda was shaped in part by the struggle of a growing group of publicly active women to find an effective way to relate to economic and social change. Theda Skocpol (1992, part 3) sees a significant thread of what she calls "maternalism" in Progressive reform, which included a focus on protecting women and children, a glorification of mothers, healthy homes and neighborhoods, and maternal values. She points out (1992:2) that

the United States . . . did not follow other western nations on the road toward a paternalistic welfare state, in which male bureaucrats would administer regulations and social insurance "for the good" of breadwinning industrial workers. Instead America came close to forging a maternalist welfare state, with female-dominated public agencies implementing regulations and benefits for the good of women and children.

Baker (1984:640) on the other hand argues that the imperative for state action to regulate working and living conditions encouraged activist women to break out of traditional boundaries for female reformers. For example, women played key roles in efforts to push for laws to compensate

victims of industrial accidents as well as laws for factory and tenement inspection. In a sense both Skocpol's and Baker's perspectives are correct. Female reformers were seeking both to regulate the corporate marketplace and to reduce its emerging dominance of American life by creating a renewed "social" realm to balance its influence (see Dawley 1991:99). They reinterpreted the city as a large, interdependent family rather than a giant marketplace. They redefined services such as garbage collection, formerly seen as one form of economic activity, as domestic activities (Flanagan 1990).

Progressive agendas ranged broadly from banning alcohol and saloons, to women's political suffrage, to the aforementioned laws to compensate victims of industrial accidents, to laws restricting immigration. The nineteenth-century preoccupation with physically removing children from unhealthy circumstances was gradually transformed to a new commitment to family preservation. This commitment was reflected in efforts to promote mothers' pensions and the Juvenile Court, and in a concerted campaign for various public health reforms, including pasteurization of milk, compulsory vaccination, and expansion of maternal and child health clinics. Central concerns included regulation of tenement living conditions and regulation of child labor, both of which appeared to offer means of attacking capitalist excesses without questioning capitalism itself.

Tenements and tenement districts in different cities presented distinct problems, all related to the cumulative effects of the economic interests of builders and landlords and the economic goals of immigrants. In New York City the principal tenement design was known as the dumbbell. In the mid-1890s dumbbell tenements housed over half of New York City's population. Dumbbells were long, narrow buildings (typically ninety by twenty feet) that narrowed in the middle by about two and a half feet, so that when two buildings were side by side, as was common, a space of five feet was created between buildings. This space provided the only light and air for most of the 150 to 200 people who might live in a building (Wright 1981:122). In describing tenement life Handlin (1951 151-152) writes that the simplest tasks, such as garbage disposal or going to the bathroom, often became complex and disorganizing. For example, people living on the top floors might have to take themselves and their children down five or six flights of stairs to use a filthy back-

yard privy. There often was too little space for even a basic family ritual such as eating. DeForest and Veiller, New York's premier tenement reformers, described the suffocating atmosphere of many tenements, not only the lack of light and air in apartments, but the noise, the pitch-black hallways, and the constant smell of garbage thrown down the narrow air shafts (DeForest and Veiller 1969 [1903]). They argued (98) that "unrestrained greed has gradually drawn together the dimensions of the tenements, until they have become so narrowed that the family life has become dissolved."

Child labor frequently provided the modest additional income that kept families out of dependence, but at great cost to children's own future. Katz (1993:56) notes that most children accepted this role "with remarkable willingness." Conditions of child labor varied enormously. Some children helped with piecework at home; others made their living in the street trades, selling newspapers, shining shoes, doing odd jobs. Children's small size was often specially exploited to put them in the most physically exhausting and dangerous jobs in factories, mills, mines, and other settings. Descriptions and photographs of the more abusive work situations were among the most compelling tools in the arsenals of reformers, reinforcing the poignancy of lost childhoods and the pitiful wages children received in relation to the amount of work they did.

During its early years Progressive reform was built on the assumption that many problems were not solvable at the local level, and therefore that problem solving required a significantly expanded role for the federal government in economic and social life. The "municipal housekeepers needed the help of the state" (Baker 1984:640). Over time the relative emphasis on broad-scale legal and political reforms diminished, and that on poor neighborhoods and their residents increased. In a few cases, such as that of women's political suffrage and public health reforms, this was due to the eventual achievement of reform objectives. More commonly it was due to frustration with, compounded by an inherent distaste for and lack of skill in using, the interest-driven political process. Efforts to goad federal and state government into an active regulatory role with corporations "frequently perished in the legislatures or the courts at the hands of due process, which had become the legal instrument of individual rights" (Kirschner 1986:22). Owners and managers of the large industrial trusts turned the arguments against their monopolistic practices inside

out, for example criticizing the attempts of workers to organize as monopolistic itself. Municipal government reform was complicated by the fact that municipal governments were weak, and the locus of political power diffuse and decentralized.

Tenement reform remained a major focus of the Progressives, because it combined the concerns of, and therefore could be sustained by, diverse interests. It provided a focus for the communitarians among the Progressives, with their concern for creating healthful environments. Tenement reform also was argued by reformers such as DeForest and Veiller to be in the self-interest of the upper classes. It provided a focus for responding to a variety of fears about the effects of slums on the larger society; in particular the fear that the diseases bred and nourished in the slums would spread to the neighborhoods where wealthier people lived. Fogelson (1986:75) argues that concern about poverty and the poor in American society has often been based more on the calculation of its social costs than on concern for the welfare of the poor themselves. He notes that the "problem of disease was one of the earliest recognized 'externalities' of the slum."

While Progressives were able to locate and argue for the public interest in tenement reform, their reform efforts were hampered by reluctance to look to the public sphere (i.e., government) as an alternative to the marketplace in the area of housing. Regulation and inspection, the two principal strategies for tenement reform, could not counter the market forces that shaped housing conditions for poor families. The landmark New York Tenement Law of 1901 set strict standards for ventilation, overcrowding, fireproofing, sanitary facilities, and basement apartments. At the same time these high standards discouraged speculative builders from using their money for tenement construction, worsening the housing shortage for poor families (Wright 1981:129). The Progressive era also saw the first efforts at slum clearance as a solution to the overcrowding and apparent depravity of tenement life. As would be the case (although on a far greater scale) in the 1950s, thousands of families were displaced as blocks of tenements were razed, with no new housing built to accommodate them. This furthered the overcrowding in nearby tenements and in other poor neighborhoods (Wright 1981:131).

Both tenement and child labor reforms proved to be closely tied to reform in other less malleable areas: "Every housing survey and each invest-

igation of working children forced some consideration of the entire labor problem; every serious attempt to improve the home or save the children turned attention toward low wages, unemployment, industrial accidents, sickness, and the general atmosphere of economic insecurity" (Bremmer 1972:228). Poor families could not afford the higher rent that would accompany better housing, and they needed the income their children provided merely to afford their existing housing. In spite of compulsory education laws, over half the children in poor neighborhoods did not go to school (Wenocur and Reisch 1989:23).

Neighborhood Renewal as Theme and Practice

Neighborhood improvement had been part of the Progressive agenda from the outset. But it increasingly seemed the most manageable, and therefore natural, vehicle for addressing poverty-related social concerns. Neighborhood renewal seemed neither too trivial nor too radical as a response to poverty. It encompassed many of the Progressives' basic concerns, but at a level that did not appear overwhelming. When progressive reformers looked at poor neighborhoods they saw not only horrendous living and working conditions but ethnic and religious conflict, lack of neighborliness, and lack of social and physical order. Daniels (1920:161), reflecting the views of his contemporaries, wrote that "prophetically speaking, a 'slum' is not a neighborhood at all. . . . It has no organic unity; rather it is a human conglomeration of which the outward shell may have a neighborhood look, but in which real neighborhood substance and organization is lacking." Robert Woods, a leader in the settlement movement, argued that the impoverished inner-city neighborhood represented the "microcosm of all social problems," and was therefore the "ultimate testing place of all social reforms" (cited in Melvin 1987:18).

Progressive reformers tended to believe that the best way to help integrate poor neighborhoods and their residents into the larger society was to first strengthen these neighborhoods and then try to link them to the outside world. Societal reconstruction would start with individuals and small groups in local settings. These would gradually be linked to each other, thus organizing the community: "Through the multiplication of individual reactions, the neighborhood is infused with new sympathies, new ideals, and new motives for action" (Daniels 1920:212). The new

sense of community presumably would then spread to the city as a whole, and to the larger society, eventually altering the values of those who held economic and political power. It was a somewhat indirect strategy for addressing inequality.

If the neighborhood was going to be "the unit of civic and national reconstruction," as Robert Woods (cited in Chambers 1963:116) argued, something had to be created that symbolized and represented the neighborhood as a whole. The settlement, already emerging in many poor neighborhoods to provide specific services to neighborhood residents, seemed well-suited to this purpose (Chambers 1963). Settlements were the first institutional response to poverty shaped at least in part by the needs of poor families and neighborhoods rather than purely by the predispositions of reformers. Nonetheless, settlement leaders did not always or even usually trust neighborhood residents to determine their own needs and interests. Further, they had their own vision for the settlements, one not necessarily shared by other neighborhood institutions and residents themselves. Settlement leaders viewed the settlement as the potential hub and nerve center of the whole neighborhood—in other words, as a neighborhood center in the broadest sense. Settlement leaders saw the settlement as the vehicle for smoothing over and containing, if not integrating, the variety of separate group beliefs, interests, and behavioral patterns that made up poor neighborhoods (Kirschner 1986).

The primary attraction of settlements to neighborhood residents was the assistance provided in coping with the endless difficulties of everyday life, the specific skills taught, and the wide range of supportive services and recreational activities. Common elements included day nurseries, kindergartens, after-school programs, sports, sewing, hobby, and other kinds of clubs, and summer camps (outside the city) for children; equivalent clubs as well as day and evening classes of all sorts for youth and adults; theater, folk dancing, art classes, and art shows; primary health care, help in finding jobs, legal assistance, counseling, information and referral, emergency food, fuel, clothing, and bedding. Milk stations located themselves at settlements, as did visiting nurse associations and social workers charged with visiting families to determine eligibility for relief. (Settlement staff, called "residents," themselves were sometimes deputized as city or county relief workers, visiting homes to gather information and assess support needs.) Describing the University of Chicago set-

tlement near Chicago's stockyards, Slayton (1986:174) notes that "people came for advice, for help in getting children out of jail, and especially to use the showers."

Settlements' staff tried to make the settlement a second home and family for tenement dwellers—also a model home, reflecting middle class "values and techniques" (Warner 1962:10). The settlement house itself was set up like a home, with kitchen, dining room, and living rooms as well as gymnasiums, club rooms, and workshops. Some settlements, in larger buildings, included apartments that were rented out. Settlement staff believed that the good things they had to offer inside the settlement were often in competition with the unhealthy (but attractive) things found outside, in the streets, and even in some homes. Especially with children, the settlement's job was "to compete . . . for first place in their secret minds" (Hall 1971 :xi). Children indeed often found their way to settlements first, bringing home ideas from the settlement, as they did from school, and placing these ideas before their parents, to be digested by the family. (Men, perhaps being the most insecure about their position in the new world, were generally the most suspicious of the settlements, with their interest in family life and relationships.) Staff sometimes acted as surrogate parents for children, for example assuming a probationary function for children who ended up in court. Speaking of her childhood experience at Hull House, Dorothy Sigel (interviewed by Silberman 1990:54) notes:

You didn't realize that you were being observed or that someone was really caring about you personally. There must have been, in all of the residents' duties, sort of an unspoken assignment, each of them choosing a few [children] that they were following up on. There were always these little things going on, where someone who needed that extra dollar or two, somehow it just happened.

Like many indigenous neighborhood organizations, settlements and their staff viewed themselves as mediating institutions, both interpreting immigrants to America and its mainstream institutions and vice versa. Jane Addams (1965 [1893]:54) noted that it "sometimes seems as if the busi-ness of the settlement were that of a commission merchant. . . . It constantly acts between the various institutions of the city and the people for whose benefit these institutions were erected."

Settlement leaders and staff played an important role in a wide vari-

ety of neighborhood improvement campaigns and initiatives, advocating for “pocket” parks, playgrounds, public baths, and branch libraries, for closed sewers and adequate garbage collection, police and fire protection (Chambers 1963). They used clubs, lectures, forums, and other activities to mobilize and organize community residents around specific issues and also to educate residents as to their civic responsibilities (Bremmer 1972). They gathered data to provide an objective foundation for their campaigns. For example, the research of a Hull House resident revealed that there were over twice as many school-age children in the local district as there were places for these children in local schools (Addams 1965 [1893]:57). Settlement staff also stimulated innovations in other social institutions, such as the idea of school nurses, originated by Lillian Wald of the Henry Street Settlement (Hall 1971).

Polsky (1991) argues that at least in the early years of Progressive reform a few reformers, most notably Robert Woods, founder and director of Boston’s South End House, had an explicitly political agenda for the neighborhood work of the settlements. This agenda focused on two interrelated activities. The first was “the dramatic expansion of neighborhood self-government as a device for linking marginal populations to the social order. . . . If given real political autonomy, a social space in which to generate their own collective identity, they could bring themselves into the social mainstream” (Polsky 1991:120). Self-government would provide poor, marginal populations a voice, provide valuable lessons in civic education, lead to more responsive services, and strengthen community identity. The second agenda, a prerequisite for the first, was unhooking immigrants from their dependence on the local political machine. This dependence was perceived to individualize and privatize people’s concerns, and therefore to undermine the solidarity crucial to neighborhood self-governance. The machines were also seen to share the narrow self-interest and unrestrained acquisitiveness of the new giant corporations, contributing to the loss of the “older virtues” (Greenstone and Peterson 1973:115).

It was not clear in Woods’s proposals what specifically would be governed by neighborhood government, how exactly the citizenry would be mobilized and organized to govern themselves, and how they would gain control over public resources. Still, as circumscribed as it was, proposals for self-government did not get very far, running into predictable oppo-

sition from established sources of neighborhood power, especially the political machines themselves but also such institutions as the Catholic church (which sensed correctly that it was also viewed by settlement leaders as an obstacle to neighborhood unity). Neighborhood residents viewed the settlements more as a service institution than a political one. Moreover they tended to appreciate the local ward system, depending on it to meet various concrete needs, including the not infrequent need for a job, albeit for the quid pro quo of votes. As one local Tammany Hall boss himself described it:

If a family is burnt out I don’t ask whether they are Republicans or Democrats, and I don’t refer them to the Charity Organization Society, which would investigate their case in a month or two and decide they are worthy of help about the time they are dead from starvation. I just get quarters for them, buy clothes for them if their clothes were burned up, and fix them up till they get things runnin’ again. . . . Who can tell how many votes one of these fires bring me? (LEVINE AND LEVINE 1992:69)

The political potential of the settlement movement was constrained as well by its leaders’ view of the settlements as neutral organizations, as integrators and conciliators in an increasingly segmented, conflict-ridden society. The majority of men and women associated with the settlement movement disdained politics, especially electoral politics, and felt uncomfortable with the conflict potentially resulting from the political empowerment of the poor and excluded. Morone (1990:114) argues that at heart most Progressives were “suspicious of the immigrants who gathered in the eastern cities, nervous of the farmers that flocked to the populist party in the midwest, unsympathetic to the blacks and poor whites in the south.” Indeed, they seemed uncomfortable with the whole idea that there were constituencies with genuinely different interests. As such there was little effort to link local organizing efforts to a larger political constituency, such as that represented by the emerging trade unions, although a few settlement leaders argued in public forums that such unions were a legitimate new form of American association.

Robert Woods did not envision neighborhood self-government as a vehicle for organizing the working poor to make demands on the more advantaged members of society. He warned settlement workers against promoting conflict-oriented tactics—such as those used by trade unionists—in neighborhood mobilization work (Woods 1902). Jane Addams’s

response to the Pullman Car workers strike of 1894 reflected the fine, and in some cases untenable, line Progressives tried to walk when it came to social and economic conflict. Between May and December of 1893, George Pullman lowered the wages of the workers who built his Pullman Cars five times, the last almost 30 percent (Freeman 1992). Meanwhile he refused to lower rents or food prices in the company town on Chicago's South Side, where most of the workers lived. When the workers, under impossible strain, went on strike, residents of the nearby neighborhood (in which Hull House was located) urged Jane Addams to side with the strikers. She refused, arguing that if Hull House took sides in the strike, "it would fail in its responsibility to reconcile capital and labor" (quoted in Philpott 1978:77).

Addams, generally sympathetic to unions, clearly identified with the objective injustice done to the workers. But she seemed most disturbed by her own realization that paternalism was an inadequate basis for labor-management relations—indeed for social relations generally—and that workers themselves had developed an alternative, solidarity, which was in many ways the opposite of paternalism. In "A Modern Lear," her reflection on the strike and George Pullman himself, she wrote: "A movement had been going on about him [Pullman] and through the souls of his workmen of which he had been unconscious. . . . Outside the ken of this philanthropist, the proletariat had learned to say in many languages that 'the injury of one is the concern of all' " (Addams 1965 [1893]:115). Not all settlement leaders were so torn by the dilemmas presented by militant trade unionism, with its assumption that workers and owners (and their managers) had fundamentally different interests. Addams's colleague Mary McDowell, of the University of Chicago Settlement, located near the stockyards, provided various kinds of support to the union organizers and meat-packers in their ongoing efforts to organize, and during their 1904 strike (Chambers 1963:114).

Another problem with neutrality and ecumenism in what were sometimes heterogeneous neighborhoods was that "no group could regard the settlement as its own. Since it belonged equally to everybody, it belonged to nobody, except the settlement residents themselves" (Philpott 1978:75). Settlements reportedly made only modest effort to reach out, relate to, and support the churches, the indigenous mutual assistance associations, and the trade unions that provided social structure and social support in

poor neighborhoods. In some neighborhoods the local Catholic church actually discouraged parishioners from using the local settlement, citing its ecumenism and, in an ironic twist on the label applied to residents of poor neighborhoods, its alien origin (Slayton 1986; in some neighborhoods the presence of a settlement spurred the local church to begin providing services that it should have been providing already). For its part, the formal settlement movement, as represented by the local and national federation of settlements, did not accept settlements created by community members, especially those linked to particular ethnic or religious affiliations. Daniels (1920:146) cites the example of a priest who developed and directed a Ukrainian social center in New York, and who decided to call it a settlement house because "we wanted to be like the Americans." The priest reported that his settlement had "never been invited to join the federation of settlements in our city. Apparently only American settlements are admitted to that federation." Some black churches, especially the old-line churches, acted as settlements; but these also were excluded from the formal movement (Borris 1992:219; more on this shortly).

The community's sense of ownership was also undermined by patterns of settlement governance, financing, and staffing. Far from the ideal of neighborhood self-governance, most settlement leaders did not even support self-governance for the settlements themselves. Settlement boards were usually composed of people living outside, and often far from, the neighborhood, and residents had little say in how settlement funds were used. The bulk of financing came from wealthy, and generally conservative, individuals and philanthropic organizations upon whom settlement leaders always had to keep a solicitous eye. The settlements rarely hired neighborhood residents as staff, particularly in positions of authority (Philpott 1978:285). Settlement leaders and staff were confident that they knew what was most needed in the neighborhood, and felt that it was more efficient for them to make decisions about how resources were to be used (Daniels 1920:218). Nonetheless, neighborhood residents inevitably used the settlements for their own purposes, not for its purposes. When it was not helpful they stayed away.

Even when the purposes expressed by settlement leaders coincided with those of residents of poor neighborhoods, the consonance of purpose did not run deep. One domain of overlapping concern was "Americanization."

Settlement staff saw “expanding the horizons of the poor”—in terms of cultural awareness, knowledge of civic responsibilities, child-rearing beliefs and practices, and middle-class values generally—as critical to social membership, if not to economic progress (Husock 1992:57). Immigrants themselves recognized that mastering American ways was one ingredient in escaping poverty and entering the mainstream of society. But to the extent possible, it was to be Americanization on terms that respected their cultural heritage and traditional practices. Immigrants sought a middle ground between self-segregation and assimilation. Even as they “built institutions to preserve the solidarity of their particular group and to provide a measure of personal security, they tried to fit these institutions into the American social landscape” (Goren 1970:2).

Settlement leaders and staff appreciated immigrants’ efforts to maintain a measure of continuity and control over their new lives. Nonetheless, in interpreting the behavior and practices of different immigrant groups they drew on decontextualized symbols as evidence of family disorganization and misguided cultural practices. For example the “family portraits, religious mementos, and objects the residents had brought with them from their former homes” were disparaged as debris, and even viewed as a sanitary threat (Wright 1981:131). Practices such as nailing windows shut or feeding infants wine and garlic water to ward off disease were criticized as precisely what was standing in the way of Americanization (Kirschner 1986). From reformers’ perspectives other imperatives overrode the importance of traditional objects or practices as sources of continuity and security for immigrants in the face of a new and largely unpredictable world.

Many of the adaptations to poverty made by residents of poor neighborhoods were also viewed as examples of self-destructive or alien behavior that had to be altered if immigrants were to become successful Americans. They were viewed as evidence of the slum’s harmful effects on people’s morals and behavior as well. The practice of keeping children out of school to work was one common target of reformers, the practice of boarding was another. From families’ perspectives child labor was critical to family survival (although families were acutely aware of the costs as well as the benefits of choosing survival over schooling; Butts 1989:113). Boarding was a way of using the family’s resources to the fullest, and also of providing badly needed housing to immigrants (Slayton 1986:33).

From the perspective of reformers keeping children out of school was self-defeating; boarding was viewed as a major contributor to overcrowding and an important source of contagion of communicable disease.

The struggle between immigrants and those who would help them by reforming them constituted the “difference dilemma” of that era, for to gain access to the means of Americanization meant giving up a key part of one’s identity. Historically, the argument has been made that immigrants, unlike African Americans, came here voluntarily, thereby choosing implicitly to “abide by the rules” and mores of American society in order to gain access to its benefits (Hacker 1990:1990). This argument presents only half the story, ignoring the need of many American industries of the time, such as the garment industry, for a large supply of unskilled labor, which could only be met through immigration. Regardless, it remained the responsibility of immigrants alone to cope with the difference dilemma, not immigrants and society together. As Wolin (1989:15) points out, acceptance into the collectivity or mainstream was “predicated upon acceptance by [immigrants] of mainstream institutions and their prerequisites. This results in a paradoxical situation in which the newly arrived group unintentionally connive at their own repression—and by repression here I mean no more than the ability to express difference freely.”

One group for which the settlements’ efforts to promote social integration was irrelevant was African Americans, whom most settlements simply refused to serve (Philpott 1978). By the early part of the century much energy was already being devoted to keeping a relatively small urban African American population segregated from other groups in clearly defined physical ghettos (Osofsky 1964, Spear 1967:91). Common techniques included restrictive covenants, steering, violence (including bombings of peoples’ homes), and chronic low-level threats (such as sending anonymous notes detailing adverse consequences if a family did not move). In Chicago train tracks were used as physical barriers to segregate African Americans of that time, much as highways would be used in the 1950s and 1960s (Philpott 1978:147). African Americans were constantly pushed into the most marginal neighborhoods, with the most overcrowded and neglected housing, and then charged higher rents than whites in better neighborhoods. (In buildings that went from white to black, real estate agents demanded rents 10 to 15 percent higher than they had previously for the

same apartment; Spear 1967:23). In 1917 the Chicago Real Estate Board, alarmed by the growing numbers of African Americans filtering into predominantly white neighborhoods, appointed a commission to devise a segregation plan (Anderson and Pickering 1986:46). The plan developed was based on the principle of concentrating African Americans on particular blocks, and then on contiguous blocks as their numbers grew. Committee members sounded out influential blacks, hoping that they "would volunteer to segregate themselves" (Philpott 1978:162).

Settlement leaders supported the maintenance of "the color line" when they could. Nonetheless as more African Americans moved north they overspilled the boundaries of designated black districts, and many lived in the catchment areas of particular settlements. In response settlement leaders simply reconstructed the color line in their own policies, refusing to serve African Americans in existing settlements. Christamore House in Indianapolis defined its mission as uplift of white people "and moved—rather than desegregate its facilities—when the surrounding neighborhood became predominantly black" (Borris 1992:219). The more moderate among settlement leaders argued that racial integration would engender racial conflict. They argued that white neighborhood residents would not use the settlement if African Americans were present (in roles other than cook, cleaning person, or janitor). Since the whole aim of neighborhood work was to bring people together voluntarily, if one group objected there was nothing that could be done (Philpott 1978:311). The assertion by what constituted the leadership of the Progressive reform movement that in fact "whites just do not like blacks and there is nothing to be done about it," has been described as "racist realism," an effort to reduce a moral problem to a social fact (Anderson and Pickering 1986:7). It was an attitude that would define later efforts to address racial discrimination.

Settlement leaders and other Progressive reformers did provide some financial and technical support for settlement work in African American neighborhoods—just enough reportedly "to ensure a margin of safety in neighborhood relations" (Philpott 1978:314–315). But with only limited financial backing and staff resources, few African American settlements survived long. In Chicago two settlements that were begun on the South Side, where many of the poorest African Americans lived, quickly failed, and one started on the West Side in 1908, the Wendell Phillips Settlement (funded in part by Sears's Julius Rosenwald), survived until the

1920s (Spear 1967). Those trying to develop settlements in racially changing neighborhoods faced similar housing problems, including exorbitant rents and outright refusal to rent, as individual African Americans trying to find a place to live. Celia Parker Wolley, a white woman who started the first deliberately interracial settlement house in Chicago, had trouble obtaining property for the venture. Realtors "were not averse to Negroes living on the premises if they were servants," she reported, "but so soon as they heard that the Negroes were to be on a par with white people they refused to lease the property" (Tuttle 1970:161). She was able finally to open the Frederick Douglass Center, located on the dividing line between white and black neighborhoods. While its interracial principles worked, it did not reach many poor blacks, being located too far from poor black neighborhoods on the South Side.

Other Neighborhood-Based Approaches of the Era

While settlements were the paradigmatic neighborhood initiative of the Progressive era, other institutional innovations also emerged in response to the same concerns as those driving the settlements. Some of these other innovations, for example the playground movement, with its clubs, homes and youth workers, had close ties to the settlement movement. "Organized" playgrounds shared staff with settlements, and some were sponsored by settlements. Other innovations, such as school community centers (sometimes called social centers) and neighborhood improvement societies (often sponsored by local businesses), were developed independently but provided similar services. Most such innovations, other than school social centers, grew on a far smaller scale than the nationwide settlement movement, and some lasted only a matter of years.

By the second decade of the twentieth century the school had come to complement the settlement as the focus of neighborhood initiative in poor neighborhoods. The visiting teacher emerged as a new form of community worker, responsible for mediating between immigrant children and their families and the often alien public schools. Visiting teachers were encouraged by the leaders of their modest movement to view children's school-related problems as rooted in school practices and neighborhood conditions, as well as in children's home and basic life situation. Visiting teachers provided homework help and established clubs. They tried to get parents involved in school activities. A few tried, with

modest success, to provide advice to teachers on curriculum and teaching methods. When a child was having problems at school or in the neighborhood they observed that child in the classroom and at home, discussed that child's home situation with his or her teacher, and school situation with his or her parents (Levine and Levine 1992). They intervened on behalf of children with the courts and other social welfare agencies, and through individual attention and relationships helped children through difficult periods (Levine and Levine 1992:86). Common problems addressed by visiting teachers included parents' need or preference for their children to work rather than attend school; differences between home and school in behavioral expectations of children, which sometimes led children to be inappropriately labeled as slow, indifferent, or difficult, or even as retarded; and sudden changes in children's behavior, often resulting from family crises of which the school knew nothing, for example desertion or death of a parent. Visiting teachers, like their movement, eventually proved too independent (and neighborhood-minded) in spirit and practice for local school systems, and were forced under bureaucratic control. (Much the same happened with visiting nurses and the medical establishment; see Melosh 1984).

For a time there was discussion of each school in every poor neighborhood housing a social service department, which would serve as a base for visiting teachers, and would sponsor a variety of community organizing and community betterment activities. Like settlements, schools proved hospitable to recreational activities, clubs, classes, and the like. But schools were even less suited than settlements to organizing the residents of poor neighborhoods to address basic social and economic concerns. They were perceived as far less rooted in their neighborhoods than were settlements. In fact, they were in the process of becoming more centralized in governance rather than less (Butts 1989:99). Given their essentially conservative mandate, to socialize immigrant children into the mores and norms of American society and to prepare all children for the demands of the emergent industrial culture, they were not perceived by most as vehicles for social reform. Indeed, schools were themselves increasingly an additional object of reformers led by John Dewey.

One revealing effort to use the school as a base for social reform was that initiated by the People's Institute of New York City (Fisher 1977). The institute was an innovative organization on Manhattan's Lower East Side

founded by Charles Smith in 1897. Its original purpose was to address "the prevalence of class segregation and class conflict; the large numbers of impoverished, unassimilated immigrants; the climate of materialist values; and . . . the threat of revolutionary socialism" (Fisher 1977:475). In its early years the institute provided lectures and forums at Cooper Union, organized clubs, and supported legislative reform. One of its many early activities was a "People's Club" for immigrant workers, envisioned to provide a place for both leisure and educational activities. (The club apparently disintegrated soon after it was established, due to conflict between participants and staff, and among participants from different social class and ethnic groups, over control of the club's activities.)

In 1911, under new leadership due to the death of Charles Smith, the People's Institute established what was envisioned to be a self-governing, truly neighborhood-based "Social Center" at P.S. 63 on the Lower East Side. A community meeting was organized, and those neighborhood residents present elected a group of peers, the "Neighborhood Group," to govern the activities of the center. The Neighborhood Group proceeded to elect Clinton Childs, the social worker sent by the institute to work with the experiment, as the director of the experiment. Under Childs, it did go on to sponsor a variety of activities, such as a neighborhood information bureau and community discussions of important neighborhood concerns. It also achieved the goal of freeing the Social Center from financial dependence on the Board of Education, which freedom was supposed to lead to autonomy and self direction. But the institute's leadership and school authorities successfully discouraged the center from pursuing "direct social action by neighborhood residents" (Fisher 1977:477). The purpose of discussion and debate was the adjustment of neighborhood residents, not their political mobilization. Further, over time more and more of the center's activities became professionally sponsored and run. The tension between neighborhood and professional control in neighborhood organizations would emerge decades later as a central challenge to human services in poor neighborhoods.

Decline and Fragmentation of Reform Sentiment: 1910–1930

Settlements, school social centers, and other neighborhood innovations were not proving to be the transformative social institution earlier imag-

ined. The basic conditions of life in poor neighborhoods were changing little. As would be the case again in the 1960s, attention to poverty at home was diverted to other concerns. Domestic social reform became entangled in international events. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, neighborhood institutions in poor neighborhoods volunteered or were drafted into the general war mobilization effort. Newly created local Councils of National Defense used neighborhood organizations as a vehicle for mobilizing and directing the domestic war effort (Fisher 1977).

What remained of the Progressive spirit was overwhelmed in the early postwar years by surprising feelings of anger and anxiety in the American people. (Some of this was related to management-labor turmoil; four million workers were involved in strikes and lockouts in 1919 alone; Dawley 1991:234). President Wilson had anticipated that, having been mobilized psychologically for war, Americans might turn those feelings inward, after the war was over, in search of enemies at home. Once led into war, he told a friend, the American people will "forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance. To fight you must be brutal and ruthless, and the spirit of ruthless brutality will enter into the very fibre of our national life, infecting Congress, the courts, the policeman on the beat, the man on the street" (W. Miller 1991:6-7).

The Progressive reform agenda indeed became entangled in the postwar intolerance and hysteria about the spread of Bolshevism to the United States. Poor immigrant neighborhoods, already perceived as the breeding ground for dependence and immorality, came to be perceived also as the breeding ground for radicals and Bolsheviks. Social activists among the Progressive leadership felt pressure to prove their loyalty with patriotic rhetoric. Neighborhood organizations in poor neighborhoods were asked to watch for un-American behavior in neighborhood residents. Longstanding efforts to expand public commitment to maternal and child health care were labeled as creeping socialism.

The fear of Bolshevism provided an excuse to rein in African American activism as well. African American leaders were accused of radicalism and sedition (W. Miller 1991:143). The number of lynchings increased, rising to seventy in the first year after the war; many of those lynched were soldiers, some still in uniform (Kerner Commission 1968:102) Respect for African Americans' economic contributions at home and courage on

the battlefield was quickly transformed into suspicion of "the returning Negro veteran . . . who had learned to bayonet white men" (W. Miller 1991:140). African Americans were indeed more likely to resist racist language and actions after the war, angry that they had proved themselves once again as Americans, with little to show for it. The migration of large numbers of African Americans from the South to eastern and midwestern cities to meet the labor demands of the war contributed to growing racial conflict and violence in many poor, overcrowded urban neighborhoods. Settlements found their strategy of promoting good will among neighbors of little use in mediating the heightened racial conflict. Their failure to confront racial discrimination in the prewar years came back to haunt them, exacerbating their inability to address postwar race conflict (Dawley 1991:240).

The events surrounding World War I hastened, but did not cause, the decline in reform spirit that occurred after the war. Progressive analyses, theories, and approaches were too constrained and to some degree self-contradictory to alter the social conditions and individual difficulties they sought to address. Many Progressive reformers themselves were feeling disillusioned by the continued stubborn presence of sweatshops and child labor, starvation wages and long working hours (Schlesinger 1957). Some were coming to believe that their preoccupations with community renewal and with strengthening local democracy were of little interest either to the larger society or to poor families themselves. Some Progressives concluded that poor families preferred living in filthy, overcrowded conditions, and cared little about playgrounds and parks for their children. They failed to grasp that under conditions of extreme resource scarcity families could ill afford to actively support a reform agenda that furthered an abstract community. Thus as in one case involving the Northwestern University Settlement, when settlement staff succeeded in having a row of particularly horrendous tenements condemned, to be replaced by a pocket park, they were bewildered by displaced families' sudden display of intense attachment to those tenements (Philpott 1978:96).

As America entered the 1920s the sense of uncertainty about the course of society that had stimulated reform movements around the turn of the century was replaced by optimism that society's problems would fade away in the wash of prosperity and technological progress.

Confidence in the American way of life, by which was meant capitalism, was generally high. Settlement and other neighborhood work was becoming driven less by a holistic preoccupation with poverty and social relations and more by an interest in finding a niche and fighting for a share of resources in the rapidly developing and professionalizing human services. Conceived "as a process," neighborhood work "nevertheless succumbed to institutionalization" (Borris 1992:216). Settlements in particular struggled with the challenge of defining and articulating their distinct methods in terms that might "legitimate settlement work as a sphere of activity" within the emerging social problem-solving "marketplace" (Wenocur and Reisch 1989:41). For the most part settlements chose to adopt the techniques and structures of social service provision, especially casework and specialization.

Settlements, as well as other neighborhood agencies, were increasingly composed of numerous departments staffed by paid specialists defining their own sphere: child guidance, adult education, physical and mental hygiene, recreation (Chambers 1963:121). Residual societal concern about poverty, having been appropriated by the newly authoritative helping professions, was itself fragmented into specialized problems, such as infant mortality, juvenile delinquency, and single motherhood. Specialists redefined the focus of services to poor families from multifaceted support to treatment of specific adjustment problems exhibited by individuals. A growing proportion of poor individuals and families that had contact with neighborhood agencies became "cases," with case records, and caseloads suddenly began to grow. (The passage of legislation creating mothers' pensions in many states also created "cases," since continued receipt of assistance was conditioned on acceptance of monthly, or at least periodic, visits by social workers to check family status and provide various instructions.) The new professionals identified more with their community of peers than with the communities they worked in. They focused their organizational energies on carving out an area of helping that they could justify as their prerogative and defend against encroachment by others.

If the neighborhood had been the organizing concept for Progressives' efforts to understand and address poverty, and to reconstruct society, the individual and the small group became that locus in the 1920s. The notion of problem solving as a shared enterprise of the whole community—a

function largely of good relations between settlement staff and neighborhood residents—was replaced gradually by the idea that it required specialized training and knowledge to understand the many variables that contributed to problems, particularly at the individual level. The "instinctive relationship" between settlement worker and neighborhood resident, to use Graham Taylor's phrase (Chambers 1963:115), was replaced by technique and procedure. The staff of neighborhood agencies continued to respond to immediate manifestations of poverty and hardship—negotiating with a landlord threatening to evict a family for failing to pay rent, bringing a bag of groceries to a family that had run out of food, trying to locate a husband who had deserted the family, seeking medical care for a sick child. But they were encouraged to view specific requests for assistance as an opportunity for broader and deeper entrée into the interior a family's life.

Progressive-era social reformers had used the concepts and language of community to forge their approach to addressing poverty in part because it fit, in part because it was all they had. Casework gave social workers what appeared to be more refined concepts and language for interpreting and addressing poverty. Casework was a direct descendant of nineteenth-century charity work. Proponents tried to distinguish case-work from charity work by criticizing the superficial interviews and observations made by earlier nonprofessional charity workers, with the resulting sweeping generalizations. Mary Richmond, in *Social Diagnosis*, used the following exchange to demonstrate the inadequate interview technique of an untrained charity worker: "Assistance asked? 'Coal and groceries.' Cause of need? 'Out of work.' Any relatives able to assist? 'No.'" (Richmond 1917:107). Richmond called this a "stupid compiling of misleading items," and went on to argue that a major "snare for the feet of the beginner is the pressure brought by the interviewed for premature action or for definite promises of action" (130). Tice (1992:63) cites another, perhaps more self-evident, example of the charity workers' approach of which the new caseworkers were so critical:

W. P. and his wife reported sick. Called and found home if it can be called such in a state of extreme want, filth, and squalor—fruit boxes used for furniture—swarms of flies—a bed so dirty you couldn't tell the print of cloth—told them when they cleaned up help would be given. Called two days later and was refused admittance.

The emergent approach to casework gave new meaning to the nineteenth-century charity workers' commitment to investigation. It included (in ideal form) one or more home visits, interviews with relatives, collection of data from social, medical, and educational agencies family members had had contact with in the past, an employment history, and a search through municipal and other government records (Richmond 1917). It was only then that the caseworker should try to define the real nature and causes of a family's difficulties, develop a plan of action to address those difficulties, and work with the family over time to implement the plan. In practice few social workers had small enough caseloads to allow time for collecting so much information on individual families. Gordon (1988:295) points out that the intervention of the new helping professionals in families' lives often was initiated by family members themselves, particularly women. Still, few families could or would stand still to wait for a lengthy data collection process to conclude, let alone listen to a diagnosis and participate in whatever plan was proposed. Families were "engaged in their own processes of decision-making and problem-solving" on behalf of family survival (Stadum 1990:93).

Many of the questions caseworkers were trained to ask were still driven by an effort to distinguish the deserving from the undeserving poor:

What prospect does there seem to be that this family will retain or regain economic independence? That they will make a satisfactory social adjustment in this country? If the prospects are slight, would it be possible or desirable to deport them? (Richmond 1917:393)

The new techniques were intended mainly to provide a more detailed and individualized basis for labeling and sorting poor people.

Caseworkers, like their forebears in charity work, continued to seek solutions to economic problems that did not create dependence. Financial assistance was always a last resort. For example, the emerging social work establishment resisted the idea of mothers' pensions, partly in the traditional vein of concern about creating paupers, partly because they viewed marriage or employment to be the preferred solution to mothers' economic problems. Nonetheless, single mothers (the majority widowed, separated, or abandoned) often did not want husbands. They were "embittered and exhausted from the efforts of holding together a two-parent family" (Gordon 1988:105). Many were already employed, but in jobs that did not pay them enough to support their children.

Ironically, what had begun in the last decade of the nineteenth century as a search for a humane response to the damaging effects of industrial capitalism was coming more and more to reflect capitalism's principles and strategies. Even as social work educators were trying to make helping less haphazard, more systematic, and more efficient, even as they refined their "product" to make it more attractive to investors, such as the Community Chest, even as neighborhood services in poor neighborhoods were becoming more specialized and bureaucratic, some were worrying about the effects of these trends. By the mid-1920s some involved in neighborhood work were already worried about the growing social distance between professionals and poor people. Hyman Kaplan, the head of Cincinnati's Jewish social agencies, argued for the need for "generalists" who could "act as a buffer between client and technician" (Kirschner 1986:84). The organizational locus of family services and supports was also shifting during this period, with truly neighborhood-based and locally shaped programs gradually becoming replaced by "outposts . . . of specialized bureaucracies" (Kahn 1976:27). A few social service leaders worried about the loss of "feel for neighborhood" resulting from administrative centralization; they argued for decentralization of services as a means of renewing their communitarian spirit (Kirschner 1986:84).

It seemed that only those few who had begun their careers before the turn of the century worried about the shift from a commitment to studying and addressing poverty-related problems to a focus on individual and family adjustment in neighborhood work with poor families. Nonetheless millions of families were not benefiting from the economic growth of the 1920s. Wealth was increasingly concentrated in a few hands. Although wages increased 1 percent annually during the 1920s, profits (little of which went to workers) increased 9 percent (Dawley 1991:337). By 1929 2 percent of the population had two-thirds of the nation's savings. Wages for the majority of workers were actually eroding in real dollar terms, and remained below even conservative estimates of minimum family "health and decency budgets" (Schlesinger 1957:67, 111).

By 1928 and 1929 mothers and fathers were showing up in increasing numbers at settlements and other neighborhood agencies seeking financial assistance, food, clothing, and shelter. In much the same way they had addressed tenement conditions and child labor a generation earlier, settlements first observed and then began to document the extent and

effects of growing unemployment in their neighborhoods. National and local Federation of Settlement reports, which included case studies from numerous individual settlements, were one of the few sources of data providing a warning of growing unemployment and hardship, pointing out its structural sources and likely long-term nature. Settlement leaders went to local, state, and federal officials to warn of a growing national crisis. But elected and unelected civic leaders, not to mention business leaders, did not want to listen. Helen Hall, then with the University Settlement in Philadelphia, recalls one of the largest employers in the city telling her that "anyone who really wanted a job could get one, while at the same time he was discharging several hundred men a day" (Hall 1971:13).

The primary early response to growing unemployment was modest private relief from local charities—sometimes provided under threat of violence by desperate household heads—and community-initiated make-work schemes, for example sending unemployed men out into the neighborhood to shovel snow and then canvassing other local households to donate a few pennies to them (Piven and Cloward 1971:49 and 61). One plan, "block aid," called for residents on each block in small or large cities to take care of the unemployed on their block. Food generally remained the preferred form of relief among the private charities, followed by work relief, and only then by money. Helen Hall, by then director of the Henry Street Settlement, noted that reluctant and overwhelmed local public relief agencies employed "all sorts of cruel devices . . . to make the money go around. In New York, for instance, one was called 'Skip the Feed,' by which to save money the monthly food order of every tenth family was arbitrarily skipped by the Home Relief Bureau of the Department of Welfare" (Hall 1971:12).

During the previous three decades the schools, like the settlements, had assumed for themselves the role of helping integrate poor children and adults into an increasingly complicated economy and society (Janowitz 1978:455). Now, like the settlements and other neighborhood institutions, they were also being forced to struggle with the human costs of a decade of unparalleled "prosperity." Teachers observed growing evidence of family hardship, and struggled to respond. Detroit teachers "collected shoes so that pupils could come to class; New York teachers learned that a fifth of the school children were malnourished and con-

tributed funds for school lunches from their own diminishing salaries" (Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot 1984:24). In a nursery school in Philadelphia children "invented a new game—eviction. They collected all the old doll furniture in one corner, then moved it to another. 'We ain't got no money for the rent, so we's moved into a new house,' one of them said to the teacher" (Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot 1984:92). The educational community, like their social work colleagues and indeed many Americans, struggled to make sense of the pervasive hardship of able-bodied men spending months and then years of their life unemployed. Few blamed capitalism per se. Again, as in the 1880s and 1890s, it was the excessiveness, greed, and corruption of a few bad men that was perceived to be the cause of a whole society's problems. A handful of educational leaders (mostly university-based) viewed the Depression in similar terms as earlier Progressives had viewed the turmoil of the 1890s: as a societal crisis that required basic social and institutional reform (Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot 1984). As had the Progressives with the neighborhood, they proposed an enlarged role for local school systems in social reconstruction. This role would not come to pass. Local school systems were run almost exclusively by socially conservative men with close ties to the local business community and church establishment.

New Threads in Neighborhood Initiative

The magnitude of unemployment in the 1930s contributed to lack of attention to particular marginal groups and local communities. Nonetheless at this time a growing interest in neighborhood among urban sociologists, particularly in Chicago, provided a new impetus for neighborhood initiative. These sociologists focused their attention on the effects of industrialism and urban life on family and local group functioning. They focused especially on the structure, dynamics, and life cycles of poor immigrant neighborhoods: for example, on intergenerational patterns in mutual support and social control. They found that over time the authority of family and primary social group "disintegrated as secondary groups, based on common interests, replaced primary groups in which customary and traditional sanctions prevailed" (Lasch 1977:34). The "Chicago" school of sociologists also trained the first generation of professional community organizers, heirs to the early settlement workers. Two very dif-

ferent (but tangentially connected) initiatives of that era, the Chicago Area Project and the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, also in Chicago, illustrated new threads of neighborhood work that would eventually find their way right into the major poverty-related social experiments of the 1960s.

Chicago Area Project

The Chicago Area Project (CAP), conceived by Clifford Shaw at the Illinois Institute for Juvenile Research (IJR) and Ernest Burgess of the University of Chicago, was envisioned primarily as a social experiment in neighborhood-based juvenile delinquency prevention. As would be the case again in the late 1950s, the problem of juvenile delinquency was receiving growing attention, both in its own right and as a proxy for a broader array of interrelated social problems, themselves linked to the debilitating effects of poverty and social marginality. Shaw in particular recognized that the "neighborhoods of Chicago which had the highest delinquency rates also had the highest rates of tuberculosis and infant mortality; the greatest physical deterioration; populations that seemed demoralized" (Horwitt 1989:48). The clustering of problems seemed at once to reflect and to create the distinctive milieu of many poor neighborhoods.

Field researchers sent out by IJR to poor neighborhoods observed that antisocial, delinquent behavior was more the norm than the exception among neighborhood children and youth. They also noted a loss of allegiance among community youth to the traditional mores of their families and group, especially in second and third generation immigrant families. These observations strengthened Shaw's doubts about then prevailing psychological causal theories, and led to a focus on the social environment. He attributed youths' loss of attachment to traditional mores to a breakdown in informal and indigenous institutional social controls, which breakdown itself was attributed to feelings of marginality, anomie, and powerlessness among community adults. In effect juvenile delinquency was one result of a breakdown in neighborhood structure, and more generally of some immigrant groups' failure to adapt their social mores and institutions to "the urban industrial order" (Kobrin 1959:21.). It was also (implicitly) a result of the lack of attachment of some local communities to the larger society. Like their predecessors, CAP's formulators did not continue with their causal logic, asking why so many

youth in the community saw no reason to follow the rules, why so many adults felt powerless and apathetic, and why a particular community was deteriorated and isolated. Horwitt (1989:49) suggests that Shaw was not oblivious to basic causes of many neighborhood problems, including inadequate and unreliable wages, exploitive landlords, and neglect by municipal government. He recognized that the enormous energy many adults had to expend simply to assure family survival often precluded "active participation in strengthening institutions, whether one's own family or communal institutions." But Shaw was "a practical man by nature," and wanted to do something immediately helpful.

The Chicago Area Project was an initiative in community building, using local institutional innovation as a basis for drawing the socially marginal community into an active role in solving what were perceived to be its own local problems, under professional guidance. It extended the settlement vision by relying on community members to play active helping roles, and over time key leadership roles, in its delinquency prevention and community-organizing activity. It was also more sensitive to the importance of indigenous community organizations, notably the church, in meeting the social and economic needs of community residents.

Three low-income neighborhoods were involved initially in CAP, the first and most successful of which was Russell Square (Schlossman and Sedlak 1983). This neighborhood on Chicago's South Side was located near the steel mills, where most neighborhood men worked intermittently, as the effects of the Depression reached different mills at different times. Housing was old, dilapidated, and overcrowded, with few sanitary facilities. Absentee landlords, combined with redlining by banks, contributed to the severely deteriorated condition of the housing stock. Smoke and grime from the steel mills covered everything. The community had few conventional businesses, except for a multitude of saloons, which served not only as social centers but as moneylenders, employment bureaus, and so forth. Russell Square was also geographically isolated, and this contributed to a strong (if ambivalent) sense of territorial identity and ethnic cohesion, critical to Shaw's theoretical assumptions about community self-renewal.

Russell Square also had one of the highest rates of juvenile delinquency in Chicago. Much of that delinquency involved petty theft and property destruction within the community. Youth gangs especially liked "to

break into schools and desecrate them. . . . They threw ink on the walls and ceilings, smashed furniture, carved desk tops, broke windows, tore books apart and emptied desks" (Schlossman and Sedlak 1983:30). Shaw and colleagues struggled to understand why youth devoted so much energy to destroying their own community. Young people reportedly told them that they felt ashamed of their neighborhood "and the stigma attached to living there" (Schlossman and Sedlak 1983:22).

The project in Russell Square operated through the Russell Square Community Committee, directed by a board composed of the more financially secure community residents. The committee included a small paid program staff and a large number of volunteers, critical to the spirit of CAP. Most of the funds for ongoing project activities were raised locally. Early on Clifford Shaw enlisted the aid of the local Catholic church and its priest, to which community residents had a strong allegiance. He helped raise money and provide the staff for a Boy's Club in the basement of the church, at once linking CAP to the church in community residents' minds and creating a foundation for the more innovative activities he envisioned as the heart of the project. The central innovation of CAP was "curbstone counseling" with the members of youth gangs. Ideally the curbstone counselor was either a young adult from the community who "had somehow internalized and acted upon conventional values," despite a poor upbringing, or, even better, a former delinquent who had straightened out (Schlossman and Sedlak 1983:61). In practice some of the curbstone counselors, especially early on, were paid staff, young men with social work or sociology backgrounds from local universities. Part of their role was to identify young men from the community who could be recruited as indigenous curbstone counselors.

Curbstone counselors' central role was to embody and provide the social control—caring, feedback, guidance, and monitoring—that presumably had dissipated in the community. They were to hang out with the street gangs, develop the trust of their members, and gradually exert their healthy influence (i.e., communicating norms and expectations) through trusting, nonjudgmental personal relationships. (They were advised to focus especially on gang leaders, the inverted version of the community's natural leaders.) Like settlements workers, curbstone counselors were also to act as mediators and interpreters, in this case between delinquent youth and various authorities and institutions, including the

schools and the probation department of the juvenile court. They tried to convince younger children and youth to return to or stick with school, and they tried to find older ones jobs, sometimes with CAP itself.

The Russell Square Community Committee also focused its organizational energies on general community improvement, especially physical improvement. For example, it organized the community block by block to use garbage cans, and developed an educational campaign to discourage residents from dumping garbage in alleys and vacant lots (Schlossman and Sedlak 1983:48). It also mounted a large shrub-planting campaign. Shaw hoped to use these discrete campaigns to enhance neighborhood residents' sense of control over their lives. But lack of garbage cans or shrubs were not what underlay neighborhood residents' feelings of powerlessness. Among the things the committee did not do was pressure the city for better services, seeming to accept the idea that community residents were themselves responsible for the deteriorated condition of their community. Nor did it address neglect by landlords, redlining by banks, and related causes of community dispirit.

Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council

One of the Chicago Area Project's curbstone counselors was Saul Alinsky, at the time a graduate student at the University of Chicago. In 1938 Shaw sent Alinsky into the Back of the Yards, located next to the stockyards and packinghouses, and considered one of Chicago's worst slum neighborhoods, with the intention of having him initiate a CAP delinquency prevention project there. Like Russell Square, Back of the Yards was a stigmatized community. Unlike Russell Square, it was ethnically heterogeneous, with a good deal of antagonism between different groups.

Alinsky, like his teachers and colleagues, viewed most poor neighborhoods as composed primarily of numerous small, segmented groups, formed for mutual aid, protection, and support. Uniquely, through, he was also beginning to view such neighborhoods in an explicitly political light. He was coming to believe that more important than the segmented quality of poor neighborhoods was their overall exploitation and neglect by outside institutions, and that in this common experience lay the seeds of an approach to addressing community problems.

Alinsky's nascent instincts about organizing poor communities were reinforced by his early experiences in the Back of the Yards communi-

ty, in particular by his contacts with local union organizers for the Congress of Industrial Organizations, who were trying to organize the packinghouse workers. The ethnic fragmentation in Back of the Yards, and the social conservatism of primary institutions such as the Catholic church and ethnic associations, had hampered efforts to organize the packinghouse workers for decades. By the late 1930s social and economic conditions in the neighborhood had become so bad that a new generation of labor organizers had a more receptive audience (Horwitt 1989:62). The labor organizers' clear, specific goals and systematic approach to building a local organization provided Alinsky a strategic prototype for his own future organizing work. At the same time their conflict with the church and local ethnic associations reinforced for him the importance of enlisting the support of key indigenous institutions.

In the fall of 1938 Alinsky met Joseph Meegan, a park director and community leader in Back of the Yards who was becoming increasingly outraged by living conditions in the neighborhood. A series of discussions between the two men led to the idea of a community-wide reform organization, an umbrella organization that would provide a forum for mobilizing all the discrete constituencies of the community around common priority problems identified through democratic processes of discussion, deliberation, and voting (Slayton 1986). Thus was born the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC), a new form of neighborhood organization that would be replicated and adapted in hundreds of low-income neighborhoods in coming decades. The genius of Alinsky's and Meegan's strategy

lay in its simultaneous acceptance of segmented and naturalistic separations and its development of a way to overcome the restrictions of those systems. . . . Meegan assumed that the Poles would still resent the Lithuanians, that the Slovaks would still detest the Bohemians . . . what [BYNC] provided was a place where, once a month, everyone in the neighborhood could join together to try to wrest from outside authorities the resources they all needed. (Slayton 1986:205)

Alinsky's and Meegan's vision, though more militant than that of the settlement leaders at the turn of the century, was in many respects just as pragmatic and optimistic. Those earlier reformers had assumed that most Americans, regardless of class and group difference, shared the same ultimate interests, and just needed to be helped to see so. Alinsky and

Meegan assumed that people wanted a setting where they could temporarily set aside their narrow interests in the service of common interests, to be democratically defined. Alinsky was also reviving and refining the Progressive assumption that the most likely approach to addressing poverty and its correlates was to strengthen local democracy.

The Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council was initiated with an enormous community meeting in early summer 1939, attended by 350 people and dozens of organizations, including various churches, local business organizations, organized labor, ethnic mutual aid associations, athletic and social clubs (Horwitt 1989:69–72, Slayton 1986:203). The participants separated into four committees, health, child welfare and delinquency, housing, and unemployment, which were to meet regularly in coming weeks and months and report back to the larger group, offering recommendations for action to be voted upon by the entire group. Priorities set through voting provided the basis for the overall BYNC agenda.

The council's office was established in Davis Square Park, which Meegan still directed. Alinsky and Meegan focused on trying to assure a number of concrete accomplishments during the first year, in part to establish the council's reputation for "getting things done for the neighborhood residents." An Infant Welfare Station was established in Davis Square Park, as was a free lunch program for children. Plans were made for a recreation center. The council gathered complaints about municipal services, forwarded them to municipal authorities, and followed up with pressure from local leaders. It sponsored job fairs, pushed for more national Youth Administration jobs, and pressured local businesses to hire neighborhood residents in exchange for supporting a "Buy Local" campaign (Horwitt 1989:84). A Neighborhood Youth Committee, including the police captain, the high school principal, parish priests, parents, and business representatives, was set up to resolve specific complaints and find ways to divert delinquent youth from the juvenile justice system. The council eventually went on to open up a credit union.

Alinsky made sure that early BYNC achievements were viewed as battles won, and that victories were celebrated and publicized, giving participants a sense of validation for their efforts and communicating a sense of the council's efficacy (losing battles were also analyzed for tactical mistakes). The relative militancy of BYNC tactics in attempting to

make City Hall more responsive to the community (e.g., holding sit-ins, using the media to publicize problems), as well as its efforts to become the primary source of allegiance and support for neighborhood residents, angered local ward leaders and City Hall. The mayor (Edward Kelly) tried unsuccessfully to ban BYNC meetings, by having the park district deny the use of Davis Square Park to BYNC (Horwitt 1989:148). Alinsky, in what would become a trademark, redefined that challenge to the organization as a threat to the community, and used it to increase support for BYNC.

Over time Alinsky withdrew from the leadership of BYNC, leaving it to Joseph Meegan and a handful of local priests who had come to play an active leadership role. Although BYNC continued to be an effective neighborhood reform organization, and was instrumental in a number of discrete campaigns to improve the quality of life in Back of the Yards, it failed to build bridges to other social reform and social service organizations. (Alinsky actually tried to drive the University of Chicago Settlement House out of the community.) The council also had relatively little influence on broader social processes and changes swirling around the neighborhood, including loss of jobs, due to decline in the local meat-packing industry, and growing racial conflict, as a growing African American population encroached on the eastern and southern borders of the neighborhood. By the mid-1950s BYNC actually had become an organizational vehicle for defending the neighborhood against that encroachment. Alinsky had been successful in getting the Back of the Yards community to internalize his tactics (Katznelson 1990). But he had been much less successful in communicating a vision of how newly acquired power might be used to create an authentic, inclusive community.

URBAN RENEWAL AND PUBLIC HOUSING

A DECADE OF MISTAKE

The return of prosperity and the emergence of an external enemy in 1940 encouraged once again the notion that "America was a classless, consensual society" (Patterson 1986:84). The belief that poverty would somehow disappear of its own accord reemerged in academic and popular literature, and the profound preoccupation with unemployment receded. At the same time the 1940s and 1950s were a period of major social and economic change; as in the past poor families and poor neighborhoods would bear the brunt of the dislocation resulting from such change. Even before World War II advances in transportation and change in production technology had begun contributing to the dispersal of factories from inner-city neighborhoods, reducing what remained of their interpenetration between work and neighborhood life. This trend acco-