
[keywords: community initiatives, networks, garbage can, social capital, community of organizations, substance abuse, coalitions, collaboration, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation]

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Abstract


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In recent years government and philanthropic funders have frequently required the formation of community-wide coalitions that bring all “stakeholders” to the table as a condition of funding. The reasons given for these requirements include the complexity of problems, turf wars, and economies of scale. Despite evidence that coalitions may be more trouble than they are worth, support for these approaches continues to grow. This dissertation is a case study of one such effort, the Fighting Back initiative in New Haven, Connecticut. Fighting Back was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in thirteen cities from 1989 to the present with the mandate to form community wide coalitions to build “comprehensive systems of prevention and treatment” to reduce the demand for drugs and alcohol. The data for this study include several years of participant observation, interviews with participants, and examination of organizational archives. Rather than asking “does Fighting Back work?” I use the case to ask: what kind of a thing is a community for carrying out an intervention like Fighting Back? Beginning from the assumption that a community is a community of organizations, and that Fighting Back was an organizational intervention, I show how many of the routine problems encountered by Fighting Back emerge from “ordinary” interactions between “ordinary” organizations rather than from individual or community pathology. Borrowing from theories of social networks, organizational garbage cans, and social capital, I identify three points of origin of
“community of organization effects.” First, organizations have organizational properties that interact to produce unanticipated system level effects. Second, attempts at community-wide collaboration link together “garbage can” processes that are a normal part of organizations to produce super community wide garbage cans. The negative outcomes associated with increased linkages suggests a “dark side” of the social capital that coalitions supposedly foster. Finally, I develop a new way of thinking about how programs are embedded in history. Rather than seeing history in terms of lessons learned, I argue that in communities of organizations history is present as the “ghosts of organizations past” – scraps of social organization shed by organizations as they grow and die. As playing fields, communities are not merely unlevel, they are bumpy, full of gullies, hillocks, and ruts in which organizational junk both guides and hobbles contemporary efforts. Together, these effects help to explain why implementing programs like **Fighting Back** is so difficult, despite good intentions and plentiful resources.
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It is the worst of plagues. It knows no season and no boundaries. No mosquito will be identified, no microbe isolated, no vaccine invented to end its reign. It is a pestilence with all the classic trappings of social disruption, suffering and death – and one terrible, defining difference: we invite it to kill and maim and diminish us. We know how it enters us, and we open the doors to it, lured by the short term pleasure it offers, lulled by the years or decades it incubates before erupting into host-killing maturity.

And because its vector is pleasure and its mask is time, we have not even recognized its horror fully enough to grant it a name worthy of its grisly power. How inadequate it is to call this peerless filler of graves and plunderer of nations by so pallid a name as substance abuse.

THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION (1992)

I  Prologue

Walk along almost any street in downtown New Haven and you can see the ghosts of organizations past. Decals in second story windows proclaim businesses long since defunct. On wide expanses of brick, high and out of the way, obscured from view until a recent nearby demolition, one can just barely discern the New England Cigar Company’s one time tenure at a site. On some buildings, long since given over to other uses, the name of the original organizational owners are carved in stone by the entrance or along the roof line. Many structures, like “the old Malley’s building,” are still referred to by the name of their former tenant, even by people born long after the tenant had closed its doors forever. Few of the structures that compose the city’s built environment remain occupied by the organizations that put them up. Even the neoclassical structure on the New Haven Green the frieze of which proclaims it to be the “Post Office” has been converted to other uses. Like a coral reef that consists of skeletal remains of its past inhabitant even while it teems with new life, the activity of the city takes place among the remains of organizations past.
Amidst the sea of changes, a few organizations are exactly where they have been for generations, but stand alone abandoned by once intimate neighbors and business partners long since moved away. On State Street, a few blocks from the Green, the Elk’s lodge is housed in a building that was once part of a row of storefronts but that now sits surrounded by empty lots on both sides. A few steps further on, St. Bonaventure Church, once a vibrant ethnic parish, is now an architectural island in the middle of a city-owned parking lot. And two more blocks further, the Pulaski Polish American club is nestled in between St. Stanislaus church (whose school closed a few years ago and has now been rented to the Board of Education as a public school annex) and a few tiny shops including one at which both staff and customers seem to speak only Polish. The club looks like it closed long ago, but every night its small red neon window light greets people of varying ages who still come back the old neighborhood.

New Haven is like that, a place rich in history that you can see, just by walking along the street. Each of the structures encountered on this brief tour of downtown is an artifact of the past, but it is not just a past of people. The structures which make up the shape of the city are the skeletons of bygone organizations. The buildings themselves, the lot lines separating one property from another, the location of the streets and utilities, the association of geographic areas with ethnic groups, and the presence or absence of particular kinds of establishments all point to the leftover workings of organizations that once were.

And most urban communities are like this: a constant accretion of the creations, excretions, and skeletons of organizations. Every new project has to make its way within the environment created by its predecessors.
Introduction

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is the largest health care philanthropy in the United States. In 1992 it made 533 grants totaling over $225 million (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1992). The projects that it supports range from clinical and policy research and professional education to outreach programs and community interventions. In the mid 1980s, partly in response to increasing alarm over the so-called “crack epidemic,” the Foundation’s Board instructed program officers to draw up plans for a public health approach to the problem of substance abuse. In early 1989 the Foundation announced a new program called FightingBack that would support community efforts to form broad coalitions, stretching across professional sectors and extending from the grassroots to the elites, to build working systems of prevention and treatment to reduce the demand for drugs and alcohol (Jellinek and Hearn 1991; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1989).

The hallmarks of the program were that it would be community wide, oriented toward the development of a comprehensive system of prevention, intervention, and treatment, and that it would focus on demand rather than supply reduction. Communities would be chosen on the basis of their ability to document their substance abuse problem and design a program that appeared feasible and likely to have a significant impact on demand. Grantees were to be given three million dollars over five years to implement their plans.

Several hundred communities submitted applications in September of 1989 and awards were announced in early 1990. Fourteen sites, including New Haven, Connecticut, were
selected for one or two year planning grants, with the understanding that they would be awarded five more years of funding upon successful completion of a community plan.

New Haven was a relatively compact (about 17 square miles) city of 130,000 people, about 30% of whom lived below the poverty level. The population was 54% white, 35% African American, and about 10% Hispanic (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991). The city’s long history of anti-poverty and urban renewal programs is both well documented in the literature (e.g., Dahl 1961; Fainstein and Fainstein 1986; Lowe 1967; Polsby 1963; Powledge 1970; Sviridoff 1994; Talbot 1967; Wolfinger 1974) and well remembered in local myth and legend.

As of this writing, Fighting Back has been a part of the New Haven community for almost ten years. During this period, the project’s status in the community has varied from highly visible “crisis of the month” to barely noticeable and mostly forgotten. At times, the funding opportunity seemed to be more trouble than it was worth, and on several occasions the grant was nearly lost. In the name of combating drug and alcohol abuse, dormant battles between different parts of the community were re-joined. In the name of community involvement, hopes were raised, but not fulfilled, in places that suffered the worst consequences of substance abuse and related problems. In the name of collaboration, partners were brought to the table only to be alienated by the processes they

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1 Although originally funded only through 1997, the Foundation later extended the program through the year 2000.

2 A note on terminology. Throughout this document I refer to “designers,” “partners,” “participants,” and “residents” to indicate general groups of actors involved with the project. Designers general refers to program officers at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and members of the National Advisory Committee who conceived of the Fighting Back program to begin with. Participants refers to individuals and organizations who were involved in the implementation of the program in New Haven. Partners was a term used within the program to talk about organizational participants. Residents refers to people who live in New Haven. In some cases these latter two categories overlap. In these cases I am usually referring to the role individuals are playing at the time of the event being described.
saw unfolding. As readers familiar with community initiatives like Fighting Back may be thinking, it was quite typical of such endeavors.

* * *

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation announced the Fighting Back program in early 1989, but the story of Fighting Back in New Haven begins several years earlier. Much of the “organizational terrain” in which Fighting Back had to operate was created during the legendary events of the Ford Foundation Gray Areas, War on Poverty, Model Cities and Urban Renewal Programs that shaped and reshaped New Haven from 1953 through the early 1970s (see Marris and Rein 1967; Moynihan 1970; Powledge 1970; Yates 1977). The legacies of these programs were an entrenched urban grants economy, a division of the city into neighborhoods dominated by monopolistic development corporations, and a pronounced skepticism in some circles about poverty research and pilot programs.

The project’s history can be divided into five periods as illustrated in Figure -1. Phase I, or the “pre-Fighting Back” era, stretches back to the mid-1980s when infant mortality, homelessness and substance abuse were much in the news in New Haven. The city had convened task forces or coalitions on each, including a drug task force announced by Mayor DiLietto in 1986 that recommended the creation of the position of “substance abuse coordinator” responsible for the development of programs to combat drugs and substance abuse. Responding to the RWJ request for proposals (RFP) and submitting the planning proposal in September, 1989 marks the end of this phase.
The second phase, “Planning,” covers the period from grant submission through Spring 1992 when the first outside Project Director was hired. The next phase of the project covers the remainder of the planning period up to the submission of the implementation grant that fall. This phase ends with a near meltdown of New Haven Fighting Back and so is labeled “Disorganization.” The fourth phase, “Re-organization,” begins with Barbara Geller’s taking over as Project Director in summer 1992, and the final phase corresponds to the winding down of the project and preparing for “institutionalization” in late 1996 and early 1997. With the unexpected extension of Fighting Back by the Foundation in 1997, this phase might better be called “Transition to Fighting Back II.” The events described in this study cover the period between 1989 and 1996.

The Fighting Back Idea

The RWJF Board had first expressed a desire to make a meaningful contribution to substance abuse in the late 1980s. “They were most interested in illegal drugs because of emergence of crack,” one program officer later reported, “but they also encouraged us to

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3 Fighting Back had been planned as a one-time, non-renewable grant. Partly this reflected its status as a program for testing an idea and partly it reflected the idea that the program was intended to change the system rather than create an ongoing organization. Still, in 1996 the Foundation decided to offer “phase II” funding to some of the sites. The decision about which sites to extend was made on the basis of judgements by National Program officials and outside consultants as to which sites had made significant progress and were likely to make more if they continued.
look at alcohol. [They] wanted to go after the demand side. Existing efforts were too
diffuse in communities. We were looking for the tipping point since the beginning, the

The program officers were assisted by a national advisory council composed of several
of the leading experts in the substance abuse field. At the end of a decade that had seen
renewed emphasis on supply reduction and interdiction, as well as an expansion of
prevention programs and “Just say no” campaigns, they wrote that “…the demand side has
not been given a fair test. Despite the proliferation of local demand-reduction programs
and activities, there has been little attempt to tie such endeavors together.” Because of
differences over defining the problem, there was, in most communities, “no overall strategy
for deploying the[ir] multiple resources in a focused, unified effort” (Jellinek and Hearn

The program was seen by the Foundation as an experiment in which the goal was “to
find out whether, by consolidating existing programs, activities, and other resources into a
single community-wide system of prevention, early identification, treatment, and after-care
services, a community can achieve substantial reductions in the use of illegal drugs and
alcohol” (Jellinek and Hearn 1991). “If we help communities to focus and collaborate, then
they’ll turn the corner” (National Advisory Council 1996). Sites could choose their own
strategies, but they had to have community-wide representation of “everyone who was
affected by or who had a role in contributing to solving the problem.”

**What is “demand reduction”**?

As a strategy in the “war on drugs” demand reduction can be, and in practice is, defined
both in terms of what it is and what it is not. Because of the political enthusiasm for border
patrols, drug busts, and sting operations supposedly targeting “drug kingpins,” demand reduction is often defined as anything other than the “cops, soldiers, and drug sniffing dogs” that make up supply reduction. Thus defined, its supporters are all on the same side lobbying the government to shift anti-drug resources from supply to demand reduction. The diversity within the demand reduction side, however, is revealed when we look at what it is. From this perspective demand reduction consists of prevention programs aimed at stopping non-users from ever trying drugs at all, early intervention programs that seek to keep casual users from becoming abusers, treatment programs that aim to help abusers get “clean” and into “recovery,” and aftercare services that assist people in recovery not to relapse. Each of these activities is carried out by different institutions, funded from different sources, and governed by different professions.

Figure I-2 illustrates this “system” as a state diagram. Demand reduction aims at reducing (the minus signs in the diagram) transitions from desirable to undesirable states (e.g., from non-user to casual user) and promoting (the plus signs) the transitions from undesirable to desirable states (e.g., seeking treatment) by sending messages (e.g., “this is your brain on drugs”) and changing structures in which individuals find themselves (e.g., making treatment more available, improving neighborhoods, or assisting recovering addicts to find jobs). By contrast, supply reduction implicitly assumes the transitions in this model are more susceptible to market forces (higher prices, decreased availability) than to changes in individuals’ propensities to make one transition or another.
While the most obvious public debate is between those who favor demand reduction and those who favor supply reduction, equally problematic divides exist within the demand reduction camp. Prevention programs are carried out primarily by educators, social workers, and psychologists who run programs targeted at specific age groups and populations. Early intervention includes drug testing in various institutional settings (e.g., schools, jails, sports, workplaces), closer monitoring by parents, and attempts to make “the system” engage in response to lower levels of use than require actual treatment. Under treatment we get everything from counseling to 12-step programs to detoxification and pharmaceutical maintenance. Finally, aftercare services include providing drug-free housing, employment assistance, education, ongoing support groups, and anything else that can assist persons in recovery to stay “on the wagon.” In each of these realms there are debates among practitioners about effectiveness and about whether the long term effectiveness of one approach is compromised by the lack of availability or poor implementation of others (as when treatment professionals say “we do our job and then social services just lets them backslide right into addiction again by not helping them get on their feet.”).

For a net reduction in demand, most of the transitions in Figure I-2 have to be facilitated or inhibited, as appropriate, but each of these is addressed by separate organizations that have no inherent reasons for even talking to one another, let alone
working together. This is the situation in which the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was advocating collaborative, community wide approaches to substance abuse.

**Seven Years and No Effects: Explanations**

If the Fighting Back idea were correct, program officials reasoned, there should be measurable difference in demand between communities that implemented the FB idea and those that did not. In order to test this hypothesis, a substantial evaluation study was commissioned by the Foundation.\(^4\) The evaluation had four components: an multiple wave survey of drug use in all Fighting Back sites and some thirty comparison sites; a social indicator (e.g., alcohol related accidents or drug related crimes) study of these same cities; an on-site management information system; and a “community studies” component that would place ethnographers in the field in many of the sites (Saxe et al. 1994).

The analysis of the survey data has shown no significant differences between Fighting Back sites and comparison communities in standard measures of drug and alcohol use (Saxe et al. 1996). Assuming, for the moment, that there are no purely methodological problems, there are several alternative interpretations of this apparent confirmation of the null hypothesis. First, we might conclude that Fighting Back is an ineffective community intervention and the wrong approach to demand reduction. Another possibility is that Fighting Back is the right idea, but that the program was too small or of insufficient duration to have an effect, or that we have looked too soon for that effect. A third alternative is that the idea was right, but that similar things were going on in communities all over the

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\(^4\) The original evaluation contractor was Pacific Institute of Research and Evaluation. Dissatisfaction with their work led to the Foundation’s cancellation of the contract in 1993. A team of researchers affiliated with the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and Brandeis University’s Heller School was assembled by Leonard Saxe in 1994.
country so that there really was no “control” group. Finally, there is the possibility that the Fighting Back “idea” was unevenly or poorly implemented in the different sites so that variation within the “treatment” sites overwhelmed any differences that might exist between them as a group and the control sites. Each of these interpretations is briefly examined in the following sections.

Community-Wide Prevention Initiatives May Not Be the Solution

Fighting Back was built around the ideas of “community-wide-ness” and prevention. Substance abuse was to be treated as a community rather than an individual problem, and to succeed the project would have to subject everyone in the community to “prevention messages.” The approach has much to recommend it, not least its populist underpinnings and continuity with “health crazes” that are a mainstay of temperance movements in American culture (Musto 1987). In addition, it allows professionals to consume resources and perform their duties without confronting individuals, the dirtiest and most intransigent part of the substance abuse business. As attractive as they might be ideologically, though, “community-wide” efforts to reduce substance abuse may, in fact, not be very effective approach to the problem.

Broad participation may involve parties whose participation is unnecessary or whose co-participation gives rise to instant conflict. In Newark, for example, progress appeared to be made only when organizers finally realized that to succeed they needed to mount a multilateral effort that kept certain feuding parties separated (Suazo-Garcia 1997). If broad participation may cost more than it is worth, the other side of the equation fares no better: the long term effectiveness of prevention remains unproved. As a problem substance abuse may not be enough like smoking or wearing seat-belts, two “public health” problems which
often serve as models for public awareness approaches to substance abuse prevention. The theory of the program involved a sort of fetishism of “community norms” without a clear understanding of where norms come from, how they affect substance abuse, and how they can be changed.

**Time and Scale**

Fighting Back gave communities of 100,000 to 250,000 in population three million dollars to spend over five years. While generous and longer than most grant supported programs, it may be that Fighting Back was simply too small of an effort given the size of the problem, and that this, combined with the premature attempt to measure effects, pre-ordained that none would be found. On the other hand, the size of the program may have been sufficient, but its duration may have been too short with respect to the time scale of the problem. This possibility was exacerbated by the fact that most sites, and New Haven in particular, took a long time to get their projects underway. The first year or more was spent discovering not what works to reduce demand, but what could be implemented at all as a program in their particular community.

**Diffusion: No Such Thing as Control Sites**

Numerous interventions and changes have taken place in American communities over the last ten years, many of which could affect outcomes Fighting Back was designed to address, and there is no way to isolate outcomes due to the program from those due to other factors. In addition, the very publicity surrounding Fighting Back meant that similar efforts were formally instigated in other communities around the country.\(^5\) The diffusion of

\(^5\) The U.S. Office of Substance Abuse Programs, for example, funded hundreds of similar, though smaller, efforts around the country during the same time period.
what might be called the “Fighting Back idea” through these and other programs may mean that few communities did not receive some “dose” of Fighting Back.6

**Random Dosages**

Perhaps the most vexing alternative interpretation of the null findings is that it may be due to the fact that the “dosage” of Fighting Back administered to each site differed, both in quantity and quality. By design, sites were given wide latitude to build, around some basic ideas, a system tailored to their unique circumstances, and so it is difficult to compare dosages across communities. Communities were encouraged to build on existing institutions, garner wide-spread involvement, and implement plans that included “a highly visible public awareness campaign,” “a multi-faceted prevention effort,” “well-defined program policies for the early identification, assessment, and initial referral into treatment,” and “a broad range of accessible options for treatment and relapse prevention” (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1989), but how and the degree to which these would be accomplished was left up to each site.

**What does “Did it work?” mean any way?**

The purpose of the evaluation of Fighting Back was to determine whether the “concept envisioned by RWJ” works, and whether and how it could be implemented in other communities. The null findings, and their multiple possible interpretations, suggest that this may simply be the wrong question. The random dosage explanation suggests that “did it work?” might be re-phrased as “what was IT in this site?” and then “did that IT work here?”

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6 This is not a claim that Fighting Back was the source of the idea that diffused through other communities (cf. Falco 1992).
But this is still not quite the right question. The sites had been given wide latitude to adapt Robert Wood Johnson’s model to their unique circumstances and a central component of the model involved re-organizing local social networks of organizations and individuals into a community-wide effort to combat substance abuse. This meant that Fighting Back would be working with complex systems of alliances, accommodations, and both historical and ongoing conflicts among and between professions, political factions, sectors of the non-profit economy, neighborhoods, and government agencies, not just persons “at risk” for substance abuse as in the traditional public health measures on which Fighting Back was based. An attempt to form coalitions acts on a network of networks, complex sets of relations between individuals and organizations, so that even if the interventions had been identical, the objects of intervention – communities rather than populations of generic persons “at risk” – differed radically from site to site, and each from the ideal type “community with a substance abuse problem.” This suggests that we need to focus on the “here” in the question “how did Fighting Back work HERE?”

New Haven Fighting Back as a case of what?

It can be argued that single case studies are disciplinarily more in the spirit of history than sociology. That, of course, is no crime, but criticism is sometimes evoked if one makes any attempt to imply that the “findings” of the single case study illuminate anything beyond itself. The basic methodological and epistemological defensibility of case studies has been dealt with elsewhere and need not be repeated here (e.g., Becker et al. 1961; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Ragin and Becker 1992; Weber 1949). At least since Znaniecki’s (1934) description of analytic induction, the intense study of particular cases has had a place in the
development of theories about empirical social reality. What is worth reviewing, though, is the process of connecting the “thing” here studied, and that of which it is taken to be a case.

At some point in the research process – often right at the start – the researcher implicitly or explicitly decides what he or she has a case a case of. This decision affects the literature consulted, the theories that are “applied,” and which features of the case that are deemed relevant or irrelevant. One of the difficulties in the literature on community initiatives is the unselfconscious manner in which empirical cases are taken to be examples of disparate phenomena. It would be easy, for example, to portray New Haven Fighting Back as a case of Fighting Back (in contrast to other sites), demand reduction (in contrast to other prevention programs), community-wide strategies (in contrast to more categorically specific programs), or substance abuse programs (in contrast to anti-smoking campaigns). Similarly, it could be an example of community coalitions, community health programs, or, more generically, community improvement work, programs addressing “the urban crisis,” or philanthropic community programs. The fact that New Haven Fighting Back could be assigned to any one of these categories suggests that it sits at the intersection of a large number of categories as illustrated in Figure I-3.
Introduction

Figure I-3. New Haven Fighting Back at the intersection of categories of theorizable entities.

This diagram can be thought of as a space of “things that go on in communities.” It is not to scale with respect to the number of such programs nor to the relative degree of overlap of the categories, and the horizontal and vertical dimensions don’t mean anything. Thus, New Haven Fighting Back is a case of Fighting Back nationally, and one of many approaches to demand reduction, some of which involve the formation of community coalitions. Some efforts at community coalitions are part of public health prevention programs and Fighting Back is one of these.

For each of these there is a literature and a circle of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners living for, and off of, them, segregated in different intellectual worlds despite the empirical overlap in the things they study.\(^7\) Both researchers and practitioners

\(^7\) The structural relations between these worlds might be elucidated through a network study of the degree of citation between these literatures.
frequently overlook the fact that what they are studying or trying to do is a variation on some more general phenomenon, and ignore valuable insights generated by other attempts to understand or accomplish essentially the same thing. This state of affairs also leads to the formation of intellectual enclaves in which practitioners re-invent ideas already developed elsewhere and wield them in an environment that is insulated from the critical questioning fairly sustained by the same ideas in other contexts.

One of the most striking examples of this is the way that organizational theory, which should play an important role in the literature on programs like Fighting Back, has been imported in a piecemeal fashion into the literature on community initiatives like Fighting Back. This is the first reason that I advocate thinking about Fighting Back in the most generic terms possible, namely, as an example of “doing things to communities with organizations.” The second reason follows from the first.

During the field work for this project and in subsequent encounters with social scientists - both “in person” and in the literature - I found myself frequently frustrated by the uncritical and even glib usage of terms such as coalition, partner, organization, cooperation, or community. The utility of these terms seemed to derive not from their being carefully defined and standing for well understood empirical phenomena, but from the fact that they referred to the referring of other members of the conversation. Thus, when New Haveners talked about coalitions they were talking about the thing that Robert Wood Johnson was talking about. When researchers talked about partner organizations, we were talking about the things that the sites listed as partners in their database reports. This was especially true when it came to talking about organizations and communities. Participants were fairly baffled by these two “things,” but they ranked as the most taken-for-granted of concepts in
discussions about Fighting Back. These conversations were reminiscent of public health discussions in the era before anatomy and the germ theory of disease. Although they were talked about as if they were mere names and places, organizations and communities have internal structural properties and histories which greatly affected how Fighting Back could be implemented.

This “mistake” is rather understandable, especially among those who take an essentially individualistic approach to social problems, as do service providers trained in medical and psychological disciplines and policy makers trained in the economic disciplines. To be sure, Fighting Back’s emphasis on “the community” was a real advance within the substance abuse fields (which focus almost exclusively on individual decisions to buy and use drugs), but the fetishization of interorganizational collaboration and community consensus generated a genuine naivete about what organizations and communities are. To put it bluntly, program participants, designers and evaluators alike had little appreciation of the underlying properties of the kind of thing they were attempting to do and the kind of thing they were attempting to do it to.

What are the alternatives? What wisdom might we find in sociology’s precincts to correct or supplement the way Fighting Back was being thought and talked about? My criticism of the naïve enthusiasm about community coalitions draw on three different lines of thought: the garbage can model of organizations, theories of social capital, and the study of social networks. Each of these, in its own way, is a critique of “strong” methodological individualism, and this is the first point of resonance with my “take” on Fighting Back. Even though participants, program designers, and the literature on community coalitions did mention organizations and communities, the former were often seen as inert atoms and the
latter as mere ahistorical vessels in which intervention took place. Missing from these conceptualizations is a sense that organizations come in different shapes and sizes and have numerous properties that affect how they relate to one another, and that communities are complex webs of past and present affiliations among organizations and between organizations and individuals.

The garbage can model of organizations can be thought of as the ultimate critique of the rational economistic model of organizations. Rather than entities which evaluate options and make decisions about resource allocation with an eye to the efficient attainment of goals, organizations are seen as entities with ambiguous and conflicting goals. Alternatives are seen as difficult to evaluate, and decisions as being made when solutions find problems at the prompting of forces external to the organization. By “normalizing” organizational chaos this perspective has the advantage of relieving us from searching out the pathology behind every SNAFU.

Social capital and social networks are both seen as structural resources that facilitate ongoing social life. As a critique of methodological individualism, theories of social capital and social networks show that phenomena such as communities, markets, social change, and social mobility cannot be adequately understood by examining only the properties of individual units. In most of the work in these areas, social capital and networks are treated as positive assets whose origins and importance to ongoing processes need to be explained. In this study, however, by looking at social capital and networks through the lens of garbage can theory, we will see what might be called the “dark side” of social connectedness.

As organizations come and go in urban communities there develops a heritage of community organization and community action. Each such effort involves organizing that
creates networks of relations between people, positions, organizations, and ideas – chunks of social organization – that do not go away when the program or organization that created them becomes defunct. This heritage accumulates in the community and it is typically more constraining than liberating. Thus, in contradiction to the assumptions implicit in the Fighting Back “idea” – that lack of connections was the primary problem and that more connection was the primary solution – I present a view of communities as places where interorganizational networks can contribute to conflict as well as conflict resolution, and where accumulated social capital can inhibit as well as facilitate progress toward “the good of the community.”

**Brief history of power in New Haven**

A central part of the argument of this study is that urban communities are things with a past and that the past is embedded in the material and organizational “reality” of the present. Old programs are not just memories or the sources of lessons about what works and what doesn’t. They leave behind fragments of social structure – old relations, social and cultural constructions – that form the environment in which new programs take place. With this in mind, it is useful to begin with a very brief survey of New Haven’s last few decades of community programs.

In his classic study of New Haven, Dahl characterizes the pattern of leadership that existed during the late 50s and early 60s as an “executive centered ‘grand coalition of coalitions’” (Dahl 1961, 184). Prior to 1953, he suggests, New Haven was ruled by “independent sovereignties that managed to avoid severe conflict by tacit agreements on spheres of influence” (190), but this gave way under a combination of “widespread
agreement on the need for redevelopment” (201) and the availability of large amounts of federal funds. The resulting “executive centered coalition” saw the city through several waves of urban renewal to the end of the 1960s, but stumbled in the face of declining federal funds, conflicts over community action programs, and a rising level of activism by minorities.

Yates characterized the era that followed as “street fighting pluralism,” which he defined as “a pattern of unstructured, multilateral conflict in which the many different combatants [fight] with one another in an almost infinite number of permutations and combinations” (1976, 44 cited in Fainstein and Fainstein 1986, 52). This pattern lasted only a few years before an arrangement that Fainstein et al. called “conserving clientelism” took over around 1975 (1986, 55). Under this arrangement federal funds for the inner city (community development block grant or CDBG) were doled out by the Board of Aldermen to neighborhood organizations and agencies connected with neighborhood development corporations. These neighborhood groups were the legacy of Community Progress Incorporated (CPI), the city’s anti-poverty agency under the War on Poverty. As these funds shrank from 1975 on, allocations were reduced across the board with legislative involvement in shifting funds around in response to pressures from various neighborhood level constituencies (Fainstein and Fainstein 1986, 71).

New Haven at end of 1980s

The picture described above is just the barest sketch of the “system” that Fighting Back was intended to change. The city as a whole was divided into thirty aldermanic wards, and the dominant dynamic of city government was the conflict between the mayor, and his
policy agenda for the city as a whole, and the aldermen, with agendas centered on their individual neighborhoods. Pulled between them were the many city departments and agencies that carry out policies. These agencies are, to differing degrees, answerable to both the mayor and the aldermen as well as boards of civilian commissioners. Finally, there are hundreds of human service organizations, many affiliated with major community institutions (such as hospitals or Yale University) or one of several community development corporations that have dominated neighborhood politics since the end of the 1960s.

In sum, the New Haven into which Fighting Back was introduced did not have a coherent ruling elite. Partial blocking coalitions abounded, but no one could either stop or steer the entire show. Two of the most common descriptions of the community were “fragmentation” and “lack of coordination,” but it would be a mistake to call it unorganized. A very rich system of interorganizational and interpersonal relations was a central feature of the “community” in which a coalition against substance abuse was to be built. “System change” in this context was a massive task not of organization, but of RE-organization.

The Nature of This Study

Although this study is a component in a large, multi-city, multi-method analysis of the national program of which New Haven Fighting Back is part, the study itself is a single case study. It is intended as an exercise in descriptive morphology and hypothesis generation rather than hypothesis testing. Although it is customary to “rescue” such case studies by the addition of a comparison case or the construction of a contrived contest between two theoretical perspectives one of which the case bears out and the other which it does not, no such move will be made here. This project is the bounded examination of one case from
which a number of ideas about communities and community initiatives emerge. The further elaboration and “testing” of these ideas is relegated to follow up projects which I may or may not carry out.

While offering caveats, I should also add that I am not particularly interested in communities or community based organizations or social movement organizations, and, while as concerned as anyone about the harm inflicted by substance abuse and the possibilities for prevention and treatment, I am not here in a position to deal with that problem directly. The empirical case for this study was selected opportunistically - someone was willing to fund it and I had the background that was appropriate for carrying it out. The present study amounts to “making the most of” that opportunity. The theoretical direction it took emerged from my dissatisfaction with the ways that I saw participants, experts, and researchers conceptualizing Fighting Back and Fighting Back communities, and the gut level conviction that organizational theory must have something enlightening to say to these folks. In the middle of the process, the standard I informally set for myself was that I would try to borrow ideas from the sociology of organizations that would shed light on events that unfolded as a part of Fighting Back such that participants and researchers both would have a better understanding of what really went on. This did not seem to me to be happening as I watched researchers count organizations and initiatives, listened to consultants talk about mission statements, morale, and political will, and heard participants complain about specific individuals who were the cause of all of New Haven’s problems.

My criticism of the way organizations were conceptualized is basically that they tended to be taken for granted. They are certainly included in the ranks of actors and their
powerful role is readily acknowledged. The problem is that they tend to be reified as units. Like the physicist’s “ideal gas” which consists of massless, infinitesimal, perfectly elastic spheres (otherwise the mathematics is too complicated), we zoom too easily back and forth across levels, treating organizations as just another atomistic actor, ignoring their internal structures and the very peculiar ways that they interact with their surroundings including other organizations. The initial field work interpretation that led to this perspective was the simple idea that organizations are rather ornery things to work with. Like big ships in a harbor, they are difficult to maneuver, even if one is at the helm. They are not very good at communicating or at surveying their environment. The assumptions we make about them when we hope that they will all “get along” often defy sociological common sense. The problem is that we too easily treat getting organizations to collaborate as being akin to talking wealthy people into joining the United Way campaign. Organizations are much more amorphous than individuals, and the effects of organizations bumping into one another are not always easy to foresee.

Amidst all of this, funders like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation often take program failure as an indication of either community pathology (it does not have its act together) or the lack of leadership on the part of the people entrusted with implementing the program. Local participants, at least in the New Haven case, were wont to explain the problems that the project experienced by saying that “everything in New Haven was political.” Aside from being essentially non-sociological, or at least non-structural, all of these explanations smuggle into the picture the assumption that the task of setting up an interorganizational coalition for the purpose of system-wide reform is something that can be expected to work in the first place, as long as nothing goes wrong.
Introduction

Questioning such assumptions is a standard trick of the trade in sociology (compare, for example, Emile Durkheim’s discussion of crime as normal (Durkheim 1964 (1938,1895)) or Christopher Stone’s examination of corporate social responsibility (Stone 1975)). Here it amounts to cataloging what we assume to be normal (and necessary for collaboration to succeed) about potential collaborators (organizations) and arenas for collaboration (communities), and then demonstrating that real organizations and communities often lack these characteristics and then examining the implications of such deficits.

What this amounts to is arguing for a multi-layer view of the causes of problems encountered in attempts to repair or revive communities using organizations. The effects described in this study can be located at the bottom of a hierarchy of “causes” or “explanations” for such problems. I call them “generic organizational effects” to emphasize that they derive from the way organizations are structurally, quite apart from their substantive content (cf., Simmel 1971 (1908)). These effects originate in the form of sociational “organization” and “interorganizational relations.” Next come generic institutional effects. Here we have organizations being “normal” political actors, reacting to (or creating new) incentive structures and deciding how much they want to act in their own or the community’s interest. Even if these two sources of influence do not give rise to problems, there is always the possibility that participants will “play dirty.” This level is labeled “corruption, guile, and scheming” in Figure I-4. After this we have idiosyncratic “personal” effects – bad leaders, lack of talent or management skills, resource deficits and so on. Finally, time and chance, which “happeneth to them all.”

It could be argued that “fate, time, and chance” should go at the other end of the hierarchy since it happens to them all and is out of anyone’s control. Here, however, I am emphasizing the utterly individualistic nature of fate. One may wake up destined to have a good day, but having the good day can depend completely on effects that have origins lower down in the hierarchy.

8
Introduction

The vertical dimension in this diagram might be labeled “trumping” or “leverage.” As we move down the hierarchy, the effects produced at each level are overwhelmed by those below. One might, for example, identify bad management as a feature of a failed program and suggest that management training for program staff would improve outcomes. If, however, these management practices take place in an atmosphere of corruption and scheming, it may be entirely irrelevant whether they are good ones or not. In other words, corruption trumps good management. In the typical urban community improvement effort there are such ample supplies of potential explanations at the levels of individuals, corruption, and institutions, that generic organizational effects can be all but invisible “to the unaided eye.” The utility of examining programs like Fighting Back at this level lies in seeing the vertical dimension in the diagram in terms of “leverage.” Since lower level effects can overwhelm higher ones, small changes at, or interventions based on an understanding of, these lower level effects may be more efficacious than large investments made at higher levels which are then washed over by lower level effects left unattended.
Plan of manuscript

Chapter II tells the story of New Haven Fighting Back from the receipt of the Request for Proposals in 1989 through the planning and implementation process. Most of the “action” happens during the first three or four years and the narrative becomes less of a month by month chronicle and more of a general description of the shape of the initiative toward the end of the chapter. The next three chapters present the three main themes of the study: communities of organizations, organizations as units of intervention, and networks of organizations.

Central to all three chapters is the idea that for talking about community initiatives like Fighting Back, “community” must be conceptualized as a community of organizations rather than as of people, interests, sentiments, etc. All three chapters attempt to counter “conventional” wisdom about community initiatives with insights derived from examining these initiatives from a distinctly organizational perspective. Chapter III looks at what kind of a thing a community as a setting for initiatives like Fighting Back? The answer to this question is built up around the insight that organizations do not “go away” when they die, but rather leave organizational debris behind in the community. Chapter IV considers the question: what kind of a thing is an organization for carrying out a project like Fighting Back based on interorganizational collaboration? The short answer is that organizations qua organizations fall far short of the ideal collaborator on which we often base the designs of community interventions. Finally, Chapter V applies the “garbage can” model of James March and his colleagues to communities of organizations, arguing that because organizations are carriers of problems and solutions rather than sources of resources and expertise, connecting them together can easily amount to elicit the latent “garbage can-ness”
of a community of organizations as easily as it can create “an effective comprehensive system of prevention and treatment.”
II
New Haven Fighting Back

Part I, Spring 1989: Opportunity

There were few reasons for optimism in New Haven at the end of the 1980s. Each morning the New Haven Register announced the gloomy news from doorsteps and vending machines: homelessness, infant mortality, poverty, crime, drugs, AIDS, budget cuts, reductions in city services. Bulletins of worsening problems seemed always to be accompanied by announcements of programs being cut. Extreme measures began to sound reasonable; in May 1989 a group of clergymen appealed in vain to the governor to send the National Guard into New Haven (Associated Press 1989). Even the cohesion of the long ruling democratic machine was in doubt. The once “model city” seemed to some residents to be in the last stages of abandonment. They frequently commented on the fact that Yale University and the poorest of the poor were the only ones who did not have the option of leaving New Haven, and there was even unfounded talk that the University was considering it.

New Haven, of course, was not unique. In cities around the country, policy neglect and demographic shifts were catching up with one another. As more and more life shifted away
from central cities toward malls, industrial parks, suburbs, and exurbs, inner-city
neighborhoods slipped out of sight and out of mind for most Americans. It took extremely
high levels of homelessness, drug related violence, and public health threats like AIDS to
transform the urban from something to flee from back into something meriting serious
policy attention. Between the middle and the end of the decade, violence associated with
the crack “epidemic,” belated alarm about AIDS, and lobbying by prevention and treatment
professions to get a larger share of “war on drugs” resources, combined to draw our
collective attention back to the city and to the nexus of substance abuse and the decline of
urban America. The association of multiple urban problems with drugs provided an
moment of opportunity for supporters of alternatives to interdiction as the dominant
approach being used to combat drugs.

Wanted: Communities Ready to “Take Back” Their Streets and Neighborhoods

These conditions provided the national context in which the Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation (RWJF) came up with the Fighting Back program, and the local context in which
senior staff at the APT Foundation, New Haven’s largest treatment provider and a
nationally recognized leader in substance abuse research, read the “Request for Proposals
for Community-Wide Drug And Alcohol Initiative” in the spring of 1989.

The APT Foundation is an organization caught between two worlds. The Howard
Avenue location of its main office is dictated by parking availability and proximity to the
Yale-New Haven medical complex where many of its professional staff spend part of their
time. Its location, on the edge of one of New Haven’s “worst” neighborhoods, is
propitious because many of its clients and research subjects are drawn from among the
city’s poor, but it makes it a gritty place to work. It is also a good metaphor for the political
New Haven Fighting Back

bind APT found itself in: intertwined with agencies on the front lines such as community health centers, it draws its staff, funding, and prestige from affiliation with an elite research institution. The difficulties in bridging these worlds would be New Haven Fighting Back’s most persistent challenge.

Senior staff members at APT spent a long time that spring reading over “that ambiguous Request for Proposals (RFP),” trying to figure out just what RWJF wanted and who in New Haven should apply for it (Interview 1996). They were accustomed to going after, and getting, large grants from funders like Robert Wood Johnson, but Fighting Back was different. The Foundation used terms like “community-wide,” “collaboration,” “participation,” and “involvement of those most affected by the problem” making Fighting Back sound more like a community organization than a substance abuse program.

Recounting the process several years later, a senior executive APT said that the staff felt that Fighting Back was an chance for the city to make drugs come to the forefront as an issue, and that they were willing to work hard to help New Haven seize the opportunity, but that they knew that the program would have to be “owned” by the city, not them. And so they took the RFP to City Hall (Interview 1996).

Their contact there was Charles Williams, the city’s Substance Abuse Coordinator, a recently created position within the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in the Human Resources Administration (HRA). His responsibilities included “coordination of all drug and substance abuse prevention and treatment activities” and “identification of potential funding sources” (NH1246). Williams had worked in the substance abuse and

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9 These numbers refer to document identifiers used in the project’s filing system. Identifiers beginning with “NH” are correspondence, publications, and other material. Identifiers beginning with CTF indicate minutes of Citizens Task Force Meetings. All such documents are listed in the bibliography of sources at the end of this document.
counseling fields in New Haven for a decade before taking this position and so both knew and was known by the APT staff. He agreed that Fighting Back seemed custom-designed for New Haven. Relative to similar cities, New Haven was rich in services, but poor in coordination. The challenge, they all agreed, would be to get “buy-in” from the aldermen, department heads, businesses and other local institutions. All three felt that this would be easier to accomplish from within city government than from a community organization.

New Haven Gives Good Proposal, “But Is That Enough To Win?”

They got started right away. Williams arranged for the Mayor to appoint a Citizen’s Task Force (CTF) in May. It would be co-chaired by Barbara Gatison, a Vice President at Southern New England Telephone (SNET), and Charles Riordan, a psychiatrist and veteran in the substance abuse field in New Haven, who was an administrator at the Hospital of Saint Raphael (HSR), the city’s “other” hospital10 (Interview 1990). In early summer Williams and Liss attended an applicants’ meeting in Nashville along with representatives from some three hundred other cities. After listening to the Foundation’s description of the program, they were even more convinced than before that the application would have to come from the city (Interview 1995). APT’s close ties to the University and the perception that it was not “of the community” made it an unlikely convener of the “community-wide” participation that RWJ was calling for, and trying to recruit another community organization to be convener might have created a political free-for-all that could shut APT out of the project altogether. As we will see later, such considerations of interorganizational “politics” dominated the process from this point forward.

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10 Yale-New Haven Hospital was bigger, and was what people in the Yale-downtown (City Hall) corridor meant when they just said “the hospital.”
The city did not have the resources to undertake the necessary grant writing effort and so most of the work was done by APT. Speaking six years later, one participant noted that “[APT had] hoped that the city would do it, but the city wasn’t together at that point” (Interview 1995). “The ideas,” one of the principals said, “came from Riordan, Williams, Kleber (founder of APT and member of the Fighting Back National Advisory Board) and APT” (Interview 1990). Another added that “the city was in chaos at the time…. they just were not a hotbed of ideas” (Interview 1990). In addition to ideas, APT had skilled staff who were used to last minute crunches and late nights, and they were the ones who worked with Williams over the next few months to write the proposal. Their approach to “getting things done,” understandably did not include a lot of consultation with everyone who had just left it to them, and so members of the Task Force got to see the $200,000 two year planning grant proposal just one week before it was submitted in September.

Readers scored the New Haven proposal 91 and 95 out of 100. Both worried that it was too “top down,” but one rated it “excellent,” calling it “a coordinated strategy between the City of New Haven and the APT Foundation…,” and the other wrote that it was “probably one of the best two proposals we saw,” even though it was not “particularly bold, future directed, not even that innovative, just ‘solid and comprehensive’” (NH1230). He then added “but is that enough to win?”

The ambiguity of the question – it could refer to getting the grant or to having an impact on substance abuse – captures the essence of the process at this point. Writing a proposal that would speak to grant reviewers at RWJ was something APT was good at. Organizing a community coalition was not. Ostensibly, the proposal was a blueprint for what a community would do to reduce demand, but over the next several years it would
become obvious that organizing to win a grant and organizing to win a “war” were processes with little in common. It was not unreasonable for RWJ to assume that the one led naturally to the other, but in practice, keeping the funder happy, surviving locally, and actually getting something done easily became highly independent, even contradictory, organizational goals.

**Part II, September 1989 through June 1991: Planning**

Shortly after the grant was submitted the thirty seven member Citizens Task Force (CTF) met formally for the first time. Their first order of business was to prepare for a site visit scheduled for November 1. The National Advisory Committee had sent New Haven a list of questions on issues such as minority representation, the absence of prevention in the proposal, the role of schools, the participation of Yale, and the anticipated impact of the change in mayoral administrations (CTF891031). In September, John Daniels, a state legislator, had defeated Mayor DiLieto’s chosen successor, John DeStefano, in the Democratic primary. The large registration advantage held by Democrats meant that Daniels would almost certainly become the city’s first African American mayor in November.

The Task Force drafted responses to each question. They were aware that minority representation was lacking, but, the minutes note, M. Abdul-Salaam and E. Girardeau (both African Americans) would attend the site visit meeting “representing … additional minority involvement” (CTF891031; CTF891115). Daniels wrote a letter expressing his enthusiastic support for the project, and Yale participation was addressed in a letter cataloging the university’s research and clinical programs related to substance abuse. The practice of
responding to criticism with tokenism and assurances that what they were already doing answered National Program Office (NPO) concerns became a common practice for New Haven Fighting Back.

A constant theme during the actual site visit was the question of whether New Haven would ever “come together.” One visitor noted that “there was a general feeling by the group that they were willing,” and he paraphrased an APT official as saying “the aldermen will support the project, and the resources provided by the Fighting Back moneys will bring people together.” Partly on the basis of this belief in the power of funding, Fighting Back was built over the next few years on existing networks of good relationships, and efforts to repair poor, or build new, relationships were constantly deferred. The imperatives of the moment dictated that very little in the way of community organizing was carried out in the name of New Haven Fighting Back. As long as “getting the grant” remained the primary goal, New Haven could get away without building new relationships.

Winter 1990: Getting Organized

John Daniels took office on January 1, 1990. As Fighting Back got underway, the new Mayor struggled to transform an electoral coalition into a governing coalition.11 Around City Hall, and throughout the city, people scrambled to be in position to benefit from the new arrangements, but the deficit left by Daniels’ predecessor required cutbacks and hiring freezes so few spoils were available from the change in administrations. The resultant lack of slack put individuals and organizations throughout the community in a confrontational mood all that winter and spring.

11 By most accounts, this effort ultimately failed. See Johnston and Holt (1994).
When the NPO had asked about the effects of change in administrations, New Haven Fighting Back responded in policy terms, assuring the Foundation that Fighting Back resonated with Daniels’ plans. Absent was any anticipation of the community politics that would be generated by the change. No one foresaw that Fighting Back would be trying to organize itself in the midst of clouds of organizational debris stirred up by the transfer of power. In Chapter III we will examine this property of communities in detail. For now, it suffices to point out that from the start it was less alcohol and illegal drugs that posed the greatest challenge to New Haven Fighting Back, than the unraveling and rearranging of New Haven’s organizational past.

Even before the grants were announced, initiatives in New Haven that might be included in Fighting Back began to scramble for inclusion. The Special Commission for Infant Health and APT had proposed forming a “Consortium for Substance Abusing Women and their Children,” and the mayor said he wanted to implement some kind of neighborhood policing. Both would later become central components of Fighting Back, but their origins were outside the project, illustrating another feature we’ll examine in more detail later: each organization that “joined” Fighting Back brought with it “solutions” that Fighting Back might incorporate. For a price.

In early February, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation did announce that New Haven was one of fourteen communities that had won Fighting Back planning grants.12 In less than a year, “Fighting Back” had gone from something a few officials at APT “thought New Haven should do” to $200,000 of funding and a commitment to involve the

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12 The others were: Little Rock, Arkansas; Santa Barbara, Vallejo, and Oakland, California; Charlotte, North Carolina; Columbia, South Carolina; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Worcester, Massachusetts; Newark, New Jersey; Kansas City, Missouri; San Antonio, Texas; Washington, D.C.; and North West New Mexico.
community in two years of planning and five years of implementation. Most such grants go to a particular agency or group of agencies that are charged with delivering specific services to the community. FightingBack, though, was a grant to a community via a “delegate” agency, and the charge was to change the way a system of organizations functioned.

Throughout the rest of this narrative and the analysis that follows, we will see that before we can evaluate the soundness of the FightingBack idea or New Haven’s implementation of it, we need to understand more about using organizations to do things to communities.

The Continuum of Care

At the center of the charge to change the system was the idea of the “continuum of care.” In the literature this phrase refers to two distinct concepts. The first is a complete range of programs and services structured around the “career” stages a client passes through sequentially (e.g., identification and referral, detoxification, treatment, aftercare), and multiple services one might require simultaneously (e.g., transportation, childcare, housing assistance, protection from an abusive spouse). The second meaning of continuum of care is that different kinds and intensities of services should be available so that they can be efficiently matched to patient needs (a continuum of care for child psychiatric services, for example, might include outpatient clinic, intensive case management, home-based treatment services, partial hospitalization, therapeutic group home, residential treatment facility, and hospital treatment).

The APT Foundation had been championing the continuum of care idea even before FightingBack. One motivation behind these efforts was their experience of “losing” clients who dropped out of treatment because of housing, childcare or employment problems or seeing people in recovery relapse because of insufficient support services available to help
them get their lives back on track after getting clean (see Johnston, Rowe and Swift 1993). When *Fighting Back* came along, the rhetorical meaning of continuum of care expanded to include public awareness, prevention, early intervention. This shift, which effectively changed the object of care from individuals to the community as a whole, seems to have gone unremarked, though its implications continued to be felt throughout the history of the program. While RWJ approved of this shift, most individual organizations continued to be more concerned with client level coordination.

During the grant funded period, the “continuum of care” – public awareness, prevention, early intervention, treatment, relapse prevention – provided a guiding metaphor for New Haven *Fighting Back*, but more work seems to have gone into defining the continuum, constructing charts, and compiling lists of service providers than to developing actual coordinating practices. To be sure, some progress was made connecting treatment agencies to other social services, but nothing resembling a seamless, comprehensive system of care ever emerged.

**Involvement, Representation, Participation, and Just Getting Things Done**

Alongside the continuum of care was a second structural mandate: broad community involvement. RWJ had specified that the program should be “community-wide” and involve “those most affected by the problem.” Early criticism of New Haven, as has been pointed out, was that the process appeared too “top down.” Within the Task Force, many members felt that APT, with its treatment orientation, was dominating the project. Within New Haven there was a feeling that a small clique of social service organizations were monopolizing resources and shutting out neighborhood based organizations. These beliefs and others like them combined to create “the community involvement issue,” an
examination of which reveals a tendency to elide the differences between involvement, participation, representation, and action.

At the March meeting Task Force “community involvement” was the main topic of discussion:

...[the] necessity of having strong representation from the community and community-based organizations on the four committees was made very clear. The perception of the community must be that the ‘Fighting Back’ Initiative is all inclusive and crosses all races, genders and economic backgrounds (CTF900320).

The “community issue” was essentially a euphemism for the lack of race and class diversity and absence of specific institutions - such as the school system or the community development corporations in the target neighborhoods - from active participation in Fighting Back. These issues manifested themselves in debate and jockeying over Task Force membership, and conversations about its composition revealed disagreements about what constituted broad involvement, why it was desirable, and how to achieve it. For some, it had to do with sectoral representation: “...prevention, treatment, enforcement out of balance (need more education)...” (Interview 1990); “one third prevention, one quarter treatment, one twentieth law enforcement ... out of balance, not sure how, but it is not right” (Interview 1990). For others it was a question of under-represented constituencies: “minority members [are] concerned with proposals being culturally sensitive” (Interview 1991), and for still others it was needed skills and insights: “... not enough non-professionals, need more citizens, more media people” (Interview 1990); “too few management experts, too little structure and direction” (Interview 1990); “need more business involvement for organizational skills... .” (Interview 1990); “four persons in recovery...about right, though more powerful link to AA would be useful ... ” (Interview
1990); “no idea how many recovering individuals on task force, but not enough…” (Interview 1990). These comments suggest that in the absence of guidelines from RWJ on why broad involvement mattered or what the appropriate dimensions of breadth were - something about which RWJ was probably as muddled as was New Haven - New Haveners made up their own. The result was a set of words and phrases everyone subscribed to without any agreement on their definition or how to achieve them. Some participants were motivated by participative ideals, some by utilitarian fantasies of efficient systems, and others by the pragmatics of giving the funder what it wanted.

Other issues gave rise to factionalism within the Task Force too. Most of the day-to-day work of the project was still being carried out at APT, and other organizations began to feel excluded the direction of the project. When asked about factions in 1990 one of the co-chairs said, “Yes. One is APT. [The] issue [is] they drive agenda [and the question] is how rest of task force makes itself felt” (Interview 1990). Participants felt APT had disproportionate influence on the Task Force - “sometimes [we] have to keep APT down” (Interview 1990) - and that race was an issue as well: “[o]ther treatment providers want APT to be more responsive to minorities” (Interview 1990). As the largest treatment provider and the one most closely affiliated with Yale and research (“...APT is just research...” was a common, if incorrect, perception), APT was a natural target for resentment, but much of the factionalism seemed rooted in the feeling that APT’s technical superiority went hand in hand with its lack of connection with “the community.”

The issues of APT’s role vis à vis other agencies and of Task Force and committee membership both reflected a continuing tension in Fighting Back about what it meant to be a
“community-wide” initiative. Those for whom the top priority was “getting something done” (e.g., the grant written) were always at odds with those who saw wide participation as the first order of business. Among the latter, “political realists” were concerned about legitimacy so that whatever plan they came up with would have a chance politically. For idealistic reformers it was a matter of getting input from, and a piece of the pie for, suspects other than the usual ones. We will see in a later chapter that as the number of participants at the table increased with each passing month, so did the number of ideas on the table.

Eventually, the representation and involvement issue and the question of action converged as Fighting Back’s agenda was patched together out of the multiple agendas brought to the table.

“To get the money we need to pull together”

The designers of Fighting Back had allotted two years for communities to work out some of these differences. This gave New Haveners time to become more aware of and deal with latent conflicts within the community, but the imperative of eventually producing an implementation proposal allowed (or motivated) them to defer resolving them. It was typical, for example, when, in the middle of a heated discussions about membership, someone pointed out that to get the money, they would have to show that they could “pull the community together” and prepare “a comprehensive and integrated plan” thereby shutting off an important discussion that might have actually led to pulling the community together (CTF900320). This obvious point amounted to saying “we can’t keep talking about this because it will look like all we do is squabble among ourselves.” Actively working out their differences would highlight their disunity and endanger their receiving the grant. As things went on there was an increasing tendency to concentrate not on what would work to
reduce substance abuse in New Haven, but rather, (a) what could be set up in New Haven that (b) would help to win the implementation grant. As one participant said later that year:

Everyone wants to know what does RWJ want to see and we will give it to them, but I want to answer the question “how is this going to work?” There is a lot of discussion with too much [emphasis] on what RWJ wants to see [and] not what New Haven needs (Interview 1991).

This tendency was even encouraged by feedback from RWJ. At a Technical Assistance Workshop in July the NPO presented a paper titled “Observations from Site Visits to all the Funded Cities.” They noted that programs were too staff driven, lacked law enforcement involvement, allowed alcohol to take a back seat to other drugs, gave insufficient prominence to school based programs, and lacked public health and medical involvement. New Haven was not unique. RWJ officials could see what was happening in the sites, but when they articulated their observations, the sites heard them as criticisms of their efforts to date. What New Haven needed was ideas on how to build a coalition, but even though that was how the Foundation intended its observations, what New Haven heard was a checklist of new grant requirements.

**The New Yorker Article**

There was another reminder of the need for a community focus in September when a two part article chronicling the lives of a young boy, Terry, and his mother, Angelica, who lived in Newhallville, one of Fighting Back’s target neighborhoods, appeared the New Yorker (Finnegan 1990a; Finnegan 1990b). The article painted a bleak picture of the neighborhood and the city as a whole, suggesting that conditions in New Haven had deteriorated to the point that there was little that could be done. The article proved divisive in New Haven as people argued over whether it portrayed the community accurately or just amounted to
hitting them when they were down. One city official and CTF member said “I thought that the New Yorker article was accurate and helped educate people,” but others felt that it undermined all their efforts to date (Interview 1990).

William Finnegan, author of the article, gave two talks at Yale in October. He had written the article, he said, to look at race in America after having finished research for a book on apartheid in South Africa. He had selected New Haven “as typical northeastern American City” with a declining industrial sector, middle class flight to the suburbs, and a shrinking tax base (NH1401). His main point was that the root cause of the problem was “collapse of opportunity” not the “collapse of respect for authority” trumpeted by some social critics (Finnegan 1997).

In the wake of the New Yorker “fiasco,” the National Program Office challenged New Haven to think of what the article would look like after Fighting Back. Their 1992 renewal application included a section titled “How Fighting Back Would Help Terry” in which they juxtaposed quotes from the article with descriptions of how Fighting Back would make a difference. These paragraphs presented Fighting Back as an almost eerie community implementation of the continuum of care where “members of the community become responsive to teenagers like Terry and adults like Angelica and invite them into the continuum of care” (NH1013). Fighting Back is essentially envisioned as an active and efficient social service and surveillance network. That Finnegan’s argument about “root causes” was not reflected in this section of the proposal is not surprising since these professionals and grant-seekers were not in the root cause business. Several voices on the Task Force continued to argue that the only way to reduce demand was to attack root causes, but RWJ had made its position clear early on when it suggested in the RFP that
work on such problems should be supported by other sources (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1989) and that Fighting Back was about changing the system of care that responded to substance abuse problems. With Robert Wood Johnson’s hand on the purse strings and service-providing professionals in charge of the project, the article proved to be a “crisis of the month” that changed only how people talked (temporarily), but not how they acted.

Out of the Committee Room and Into the Community

If Fighting Back was going to be “community wide,” planners would, at some point, have to take it “to the community.” The first of several planned town meetings was held in mid-November at the Conte Career Education Center, in Wooster Square. Bilingual posters announced the meeting and several city officials, including Human Resources Administrator Audrey Rowe, participated. Written records suggest that the Task Force was nervous about “going public.” The proposed agenda included a welcome from the Mayor, “History and Purpose of Fighting Back Initiative,” and “[b]rief presentations [by] neighborhood groups” (emphasis in original). Speakers addressed topics such as youth, after school activities, resources, and funding and “input” was solicited. Explicit mention of substance abuse was conspicuously absent from the minutes of the meeting. Most Task Force members did not attend the meeting, but viewed a video of “several speakers and the summation of the speakers of the event by Audrey Rowe” (CTF911115). CTF members and staff were relieved that the town meeting had gone well. After months of tension about “the community” they were heartened by an evening of resident testimony and testimonials (CTF901115). Their descriptions of the meeting provide some insight into their concerns about community involvement:
There was a good feeling. All sorts of people came out. People were not there to complain but to contribute. [The issue is] not that we weren’t doing enough, but that community wants to take ownership.... (Interview 1990)

The successful town meeting was encouraging, but they knew they had not really solved the community problem. As one participant told PIRE\textsuperscript{13} interviewers: “[We’re] failing at it now” (Interview 1990). In particular, the community development corporations – the most well established and recognized community based organizations in New Haven – in each of the target neighborhoods continued to want nothing to do with Fighting Back:

The neighborhood corporations chose not to participate. They don’t want to be involved in planning. [They just want dollars to do what they want. [They see this as another fad that will come and go, while they just do what they have been doing since the 60s. ... [Having] the neighborhood corporations in a feuding mode with staff, [has] been an overshadow that has to be dealt with (Interview 1990).

At the National Fighting Back Annual Meeting in December, New Haven described the situation in these terms: “... also requires the support of the community based organizations as they jockey for territorial control and the ability to continue to control the flow of funds and influence into their neighborhoods” (NH1504). The doubts raised by these ongoing difficulties were somewhat assuaged by Task Force Co-Chair Gatison at the December CTF meeting when she reported that on the basis of what she had heard at the Annual Meeting, the other communities “are pretty much in the same place,” and that “common issues throughout are community awareness, business partnership, turf issues, denial issues, that is, political climate, racism, not my problem, etc.” (CTF901220). The “Fighting Back idea” was proving difficult to translate into practice in all of the sites, so New Haven did not need to be overly concerned with how things had been going up to this point.

\textsuperscript{13} The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation was the original contractor for the evaluation of Fighting Back nationally. They conducted several rounds of interviews with staff, Task Force members, and community leaders. The original handwritten interview
Stop Planning, Start Acting

The new year began with a call for action: “Please, no more planning [and] bureaucracy” (CTF910215). Some participants had been “at the table” for over a year, and they expected to see a commitment of resources for their trouble. Others believed that there would be pressure from “the community” if they did not soon show that they were actually doing something. It became common for leaders of existing initiatives to decide that their program could be a particular component of Fighting Back (and capture a part of the budget), although Fighting Back would have little effect on the program’s trajectory. The school system, for example, had been working with researchers at the Yale Child Study Center on a “Social Development Program” that might become Fighting Back’s youth and prevention initiatives. If Fighting Back chose not to use the program, they would alienate a potential ally. If they accepted the “offer,” they gave up control, and spent resources on something that might not contribute to the overall goals of the project. This pattern might be called “piecing” as participants often spoke of “doing the _____ piece” with the emphasis on dividing up the work rather than coordinating it.

The Task Force tried to get in front of this problem by suggesting that the Fighting Back plan be the blueprint into which other initiatives fit their requests for money both from Fighting Back and from other sources. They requested “that organizations assign their grant writer/program development specialist to the [Fighting Back Development] committee to assist in the design and writing of proposals to support the recommendations of the Citizens Task Force” (CTF910321). The need to articulate this strategy at all was an

booklets were available for this study. Since the author did not have access to anonymity agreements with PIRE informants, a guarantee of non-attribution was assumed and names are generally not given in the text.
indicator of what had not yet happened. They were trying to act like a major player in a crowded field of established programs with nothing to back up their claims. They were thinking like a community-wide coalition and a central coordinating body without actually being either and they were continually frustrated because they had no power and no authority. Increasingly aware of their impotence, two months after the call for “no more planning” they decided to engage in a strategic planning exercise.

**Strategic Planning**

A local consultant facilitated the strategy session in late March. At the end of an all day session held at Yale, a “Statement of Philosophy” was agreed on:

- Planning and action need to be community-wide; broad range of people needs to be involved; Fighting Back cannot be a top-down, externally driven effort; participants must be driven by inner sense of problem not just outside funding possibility; CTF as catalyst and organizer … the community wide system is to be built out of existing initiatives; short term must be balanced with longer term efforts at prevention (CTF910321).

This statement identified all the major areas of conflict in the project, and echoes of many different voices can be heard within it. The familiar calls for increased diversity and participation show up in the first line, the professional homogeneity of the CTF and the dominance of APT in the second. The “just get the funding” mentality is criticized, as is the tendency for the CTF to attempt to become a spokesperson in its own right. Concerns that Fighting Back would compete with existing programs are heard in line four and those who would balance treatment with prevention have the last word. The report goes on to say that the mission of Fighting Back would enable all concerned citizens - e.g., youth, parents, school personnel, service providers, elected officials, clergy, business owners/executives, civic leaders - to work together in city-wide partnership to measurably reduce the demand for alcohol and illegal drugs and the community’s tolerance of substance abuse (CTF910321).
This mission statement represented a retreat from actual “doing.” The Task Force would facilitate, catalyze, and broker – “enable all concerned citizens” – but it would not become a player in its own right. New Haven did need a coordinating body – the community was long on programs, short on cooperation between them – but they backed into this conclusion as a result of having been rebuffed by existing groups. In other words, facilitating and brokering were what Fighting Back was left with rather than part of some master plan for how coordination could best be accomplished.

Having reached consensus on what it would not do, there remained the problem of what Fighting Back would do. A breakthrough came when they decided “to capitalize on the fact that every major initiative … in New Haven has identified the same neighborhood focus as its primary strategy,” and, therefore, to make geographic neighborhoods the focus of the initiative (CTF910418). New Haven Fighting Back would be built around “neighborhood networks.” A staff member would be assigned to each neighborhood to “provide staff leadership to the neighborhood-based Fighting Back effort,” and “whose job it will be to mobilize the community, … provide technical assistance, build capacity and help to empower neighborhood residents … to fight back successfully” (CTF910418).

Ironically, this plan appeared to be an application of the RWJF “each knows best” principle to the neighborhoods that made up the target area. But while the original draft had read “empower each [neighborhood] to ‘invent’ their own strategy and choose the best structure and staffing arrangement for their neighborhood,” in the next version, this was changed to “choose from suggestions of CTF,” and then the final draft had “provide each network with a ‘template’ consisting of the conceptual framework and menu of awareness,
prevention, intervention, and treatment tools for Fighting Back developed by the CTF and its various subcommittees” (CTF910418). What began as an escalation of Robert Wood Johnson’s founding principles ended up being an abandonment of them.

Superficially, the neighborhood networker idea seemed an ideal compromise: the professionals would just as soon not go out “in the field,” and the neighborhoods would rather have “their own” people knocking on doors. In the end, though, the professionals did not want to lose control completely (the neighborhoods might decide that their services were not needed at all), and so they move to limit the discretion of the networkers to selections from a menu.

This repetition of the pattern we saw between Robert Wood Johnson and the sites points to a basic contradiction faced by Fighting Back. RWJ started with the rhetoric that individual communities know best what will work to reduce their substance abuse problems, but they measured “good ideas” against the standard of their vision of the continuum of care. At the neighborhood level, New Haven Fighting Back conceded to neighborhood activists on the one hand, but were unwilling to yield total control. This ambivalence about elite vs. grassroots relations continued throughout the history of the program.

Part III: From Opportunity to Disaster - Summer 1991 to Fall 1992

Reality Check: “The main task is to get the grant...”

Even if modest, the new ideas did represent progress. For the first time in two years, the Task Force was dealing seriously with serious issues, but they did not get to do so for very long. In May, the Task Force was working hard on participation and youth prevention when someone abruptly stopped the considerations by pointing out that the deadline was
looming: “...while all of these ideas and suggestions should be pursued, the immediate, main focus should be to satisfy the needs of the Robert Wood Johnson grant utilizing the work effort that has taken place over the last two years by the CTF and its committees” (CTF910516). Just when it was finding its deliberative stride, the project switched back into crisis mode to get the grant written.

They were on a tight schedule, as shown in Figure II-1. Initial drafts of subcommittee plans were reviewed by CTF and passed on to a grant writer. A draft was mailed to Task Force members in mid-June; everyone who looked at it agreed that there was still a lot of work do. Then the grant writer resigned. A week later, another was hired, but she was brand new to Fighting Back (CTF910615).

Forty people attended the July CTF meeting, more than any since the beginning of the project. With ideas finally on paper, everyone had changes or additions to offer. Some were concerned that the many “models” in the grant needed to link to one another and show how they connected to demand reduction. Others thought the plan did not present “a general model which will provide a cohesive system of continuum of services addressing the problem of substance abuse.” The plan, they argued, “needs to show how the Fighting Back initiative will be coordinated with these programs rather than duplicating [them]”
New Haven Fighting Back

(CTF910716). Some of the main players felt as if nothing had been accomplished during almost two years of meetings.

Work continued and twenty nine people re-assembled on 15 August to examine a draft which, though incomplete, had been “formatted to rationalize the proposed budget.” A “lively discussion” followed on the role of neighborhood networker, their qualifications, and what agencies would get them (CTF910815). Nothing was decided, but the grant writing team left with more ideas.

Several changes were “announced” when the Task Force met again a week later. The number of networkers had been reduced from seven to one, effectively gutting a central part of the program. Neighborhood mini-grants were added “to be used to expand and enhance existing neighborhood efforts; to allocate moneys for youth sports programs,” and the public awareness coordinator’s position would be phased out after the first year (CTF910822). Decisions were being made between meetings through negotiations between HRA Director Hendricks, who represented the city and what various parties with access to the administration wanted, and CTF leaders who nominally represented the Fighting Back “coalition.” The result was repeated accommodation to political pressures from parties who had been little involved in the previous two years of planning, and a rapid loss of substance abuse focus.

Throughout the planning period, for example, the Task Force had been frustrated by the lack of school system participation. Superintendent Dow had been unwilling to participate personally, but CTF members felt that the school system was crucial to a proposal that put forth youth prevention as one of its main priorities. Dow’s representative, Tim Shriver, had suggested that Fighting Back fund the school system’s
New Haven Fighting Back

Extended Day Academy (EDA), a program that kept schools open after hours, as its youth prevention effort, but the idea had not caught on with other Task Force members. By mid-summer, Board of Education support for the overall proposal came to depend on funding the Extended Day Academy.

At the next meeting Hendricks distributed a revised budget that included $125,000 annually (about 25% of the grant) for the EDA. While there was agreement that the grant had to have some funding for the school system Task Force members were furious about how the change had been handled. As a compromise, they agreed to put as close to $100,000 as possible in the budget, but only “after additional discussion with and commitment and clarification by Dr. Dow.” The money for the school board would come from mini-grants, indirect costs, and staff salaries.

The shift of $100,000 per year to the Board of Education radically changed what Fighting Back could be by reducing the viability of its neighborhood initiative. Combined with the assignment of project staff to numerous subcontracting organizations (the police department, South Central Rehabilitation Center (or SCRC, the city’s new detox facility), APT, InfoLine (a telephone “hotline” and information and referral service), and the Chamber of Commerce), it undermined Fighting Back as a standalone organization. Each concession and design change had “linked” Fighting Back to a part of the community, but now a large fraction of the $600,000 annual budget would go to programs over which Fighting Back would have little influence, and much of this had been committed on the basis of last minute pressure from entities that had not participated in the planning process.

The drama of that summer was acted out by colorful individuals who represented New Haven’s finest, but it would be difficult to characterize them as a coherent community elite.
They were old friends and old enemies, neighbors, comrades in the struggle to make their town a better place to live. The contests that played out as the grant was finalized seemed to be just another round in long standing disputes between conflicting interests. But these contests were both more and less than a straightforward clash of interests. Participants repeatedly asked why others were not able to put the community interest first as they believed they themselves had. It would be easy to follow this lead and see the story only in terms of personalities, of individuals who did or did not “play” fair and for the community or in terms of abstract interests. Participants saw things that way. It was the School Superintendent who extorted support for his Extended Day Academy or the head of the Human Resources Administration who “gave away the store,” or it was “city hall versus the people” once again.

These “takes” on the narrative will work, but they leave out something important. *Fighting Back* was an attempt to do something to a community using organizations. Organizations, as Perrow has written, “are tools for shaping the world as one wishes it to be shaped” (Perrow 1986, 11), but en masse, organizations can be awkward tools indeed. The table at which New Haveners saw their long term comrades was not a table of individuals, but of organizations, and organizations, by their nature, are not apt to put the community’s interests first. As we read the rest of the story of New Haven *Fighting Back*, we need to keep in mind that a community is a community of organizations, an entity that can only be understood by examining organizations and their interactions.

*The Community* Fights Back

In October the NPO in Nashville received a letter from eight neighborhood leaders writing as “The Federation of Inner City Neighborhoods.” The authors declared
themselves “representatives of the neighborhood scene,” and claimed it was a farce to call Fighting Back a “city-wide” initiative without their involvement:

Among the realities that these special groups ignore ... is that in several neighborhoods there are structures in place for planning and service delivery. They were organized for this purpose and have been maintained over the years, ... to carry out these functions. ... Their effectiveness is attested to by their continued funding.... It is in these Neighborhood Based Organizations that true expertise exists in dealing with neighborhoods. ... They can get to those key persons in those populations that outsiders do not even know exist.... More and more, neighborhood folks are resenting and refusing to cooperate with outsiders who intrude ... (NH1081).

The organizations referred to were the neighborhood development corporations (NDCs) that had been established during the War on Poverty in New Haven. Their description was accurate, but it was precisely this kind of local control and coercion that had made the Task Force members reluctant to involve the NDCs as “the community” in the first place. The letter continued:

They [the planners] perceive the indifference as non-caring and the hostility as personal affront. What needs to happen is a radical alteration in the thinking of the municipal authorities that will allow them to understand the absolute necessity for ... the participation of grass-roots neighborhood persons and groups in the initial and beginning planning sessions for any and all programs and initiatives that will find their focus and activity at the neighborhood level.... They are allowed to blunder into delicately balanced power struggles, unaware and unknowing of the havoc they cause... (NH1081).

The issues raised in the letter represented a multitude of ongoing conflicts: city vs. neighborhoods; professional service providers vs. neighborhood based organizations; Yale vs. New Haven; white vs. black. The neighborhood leaders were effectively telling the Fighting Back planners, “we own this territory, so if you want to operate here, you have to play by our rules.” Contrary to what the CTF had assumed, neighborhood networkers and mini-grants were not sufficient tribute to established local organizations.
The neighborhood leaders asked that the proposal to be returned for their approval, but the NPO responded that this should be taken up with their local colleagues. The national program director predictably wrote “I can only urge all of you to sit down together for a local summit meeting to thrash out the whole situation” (NH1157).\textsuperscript{14}

The next site visit, a few weeks later, was, reportedly, a fiasco. According to available records, none of the letter writers attended the morning meetings, although two of them were “brought in” late in the day. One site visitor wrote that the visit was “intense and difficult,” and that there appeared to be an “unspoken battle going on between the co-chairs of the Task Force and the Human Services Administration Director” (NH1007).

New Haven had been through this before when a similar tactic had been used on a teen pregnancy grant and it had been lost (NH1402). Several influential individuals, some witnesses to earlier incident, attempted to negotiate a resolution. Over the next few weeks a settlement was reached that included an agreement to work with the City Wide Youth Coalition, the assignment of a networker to the Dwight neighborhood, an outreach worker hired to be through another city program for the West Rock and Dixwell neighborhoods, and, a guarantee of neighborhood involvement in the networker hiring process, especially important since their stock in trade was getting people jobs, and they could influence the project if they could put “their” people on the “inside.” The letter writers wrote that “we have agreed to serve on the Task Force and to work to bring the voice of local neighborhood people to the table.... We are committed to participating fully in the Fighting Back process...” (NH1403). CTF meeting minutes indicate that one of the letter writers

\textsuperscript{14} Similar “rebellions” took place in many of the Fighting Back sites. Several of these are chronicled in site reports prepared for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation by the evaluation team headed by Leonard Saxo, Ph.D. (Gladden et al. 1996; Jones 1997; Lindholm 1997; Price-Reavis 1997; Suazo-Garcia 1996; Suazo-Garcia 1997).
attended one meeting over the following six months (CTF920115; CTF920416; CTF920716).

**Resolving Problems in Theory and in Practice**

New Haven survived “the letter incident” and “the New Yorker article,” as these events came to be called by participants, but the cycles of planning, crisis management, show and tell, and spin doctoring took a toll. By early 1992 many site visitors, National Program Officers, and New Haven participants were thinking that the project might not survive. Fundamental problems remained unresolved while they struggled to move the project forward, get sufficient agreement among themselves to submit the grant, or perform for site visits. *Fighting Back* was becoming an embarrassment, and the word on the street in New Haven was that “they had blown it this time.”

In February the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation announced the implementation grants and New Haven was awarded provisional funding, contingent on resubmission of the proposal in the fall. In March, NPO Director Spickard wrote to New Haven *Fighting Back* about the collaboration and cooperation, political will and public support, leadership, business community involvement, and “mutual trust and respect.” He asked whether there was actually enough cooperation to overcome endemic fragmentation and whether the participation promised in support letters would be forthcoming or not. He reminded New Haven that the project director “hiring decision [is] critical,” and that the person “should have excellent credentials, be compensated well, and given sufficient authority to operate on behalf of City and Task Force without being overly burdened by bureaucratic obstacles” (NH1404 1992).
Few in New Haven would have disagreed with Spickard’s assessment, but no one seemed to think there was much they could do about the problems he raised. They were tangled in a web of alliances, political debts, and awareness of “how things are done around here.” Conflicts such as those between the HRA and the mayor, on the one side, and the Task Force and APT on the other, not only remained unresolved, they were institutionalized. The delicate balance among participation and representation, resource allocation, leadership, and control meant that the “leaders” involved in Fighting Back really had very little discretion to actually do anything; knowing what could not be done was part of what made them “leaders.”

Leadership and Control

The process of hiring a permanent project director got underway in late winter and everyone vied to have input or veto power. There were heated discussions about qualifications, including whether the “academic qualifications would be too intimidating for qualified applicants without such credentials” (CTF920416), and when the jobs were advertised several neighborhood representatives tried to delay the process by saying that “certain organizations” had not received city job postings, apparently a common ploy (field notes). Despite the fracas, the CTF narrowed the list down to seven candidates from which the Mayor chose Laurel Coleman, a young, African American outsider who had served in the Peace Corps and worked as a consultant with Arthur Andersen. In April 1992 New Haven Fighting Back hired its first “real” Project Director.

Without a permanent leader New Haven Fighting Back had sometimes been directionless, but, lack of leadership also meant that other organizations had had no one to target in attempts to gain influence over Fighting Back. This changed the moment Coleman was
hired. First, someone challenged her on why there were no minutes from the August meeting where the last minute scrambling over the budget had occurred. After this, there were overtures from interest groups lobbying Fighting Back to take positions on various issues. With a director finally on board, the NPO began to push New Haven on Yale involvement, and suggested that New Haven Fighting Back needed to “have a visible presence or resource center.” In May she had to oversee a round of community projects grants. Almost 300 applications were sent out, four workshops were attended by 90 people, 44 proposals were received by the deadline, and a review committee recommended 23 for $37,000 in funding. Unfunded applicants raised questions about selection criteria and those who were funded complained about methods of payment. A slow city bureaucracy apparently deliberately held up disbursements (Interview 1996).

The NPO was convinced that leadership was a key variable in the success of Fighting Back projects, and they had high hopes for Coleman. It did not take long for these hopes to be dashed.

Coming Apart at the Seams

By June, four months into the grant, tensions had intensified rather than lessened. The city was slow to execute subcontracts, and the HRA bureaucracy was becoming less supportive. The Mayor exacerbated the problem when he expressed concern about whether “the City [was] covering salaries that otherwise would have been an organization’s expense…,” a slap in the face to organizations like APT that had been carrying the project for so long. Hendricks sent a memo to the mayor suggesting that he not use the CTF as his new task force on violence, as some had suggested, because its members were mostly not New Haven residents and its focus tended to be addiction and treatment (NH1057), a veiled
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reference to the growing feud between HRA and APT. Fighting Back also found itself in the middle of ongoing struggles between the Daniels administration and neighborhood leadership.

The NPO could not see everything that was happening in New Haven, but enough news reached them to worry them. When Spickard met with a Foundation officer in late June, he noted that "[there] is concern that Laurel Coleman is not ‘heavyweight’ enough to lead a program that is so politically confusing...." He continued:

[perhaps] John Daniels should be taken to Kansas City where problems similar to New Haven’s have occurred. Perhaps this would help him to see how things can be structured in New Haven to be successful." ... There are obviously many reasons for New Haven to be funded. ... New Haven is the only site where there is an associated academic medical center involved. ... [W]e must make every effort to help Laurel Coleman (NH1059).

A site visit that locals felt would determine future funding was scheduled to take place in July, and New Haven was not prepared. The organization was nearly paralyzed; hiring still lagged: there was no administrative assistant, Dwight networker, or SCRC15 intervention specialist. The City continued to drag their feet on in-kind positions, including the Substance Abuse Coordinator, prevention specialists, and the Youth Services Bureau Director. The office lacked a telephone, office supplies, and furniture. At one point, Lavonne Sheffield-Turner, assistant to the Mayor, came to the Task Force meeting to discuss “personnel conflicts” (between HRA and Fighting Back) but little progress resulted (CTF920716).

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15 The South Central Rehabilitation Center was a state funded detoxification facility located in the New Haven “medical area.” One of Fighting Back’s subcontracts was to cover the cost of an “intervention specialist” at SCRC. Later, the person funded by this line played a role in the implementation of the CIMSAT protocol described later in this chapter.
While organizational problems absorbed the attention of project leadership, the networkers were “out there” working with neighborhoods, making deals, setting precedents, and raising expectations without direction or supervision. As a result, the definition of “substance abuse related” was stretched considerably. At a Dixwell meeting in July, for example, there was talk of a community party that “could be used to rally community support that could ultimately help fight the drug problem in the neighborhood” (CTF920816). A report written later in the summer called this a “Family and Youth Substance Abuse Resource Social.” Fighting Back was underway but out of control at both the top and the bottom (CTF920816).

New Haven survived the July site visit, but a week later, Coleman, worn down by the constant fighting, resigned as Project Director effective mid-August (NH1215). She wrote of working

10 and 12 hour days for the past months at the office hoping it would get better but it hasn’t. These past few months have been exhausting... The project clearly needs all the staff identified in the grant and then some, volunteers can’t do the day to day work.

She had been working with little administrative assistance, and with a Task Force which, after carrying the ball for so long, wanted the Project Director to take over all the things they had been doing. Although new to New Haven, she had to run the political end of the project, steer the partner agencies, administer a small grants program, and revise the proposal. In a very short period she had witnessed a wide range of organizational and community pathology. She was nominally “in charge,” but other players (especially in the HRA) “want[ed] to run the show.” The project was lodged in a contentious department with little support from above. Because she had to depend on a city infrastructure (for
supplies, payments, etc.) which others could manipulate, she had very little power to make things happen. Hired to run a community-wide program against substance abuse, Coleman spent most of her time caught in a struggle between the Task Force and the Mayor’s administration. On top of all of this, she was constantly approached by individuals and organizations trying to get money out of Fighting Back. “The money,” she said, “seemed to be a curse” (NH1215).

So, in August 1992, with just over a month before the revised proposal was due, New Haven Fighting Back was once again adrift. The city administration did not know what to do with it. The Citizen’s Task Force was exhausted and exasperated, and both residents and the leaders of numerous organizations in the community had become alienated. Almost everybody assumed Fighting Back was a lost cause. Coleman’s resignation suggested that New Haven’s feuding factions had finally squandered an opportunity, and it was a surprise to everybody behind-the-scenes maneuvering by a state senator persuaded a woman who had lost out to Coleman in the spring to re-apply. Barbara Geller, a former staffer for Congressman Bruce Morrison, and long time New Havener, was hired as the new Project Director at the end of the month. Her brief was simple: fix things and make them work.

Part IV, Fall 1992 and After: Rescuing Fighting Back

Ask almost anyone who was there and they will say that if Geller had not come on board at this point the project would have fallen through (field notes 1995; Lindholm 1994). Staff positions were unfilled, key players not on board, and projects had not been implemented. Fighting Back had not even been able to spend its budget. Subcontractors had exhausted their funds, but the central office had a surplus of over $100,000 at the end of the
planning period (NH1013). There were fences to mend and bridges to rebuild and the renewal proposal had to be completely re-written. Geller had to figure out what the Foundation wanted and how to produce it from the materials left at the end of the planning process. For the next few months, New Haven Fighting Back kept a very low profile as a small group fashioned a new proposal.

After having been given up for dead, New Haven Fighting Back gradually came back to life, but it is a mistake to attribute the “rescue” exclusively to Geller’s leadership as many participants were wont to do. The disaster that the project had become caused several structural changes that made it possible to turn Fighting Back around. Most important among these were that everyone was “on notice” that New Haven had nearly lost the grant, and that the events of the past two years meant that everyone’s cards were on the table. Fighting Back had been just another “community-wide” grant facing the usual turf battles dividing the spoils, but by mid-1992 Fighting Back showed that it was different: nearly being de-funded was a serious embarrassment in a community that prided itself on over forty years of “getting the grant.” It was time to stop making fools of themselves, and word went out that “this was serious.”

The opening lines of the new proposal were “... New Haven’s challenge is to present a united front and show the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that we do have a coherent, integrated plan and that we are implementing it” (NH1013). Shame gave Geller leverage that her predecessors did not have, providing a mandate, if not to “come together,” at least to let her do her job. On top of this, she had the advantage of having been a witness to what had gone on over the previous few years and so knew who wanted what. This set the stage for her “work the phones” approach to project management which was
complemented by the skills brought to the project by Mark Nickel, a recent Ph.D. in psychology (not from Yale) who was hired as coordinator for epidemiology and treatment. He became Geller’s “right hand man” as she renegotiated partnerships with key players, his quiet, soft spoken manner contrasting sharply with Geller’s loud brashness and with the self-promoting arrogance people in New Haven associated with Yale Ph.D.s.

Geller replaced “management by committee and consensus” with one-on-one deal-making. She approached other players separately saying “you need to do X if we are not to crash and burn,” followed by “what do you need from me?” She could bargain for their support, because between her own connections and Nickel, Fighting Back could finally “get something done” for its partners. Her strategic generosity with him was a significant component in the give and take of coalition building, and the phrase “I’ll get Mark to do that for you” became a common Geller line. Nickel was located at APT, but ”worked for” Geller, so that when she “loaned” him out for report and grant writing, data analysis, developing evaluation instruments, etc. it had the added significance of appearing that she was sharing resources that APT had kept in house up to that point. Later, one staff member said “she could never have done it without him – he did what she promised…” (field notes).

Over the next few months other new strategies emerged from the experiences of the previous three years. The project built on the accumulated cynicism surrounding Fighting Back, adopting as mottoes criticisms that had been leveled against it over the previous years. At every opportunity Geller would remind people: “there is no need to duplicate existing programs,” “no one program can take credit for changes either positive or negative,” or “everything has to be neighborhood driven.” Their “partnering” strategy moved from
trying to get everyone on board for every project to convening just those players whose work was relevant to a particular project.

**Adapting Fighting Back for New Haven**

The revised proposal that was submitted in November reflected these changes. Where earlier proposals had emphasized the structures and committees that Fighting Back would create, this one included table after table - reflecting the contribution of Roz Liss at APT, who described herself as “the chart lady” - showing all the agencies related to a particular problem or population (such as youth or “moms and babies”), each in its place in a continuum of care. The tables represented comprehensive inventories of New Haven organizations, although many of the programs listed were not actively involved with Fighting Back. The table for youth (Table 1), for example, listed some eighty agencies in seven components of a “coordinated/ integrated continuum of care,” but the proposal offered little evidence of (or plans for) coordination or integration or direct connections with Fighting Back (NH1013). Few of the 6,000 or so possible links\(^{16}\) in this “network” existed as anything beyond co-presence in New Haven or occasionally attending meetings together. While this suggests that New Haven was claiming collaboration were there was none - and strictly speaking they were - it more importantly represented a transition from trying to be a community wide organization to being an organization with a community wide perspective.

\(^{16}\) The figure 6,000 represents the approximate number of links in a fully connected graph involving eighty nodes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Finding and Referral</th>
<th>Entry Point Clinical Assessment</th>
<th>Substance Abuse Treatment and Self Help Groups</th>
<th>Medical Care &amp; Mental Health Treatment</th>
<th>Parenting Skills/Teen Parents</th>
<th>Case Management and Family Support</th>
<th>Social Services, WIC and Entitlements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Med Unit (APT)</td>
<td>ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS</td>
<td>EXTENDED RESID TX</td>
<td>MEDICAL CARE</td>
<td>PARENTING SKILLS</td>
<td>CASE MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifford Beers Clinic</td>
<td>(providing assessment only or as a part of Tx)</td>
<td>(6-18 months)</td>
<td>Fair England City Clinic</td>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>AIDS Project New Haven</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm Hlth Plan</td>
<td>ACUTE</td>
<td>Alpha House - 7 community slots</td>
<td>Hill Health Center</td>
<td>Birth to 3</td>
<td>APT Mothers’ Project</td>
<td>APT Vocational Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation Center</td>
<td>ALSO</td>
<td>Only 20 statewide</td>
<td>Hospital of Saint Raphael’s</td>
<td>Children’s Ctr serving</td>
<td>Assoc of Agencies Serving</td>
<td>Centro San Jose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Haven Clinic</td>
<td>Juvenile Courts</td>
<td></td>
<td>CCC-parent aids</td>
<td>families of SA adols</td>
<td>Afro-Americans</td>
<td>Community Action Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Planning Clinic</td>
<td>TREATMENT PROGRAMS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hill Health Ctr-child guidance,</td>
<td>Clifford Beers - parenting</td>
<td>Catholic Family Service</td>
<td>Hill Coop Youth Svcs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NHHD)</td>
<td>(providing assessment only as a part of Tx)</td>
<td></td>
<td>early stimulation, outreach</td>
<td>CCC-parent aids</td>
<td>Christian Community Action</td>
<td>Latino Youth Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthline</td>
<td>Alpha House - APT</td>
<td></td>
<td>NH Health Dep outreach</td>
<td>CCN</td>
<td>Consultation Center</td>
<td>Neighborhood Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Health Center</td>
<td>Clifford Beers</td>
<td></td>
<td>was family support &amp; parenting</td>
<td>DCYS</td>
<td>CT Mental Health Center</td>
<td>New Haven Job Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hosp St. Raph</td>
<td>Wakeman Hall-Children’s Center</td>
<td></td>
<td>N Public Schools-Early</td>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>CCCC</td>
<td>New Haven Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HANH Off Res Svcs</td>
<td>OUTPATIENT TX</td>
<td></td>
<td>childhood assessment,</td>
<td>Dept Hum Resources</td>
<td>DCYS</td>
<td>Private Industry Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Haven Pub Schl 5-12</td>
<td>ACUTE</td>
<td></td>
<td>educational programs for</td>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>Regional Council on Educ for</td>
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<td>Parents Anonymous</td>
<td>MENTAL HEALTH AGENCIES</td>
<td>Specialist – Police</td>
<td>ACCESS TO WIC &amp; OTHER ENTITLEMENTS</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Planned Parenthood Polly McCabe</td>
<td>ACUTE</td>
<td>Hill Health Center</td>
<td>Catholic Family Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dxwl-New Download Mrtl Hlt</td>
<td>Catholic Family Services</td>
<td>HANH</td>
<td>CCC</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ctr Counseling &amp; Hum Dev</td>
<td>NHFA</td>
<td>Fair Haven Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ctr Counseling &amp; Psychotherapy</td>
<td>New Haven Health Dept</td>
<td>Hill Health Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clifford Beers</td>
<td>Yale Child Study</td>
<td>HANH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dxxl-Newdownload Mrtl Hlt</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>NHFA</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family Counseling of New Haven</td>
<td>Unified School District</td>
<td>Fighting Back Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish Family Services</td>
<td>Yale Child Study</td>
<td>Specialist – Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yale Child Study Center</td>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>Hill Health Center</td>
</tr>
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<td>YWCA</td>
<td>YNHH</td>
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<td>YWCA</td>
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<td>HOUSING</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Continuum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(NH1013 1992, Table II.B.C.3)
The connections that did exist between Fighting Back and these programs are illustrated by the “Youth Initiative.” In addition to the 80 agencies constituting the “Coordinated/Integrated Continuum of Care for Youth Services,” the proposal listed seven programs as “components” of the initiative, two of which were funded by Fighting Back (see Table II-2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Initiative Component</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board of Education Social Development Program*</td>
<td>After school activities, social development curriculum, support systems for individual students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Youth Intervention System*</td>
<td>Individual intervention with at-risk youth by police-based social worker; youth identified through community based policing activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City-wide Youth Coalition</td>
<td>Coordination of a wide range of youth services across all neighborhoods, advocacy for systems change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Authority Youth Diversion Program</td>
<td>Provision of quality after-school and weekend activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Youth Bridge</td>
<td>Neighborhood-based approach to intensive prevention activities using a group work and mentoring model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Project LEAP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• C.A.S.T.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collaboration for Youth Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constructivist Learning Center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Industry Council Summer Jobs Program</td>
<td>Employment training program for disadvantaged youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adult Police Commissioners</td>
<td>Formal vehicle for youth input into policies of New Haven Department of Police Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fighting Back funded

Two HRA staff assigned part time (50% and 30%) to Fighting Back were given responsibility for the initiative. Neither dedicated that much time to the project, and they had no authority over the organizations listed as components of the initiative leaving it all but undirected (field notes). There is no record, for example, of these agencies ever having met together as an initiative. Fighting Back youth initiative dollars paid for a “youth
New Haven Fighting Back

intervention specialist” at the police department – initially said to be effective, but later moved to other duties – and for the School Board’s Extended Day Academy. The City Wide Youth Coalition, a group of small youth service agencies funded by CDBG, state and local foundation funds, had, at best, a strained relationship with Fighting Back. The Housing Authority youth programs, Neighborhood Youth Bridge, Private Industry Council, and Young Adult Police Commissioners were simply existing programs that were willing to come to meetings and say they were “available” to Fighting Back. Later Fighting Back received a grant from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven to hire two “youth outreach workers.” Recovering addicts in their thirties, these men were among the most active members of the Fighting Back staff, giving talks at schools and youth groups and serving as points of contact on the street for Fighting Back, but they had almost no direct interaction with the other “components” of the youth initiative.

All in all, New Haven Fighting Back’s “youth initiative” was more a coalition on paper than in practice. This “initiative” amounted to a group of topically related, but independent and uncoordinated, activities. New Haven had a significant amount of activity going on in youth programming and Fighting Back attempted to show how the programs complemented one another, but a broad interorganizational coalition in support of demand reduction for youth never materialized.

Re-Structuring the Organization

The proposal also showed how New Haven Fighting Back’s structure had changed since the planning phase. As shown in Figure II-2, the earlier structure emphasized the place of the program within the City Hall hierarchy and divided the substance abuse work between prevention and treatment. Now, as seen in Figure II-3, the CTF and its executive
committee lie at the center of the structure. Three coalition-like entities – the treatment
providers, Consortium, and the Youth Coalition – are connected to the overall structure
through the committees, and “the community” is represented in terms of a named entity,
the Neighborhood Advocacy Committee (later CMTs). Interaction with “the community”
is suggested by lines between the Neighborhood Advisory Committee to each of the main
units of the organization.
These changes also suggest APT’s diminished role in Fighting Back. They were still a dominant force, but Geller had worked hard to move APT and Liss out of the project’s center so that Fighting Back would be less associated with the suspicions directed at APT. If the 1989 structure was APT reassuring the City that Fighting Back was a part of its hierarchy, the 1992 structure was Fighting Back locating itself with respect to the substance abuse domain and the community as a whole.
Figure II-3. New Haven Fighting Back structure in 1992 (NH1013).

Staffing the Structure

Figure II-4 shows how this organizational structure was to be staffed. The project director was now firmly at the center of the structure, with existing organizations, City Hall and APT on the periphery or not shown at all. The disconnection between the Substance Abuse Coordinator (who was also the assistant director) and neighborhood networkers and
the rest of the structure may be an artistic oversight, but it accurately reflects how this part of the staff ended up being quite detached from the rest of the project.

Like the organizational structure, the staffing structure represented an arrangement that “worked” not in the sense of effectively reducing demand for drugs, but in the sense of making it possible for Fighting Back to exist as an organization in New Haven. True to their pledge to not run programs in their own right, most of the staff were assigned to existing organizations. This meant that Geller had a minimal amount of supervisory work to do and it allowed her and the assistant project director to concentrate most of their energies on the neighborhood management teams.
Allocating Resources

In addition to strategies and structures, another perspective on Fighting Back’s trajectory in New Haven is provided by resource flows outlined in the implementation budget. The annual budget, including both RWJ and matching funds, was about one million dollars, of which about one fifth of the total went for administrative staff, office operations, and overhead, one fifth for neighborhood activity, and three fifths for initiatives run primarily by other organizations. Sources and destinations of funds are illustrated in Figure. Public Awareness\(^\text{17}\) and Treatment/Intervention got about 10% each. Moms & Babies, although it figured centrally in the proposal, received only about 5% of the budget, and youth, the other target population, was slated to receive about 20% of the budget. A similar amount was allocated to neighborhood prevention.

\(^{17}\) Approximately $100,000 of the match provided by the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce for Public Awareness represented spending on general New Haven promotion and is not included in these figures.
Figure II - 5. Implementation Phase Budget Flows
Of the $696,338 of RWJ money budgeted for the first year, about half went to five external subcontracts and two city agency subcontracts. Just under a third was allocated to administration and a fifth to the neighborhood program, with three quarters of this set aside for grants to the neighborhood committees. The budget carefully doled out resources so as to keep constituents happy and reduce the amount of supervision and programmatic direction that would be required of the central office. Funds were generally not used strategically to coordinate existing activities into “initiatives” but to placate partners and create the profile of services that Robert Wood Johnson required.

Summary: “Leadership” as Vision in a Community of Organizations

There is no doubt that Geller was responsible for the “rescue” of Fighting Back in New Haven, but that rescue amounted not to the implementation of Robert Wood Johnson’s vision, but to the maneuvering of the organization into a place where it could survive. Putting together initiatives, changing organizational structures, and dividing up the budget were components of the solution of the “real” organizational problem faced by New Haven Fighting Back: how to design something that would meet Robert Wood Johnson’s requirements and still be allowed to exist in New Haven. Geller’s contribution was not leadership, genius, vision, or power, as the NPO often seemed to think, but rather the recognition of the structural constraints within which she was working and the ability to focus on organizational survival, while pretty much not worrying at all about demand reduction per se. As we will see in the following chapters, there is much more to wielding organizations as tools in a community of organizations than the leadership, vision, or commitment of individuals.
Part V: Fighting Back - 1993 to 1996 - From Standing Out to Fitting In

The revised proposal was funded through 1997, and, four years after the RFP, the project settled into a period of “business as usual.” One characteristic of this period was that, contrary to the NPO’s wishes that “Fighting Back’s name should be on everything you do,” Geller tended to work behind the scenes. Partly, this reflected a realization that no one program causes change in outcomes by itself, but it was primarily an organizational survival strategy. By not taking credit, Fighting Back avoided unnecessarily drawing attention, jealousy, and criticism, including criticism that it was not doing what it had promised.

The overall trend during this period was a toward a reduction in diversity of activities, goals, projects, and partners. Robert Wood Johnson’s idealized Fighting Back was set aside in favor of what was politically do-able and still fundable. The “new” Fighting Back was simpler in design, more humble in expectations, and unthreatening to the organizational status quo in New Haven. To accomplish this they modified their stated goals, re-aligned their initiatives and continued to adjust their organizational structure.

Evolution of (Stated) Organizational Missions, Goals, and Objectives

From the first proposal to the last, Fighting Back’s stated purpose evolved from activism to facilitation and from specificity to vagueness. As mentioned above, the stated mission of Fighting Back had evolved from “reducing demand” to “providing an environment” in which organizations could work toward reduce demand. During the “business as usual” period the project moved from thirteen highly specific “long term overall objectives” (see Table II-3) to a grouping of objectives in terms of general focal areas (neighborhoods, the community as a whole, and target populations) to two main “themes”: residential empowerment and systems change.
Table II-3. Original Project Objectives (NH1013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Haven Fighting Back Long Term, Overall Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reduction in drug related infant mortality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increase in number of SA pregnant women seeking earlier prenatal care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Decrease in number of cocaine/heroin addicted infants, and fetal alcohol syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reduction in number of AOD related deaths and injuries among youth and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reduction in number AOD related pregnancies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reduced drug use among children =&gt; lower drop out, higher attendance, better performance, lower AOD youth crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Decline in AOD related health problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Decline in AOD on job problems and injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Reduction in AOD crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Reduction in AOD relapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Training community based organizations in prevention with follow-up and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. After school, evening and weekend activities as alternative to drugs and crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Expansion of early intervention efforts especially in public housing and youths and families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early on the project defined substance abuse as the problem and the coordination of existing organizations as the solution. The early objectives could be ambitious because there were organizations working in all these areas and coordinating them was expected to be straightforward or at most to amount to an incidental side problem. When it turned out to be a major obstacle, one solution was to back off from such specific objectives.

The two basic strategies they settled on - “resident empowerment” and “systems change” - had the advantage of that they were out of the purview of existing organizations and that staff could fit most anything they became involved in under one or the other.

Evolution of Structure

New Haven Fighting Back’s “official” organizational chart was significantly different in 1994 (Figure II-5) from what it had been during the planning period (Figure II-4). Earlier,
most of the picture had been devoted to top level entities, but now the focus was on working committees, partner organizations and management teams. The Project Director, who had been buried deep in the city hierarchy, was now at the center of a network of organizations working in New Haven’s neighborhoods. The Task Force was isolated from the day-to-day running of the project and the Project Director had a connection to every major project or committee.

**New Haven Fighting Back Organizational Structure May 1994**

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Figure II-5. Organizational chart 1994 (NH1014).
The 1994 organizational chart also shows the main interorganizational connections between Fighting Back and its key partners. Geller had established comfortable relationships with the Yale Child Study Center, the Chief of Police, the Office of the Secretary at Yale, the Housing Authority of New Haven, and other organizations. After struggling with the problem of how to involve existing programs and agencies, Fighting Back had settled into relationships with a handful of organizations willing to work with them and more or less ignored those who were not.

Doing Fighting Back

After all that had happened, some people in New Haven were pleased that Fighting Back existed at all. Others, however, were quick to opine that Fighting Back “hasn’t done a damn thing” (field notes). Some holders of this view represent organizations that did not benefit from Fighting Back’s largesse, others are activists in neighborhoods where substance abuse problems remain undiminished or less diminished than residents had hoped, or bystanders who watched Fighting Back up close and saw it as incompetent and poorly carried out.

If “doing something” only means results and outcomes, then “scientific” observers would agree with this assessment. But even if they accomplished little, it is not the case that they did nothing. It remains possible to describe the day to day activities that constituted “fighting back” during what I have called its “business as usual” period. “Doing” Fighting Back can be divided into five areas: using subcontracts to make connections among players in the substance abuse domain; providing “technical assistance” to other organizations; fostering the development of the Consortium for Substance Abusing Women; carrying out highly focused projects; and establishing neighborhood management teams. In the next few sections I will describe each of these in more detail.
Community Collaboration as Networks of Subcontracts and Favors

New Haven Fighting Back

Most of New Haven Fighting Back’s staff did not work at Fighting Back. Of the RWJF-funded staff, only the project director, one neighborhood networker, the MIS specialist worked out of the Fighting Back office in City Hall. Other staff supported by grant funds were located in partner agencies and paid for through subcontracts between those agencies and the city. The largest subcontract was with the Board of Education for support of their after school program. In addition, the police received funds to hire a youth worker and pay for part of a planning assistant. The latter often attended Fighting Back meetings. Other subcontracts included a staff member at the South Central Rehabilitation Center which helped secure that facility’s participation in the CIMSAT ambulance protocol project, a phone counselor who focussed on alcohol and drugs at the United Way supported information and referral service “InfoLine,” and an outreach worker in the maternal and child health division of the Department of Health. The proposals described these individuals as “intervention specialists.”

One practical reason for subcontracts was that it shielded the positions from the city bureaucracy and patronage economy, but subcontracts also helped to cement relationships between Fighting Back and key partners. The modal response to Fighting Back’s early overtures had been support coupled with apologies: “but we’re strapped as it is and so can’t start doing anything new right now.” Fighting Back was in no position to argue, and so the core of the community “coalition” was built with subcontracts; if Fighting Back wanted something done, it had to pay for it. The subcontracted staff members were also able to take advantage of resources and a culture of getting things done available in the
subcontracting agencies but absent in City Hall. It also meant that Geller did not have to be a staff manager leaving her to do the brokering that she was good at.

One of the enticements she could offer was “technical assistance” in the person of Mark Nickel. Early on there as a serious lack of organizational skills outside of a small circle made of the APT Foundation and the loaned executives. Meeting minutes, general record keeping, data collection and analysis, and grant writing all depended on these players. City Hall and small nonprofits lacked a culture of “getting things out the door.” When grants need to be written, reports and budgets prepared, or research needs to be done, City staff either did not have the expertise, could not be cajoled into going an extra mile or could not be “borrowed” from one office to another. Geller made extensive use of Nickel’s skills in these areas, lending him to write reports and grants for a number of partner agencies. Each rescue of an organization in trouble built support for Fighting Back.

**One Successful Coalition**

Although it was limited in its target population and did not include direct “community” involvement, the Consortium for Substance Abusing Women and their Children was the closest thing to a real “coalition” in New Haven Fighting Back. Its members include treatment providers, the probation system, domestic violence services, homeless services, city and state agencies that work with mothers, children and families, and other health service providers. It was established in 1989 by the Commission on Infant Health, the city, the State Department of Children and Families, and APT just before Fighting Back got underway, but the latter played a crucial role in building the Consortium into an established institution (NH1503). By informally adopting it as the “Moms and Babies Initiative” Fighting Back acquired an up and running coalition of agencies (CTF901115), something it never
really succeeded in building on its own. Throughout the planning period, the Consortium had run more or less on its own without support from FightingBack. It formally became an initiative in 1994 when FightingBack agreed to fund a full time coordinator through a subcontract with the Hospital of Saint Raphael with space and equipment provided at APT. This arrangement kept the Consortium at the nexus of a three way link between HSR, APT and FightingBack helping it to remain stable and unpoliticized.

The Consortium facilitates networking among a diverse group of organizations working on the front lines, promotes information sharing, pooling of resources, non-confrontational elimination of duplication, and cooperation among funding seekers. It is treated by Geller and others as precious resource - one place where the FightingBack idea seems to have worked and where the goal of creating system changing entities that can survive beyond RWJ money seems likely to have been fulfilled. Interestingly, the Consortium has never ranked highly in Robert Wood Johnson’s estimation of New Haven’s accomplishments.

The Unambiguous Success of Focused Projects

The other activities that New Haven FightingBack can point to as successes were highly focused projects involving a small number of partner organizations. Two examples are the CIMSAT project that FightingBack helped broker and the pilot Drug Court which FightingBack helped guide into being.

The CIMSAT(Committee to Improve the Management of Substance Abuse Treatment) committee included representatives from both the city’s hospitals’ emergency departments, local ambulance companies, the police, the city’s main treatment facilities and FightingBack. At issue was how to handle chronic inebriates who were routinely transported by ambulance to emergency rooms even though they were not in need of medical attention. Hospital
officials complained that they took up valuable space, and the matter came to a head when a drunk individual fell off of a gurney, broke an arm, and then threatened to sue. Despite widespread agreement that changes were needed, complex negotiations were necessary for the establishment of a new protocol for use by the police, EMTs, emergency departments, and the detox facility. Each party had an incentive to “dump” the patients on someone else’s doorstep and even when a protocol had been agreed to, there was a need to constantly monitor the system’s implementation. Fighting Back provided the necessary brokering to make the deal happen and keep it in place long enough to take hold by funding a position at SCRC for ongoing monitoring of quality and compliance.

Fighting Back had a similar experience with a drug court program a few years later. Toward the end of 1996 Connecticut passed legislation permitting the establishment of drug courts that could offer non-violent drug related offenders a facilitated route into treatment as an alternative to jail time. Even though they liked the idea, the drug court was something of a peripheral issue for most of the parties involved—police, DAs, probation, treatment providers. Fighting Back could make it a main issue for itself and so, even though it was not a crucial player substantively, it was seen as disinterested and so could keep the other parties at the table until an agreement was reached.

Both of these cases are marked by the highly focused nature of the coalition brokered by Fighting Back. Rather than a community-wide effort, Fighting Back helped to assemble just those partners who really had something to contribute to the project.

The Ambiguous Success of Neighborhood Prevention

People in New Haven who know anything about Fighting Back know about the “management teams.” Management teams are probably New Haven Fighting Back’s greatest
achievement and they are presented as “what Fighting Back is all about” when NHFB talks about its accomplishments. Community management teams (CMTs) are groups of residents who work with the police officers assigned to each of the City’s community policing districts. Within Fighting Back they are the program’s “neighborhood prevention” strategy.

In practice they vary from virtual inactivity to setting up a new Community Development Corporation with the modal activity level being on the order of a block watch committee. CMTs typically have a few dozen active members with a mailing list ranging from one to several hundred. They are headed by co-chairs and meet monthly. In addition, team leaders from all the neighborhoods meet once a month with Fighting Back staff and the police department’s community policing officers and supervisors. They began as a joint project between Fighting Back and the Department of Police Services new community policing program. Fighting Back provided staff support and a budget, while the city built small “substations” in each neighborhood and assigned officers to work out of them.

Most of Fighting Back’s target neighborhoods were dominated by community development corporations (referred to in New Haven as “neighborhood corporations”) that had been established during the War on Poverty in the late 1960s. Local politics in New Haven consisted of deal making between aldermen and the neighborhood corporations. By the end of the 80s, there was, widespread skepticism about the neighborhood corporations and their apparent ineffectiveness at improving life in the neighborhoods. Fighting Back wanted to develop a “neighborhood component” without handing the project over to the neighborhood corporations, and so the CTF apparently went to great lengths to prevent the neighborhood corporations from receiving the lion’s share of Fighting Back resources. The implementation of Mayor Daniels’ community
policing program coincided with the beginning of Fighting Back and it was also in need of a mechanism for neighborhood involvement, preferably independent of the development corporations. Rather than duplicate their efforts, they agreed to work together to set up the neighborhood organizations and what Fighting Back had been calling Neighborhood Networks became Community Policing Substation Management Teams or CMTs.\textsuperscript{18}

Some of the management teams grew out of neighborhood organizations that predate both Fighting Back and community policing, while others were started from scratch. Existing organizations, especially the neighborhood corporations, were hostile, and many of the initial recruits were lacked organizational savvy. Geller and her Assistant Director devoted large amounts of time to the “care and feeding” of the management teams. The Fighting Back clerical staff, neighborhood networkers, youth outreach workers, and the public awareness specialist helped with mailings, organizing meetings, and obtaining information for the management teams. Asked what his typical day consisted of, one youth worker said “responding to all the requests from the management team chairs” (Interview 1996).

CMT funding evolved from what had been the neighborhood small grants program in which a staff committee selected which projects to fund to each CMT receiving $25,000 per year from which it made grants to local “neighborhood prevention” projects. This gave CMTs something to work with, something to do, and a reason to be organized. The challenge of administering funds – especially getting proposals into a form that would pass muster at both city hall and Robert Wood Johnson – required close supervision by Fighting Back.

\textsuperscript{18} Residents lobbied to drop the word “substation” because they did not like the “sub” connotation and because it associated them too closely with the police department (field notes).
New Haven Fighting Back

Back staff. The positive effects this had on CMT leadership was a significant component of what New Haven Fighting Back called “resident empowerment.”

There were many projects with dubious connections to substance abuse, but Geller persuaded RWJ that criteria should be looser at the start since the goal was to support the startup of the CMTs. With each subsequent round of funding, the Foundation became stricter about the substance abuse connection, and Fighting Back passed this on to the evolving CMTs. Geller ran interference in both directions, getting the money from the Foundation, but using RWJ as the “bad guy” when proposals had to be turned down. In speaking of what was or was not funded, or changes that needed to be made, community members would often speak of trying to please “Robert Johnson” as if he were an individual personally overseeing these funds.

CMT co-chairs met together each month as Fighting Back’s “Prevention Committee” and also met monthly at the Department of Police Services building with the Fighting Back staff, the community policing district supervisors, and the captain in charge of the substations. These meetings typically included socializing over pizza mixed with informal discussion among the police officers, staff, and CMT representatives in an atmosphere of mutual familiarity and respect. Officers passed on information to the CMT co-chairs, and they, in turn, would raise questions or issues with the officers. Though there are few miracle breakthroughs, Fighting Back’s mediation and logistical support along with their efforts to keep them “non-political” helped to institutionalize them as a new conduit between the police and the neighborhoods (field notes).

The CMTs vary in activity level and organizational sophistication. A few have actively struggled against existing neighborhood entities that would as soon see them close up shop.
Some have evolved into strong entities that exist side-by-side with pre-existing groups, and one has become the dominant neighborhood organization in its area. The city has used them as the neighborhood level organization for its “Enterprise Community” application and for the mayor’s anti-blight program, the “Livable City Initiative.” Initially, administering the mini-grants was almost more than they could do, but the CMTs have evolved into active organizations with subcommittees and growing membership bases that make them significant players in New Haven.

Part VI: Going Away - 1997

During the final two years of the grant, a major concern of the National Program Office has been the question of “institutionalization.” They hired a consulting firm to provide technical assistance to the sites in their efforts to “institutionalize,” Fighting Back. Once they had met with the consultants, it became clear that this was defined in their minds as finding funds to continue the project. The consultant’s advice was focussed on identifying what parts of Fighting Back that would “sell” and funding sources that would be likely to “buy.” Almost alone among the project directors, Geller was skeptical about the mandate to make institutionalization the number one priority.

Fighting Back’s Legacy in New Haven

New Haven learned in late 1997 that its funding would be extended for several more years, but by this time Fighting Back had joined the ranks of community programs which had passed through New Haven over the previous half century. When it began, Fighting Back had to battle against the legacy of previous programs, but now it had become a part of the legacy with which future programs would have to contend. As we will discuss in more detail
in a later chapter, organizations do not simply “go away” when their grants expire. Rather, they leave behind a variety of social organizational remnants which become a part of the environment in a community of organizations.

New Haven Fighting Back's net effect on the community can be inventoried in terms of the kinds of remnants that it left behind. These include getting substance abuse “on the table,” a Fighting Back way of doing things and the “neutral convener” role, and the management teams.

Geller kept substance abuse on table by showing up at everyone else’s meetings, and, without ever becoming a substance abuse fundamentalist, she was able to make sure that the topic stayed on the agenda. By the late 90s it was included in the standard litany of “issues.” Fighting Back also left a legacy in the form of “the Fighting Back way of doing things” : gathering together everyone who might have any interest in an issue and making sure at all times that no one is left out. It meant being careful about doing all the necessary political work to get people to the table and realizing that you can’t proceed unless you succeed at this. In this process Fighting Back typically played the role of “neutral convener.” Evidence of the institutionalization of this role is provided by the numerous discussions held during 1996 and 1997 about what organization would fulfill this role in Fighting Back’s absence. Finally, the management teams have become a part of the organizational landscape in New Haven. At least two neighborhoods where Fighting Back was not active have started their own CMTs and several city initiatives have employed the teams as their interface to neighborhood residents. Already by the end of the initial grant people were forgetting where the idea came from.
Summary

There is widespread acknowledgement that things in New Haven are better at the end of the 1990s than they had been a decade before. Homicides, after peaking at 34 in 1991 were down to 22 in 1996 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997). Increases in tax revenues and state grants made possible two reductions in property taxes, long named as contributing to the city’s decline. Employment is up and homelessness down. Drugs seem to be less of a problem – drug associated violence, for example, appears to have declined sharply – but even after a decade of attention, good numbers are still hard to come by.

The intangibles seem to have improved along with the numbers. The sense of despair and hopelessness that characterized the end of the 1980s has given way to a guarded optimism not seen in decades. Generational turnover in the leadership of many key community institutions (e.g., the Community Foundation, United Way, Yale University, local banks and even some of the neighborhood development corporations) has helped to kindle a renewed willingness to work together on behalf of the community.

While some local players would like to attribute these changes to the work of specific organizations, programs, or individuals, most observers agree that what ever salutary effects these may have had, most of the positive changes reflect the overall improvement in the regional, state, and national economy.

Whether or not the can take credit or share in the blame, some individuals who had been a part of Fighting Back remain disappointed at how they and their brother and sister agencies behaved during the early years of the program, agreeing that those times did not see New Haven at her best. They remain somewhat perplexed by the whole thing. They were, after all, “on the same side,” they could see where they fit into the continuum of care.
diagrams prepared by APT, the problem was real and visible, and there was money to do
something about it. Why had it been so difficult to even look like they were getting along?

One possibility is that they had been led by program rhetoric to expect too much of
themselves. The language and logic of coalitions and collaboration is borrowed from the
realm of individual behavior, but, as we'll see in chapter three, the objects of intervention
here were organizations not people. A part of what happened in New Haven can be
explained by how real organizations fall short of what we “expect” of them in our
idealizations of cooperation and collaboration.

Throughout the history of the project, the apparent tradeoff between participation and
effectiveness contradicted the ideology of community-wideness on which the program was
based. Instead of benefits of a broad consensus, the project suffered from a constant case
of too many cooks spoiling the broth. The fact that a town as rich in programs and experts
as New Haven was couldn’t make this happen made this especially frustrating. In chapter
four we will take up this phenomenon and examine the implications of trying to build a
“comprehensive community system” with organizations as the raw materials and the poorly
understood “technology” of collaboration.

A final “mystery” posed by New Haven Fighting Back was why a town that had been
through so many programs in the past seemed to have so few advantages drawn from the
lessons of history. In chapter five we will look at how programs and organizations of the
past leave parts of themselves behind and how much of the interference encountered by
new programs like Fighting Back is rooted in such organizational debris.
While scholars cite one another, organizations survive, grow, and prosper. They also die, wither, and starve. 

James March, Handbook of Organizations.

The past is not dead history; it is the living material out of which man makes himself and builds the future.

Rene Dubos

The success parents achieved in this effort acquainted them with the legislative process and encouraged them to advocate other laws to constrain the exploitation of children for commercial gain.

Sue Rusche

III

Doing Things In Communities

Introduction: “This time, we want to get it right!”

There was, among many New Haveners, an intense sense of their inability to get their act together. “New Haven is different because it’s very political,” noted a typical informant (Interview 1993). One had to understand, explained another, that “New Haven is a highly politicized city and this gets in the way of providing quality services” (Interview 1993). In the margins of an interview booklet, an interviewer added: “Her analysis of the problems in FB were very similar to others’: highly political, competitive environment in NH; struggle between allowing community to guide the initiative and desires of agencies to improve own agenda” (Interview 1993). When visitors described successful programs in other cities, New Haven activists sometimes seemed to compete for the right to explain why the same idea would never work in their town. The first informant quoted above went on to say “There is a lack of good will in the community and skepticism about not for profits and just not enough trust” (Interview 1993). While these comments reveal the kind of parochial
local exceptionalism that one finds in almost any city, they point to an important, if obvious, fact about Fighting Back, namely, the implementation took place in a pre-existing community.

One characteristic of that community was that New Haven had been the site of pilot programs or full implementations of almost every major urban initiative undertaken in the U.S. since the late 1950s. Some call it the most researched small city in America because of all the studies scholars have produced about those programs (e.g., Dahl 1961; Polsby 1963; Powledge 1970; Szanton 1981; Talbot 1967; Wolfinger 1974; Yates 1977). For all the programs, though, the city did not have much to show for it, aside from many now discredited physical “improvements” (the Oak Street Connector is probably the most infamous example). Even true believers were hard pressed to defend the record of renewal and improvement attempts of the previous four decades. As Fainstein has pointed out, New Haven showed little net improvement between 1950 and 1980 and seems to have had no advantage over similar cities that did not have the advantages of renewal and improvement that it did (1986). Many assessments of the long line of “solutions” to New Haven’s problems agree with what Gratz wrote about Coney Island: “each represent[ed] a solution to problems made worse by the prior solution, each reflecting no better understanding than the one before” (Gratz 1990, 19).

The players who gathered round the table for Fighting Back meetings were not neophytes doomed to repeat history because of their ignorance of it. They knew the history because they had been there. Many of them had, in their youth, gathered around other tables during the Ford Foundation “grey areas” program, urban renewal, community action programs, or the War on Poverty. They shared with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation a
determination that lessons learned from the past – the importance of broad participation, the need for programs to be of sufficient duration to have an effect, the recognition that one-size-fits-all programs don’t work – would help make Fighting Back more than “just another failed social program.”

“Community” was central to that determination. The program would have to be “community focused” and “community based,” “bottom-up” rather than “top-down,” “community-wide” and “of the community.” As we saw in Chapter II, this “community” aspiration of Fighting Back proved to be its most confusing and troublesome. Everyone talked about how important it was to be community-based, but they did not seem to be able to imagine how to accomplish this without giving the entire program over to “community” organizations that they felt were not actually “of” the community. They did not do much better in the areas of community-wide collaboration. Rather than benefiting from the lessons of the past, the first few years of Fighting Back were, by all accounts, one of the worst program disasters to date.

What was behind these frustrating results? Was New Haven an inept community? Was Fighting Back a self-fulfilling prophecy? Was there something pathological in the character of the community? As the comments quoted at the start of this section show, there was no shortage of community diagnoses. Rather than attempting to select among these, or improve on them, my approach in this chapter will be to explore the possibility of more generic explanations for what we saw in New Haven, questioning the assumptions that communities of organizations learn from their past, that programs “go away” when they die, and that “normal” communities should be able to implement programs like Fighting Back successfully.
A part of my strategy is to think about community in somewhat generic social structural terms. There remains in sociology in general and in the study of community interventions in particular, a valorization of the idea of community that frequently clouds our analytical vision. Just as C. Wright Mills (1943) wrote of “the social,” “community” is usually contrasted with “selfishness,” “lack of altruism,” “lack of cooperation” or “lack of concern for the little people,” and so is taken as an unqualified good, as a valued end rather than social organizational means. The first step in this chapter is to move away from community as a value toward community as a social structural thing.

A second step involves overcoming the tendency to see communities as unorganized, empty landscapes in which every increment of organization is necessarily a good thing. Programs like Fighting Back are often seen as improving community conditions by increasing “social capital” – relationships between people and organizations in a community, feelings of familiarity and trust, shared cultural definitions and so on. Like “community,” social capital is generally seen as unqualifiedly good – the more the better – and something that can be steadily increased by ongoing interventions. By focusing on the interventions as organizations and communities as arenas where the effects of organization accumulate, we will arrive at a perspective from which to consider the “dark side” of social capital. By looking at programs like Fighting Back generically as attempts to do something in communities as well as to communities, we can better understand how such interventions work, and clarify the kind of thing a community is for carrying out an intervention like Fighting Back.19

19 There are precedents for this kind of question in sociology. Goffman, in many works, was asking what kind of a thing is an individual for face to face interaction or what kind of a thing is a situation for selves interacting. Students of organizations have long asked, essentially, what kind of a thing is a formal organization for making or selling widgets? Sociologists of science have shown the
What Kind of Thing is Community?

One of the more frustrating aspects of observing programs like Fighting Back is the tendency on the part of participants, program designers, policy makers and researchers alike use the term “community” interchangeably to refer to structures, groups, places, passions, sentiments, and interests. Mantra-like, one hears of community-this and community-that, luring the unsuspecting to assume ontological, ideological, analytical, and value consensus where there is none. The word is made sacred, but left undefined, becoming what postmodernists might call a “dangling signifier.”

This presents a danger to the sociologist not only because of the potential confusion of meanings, but because of the possibility that s/he will become mired in the local “argument” and try to resolve the ambiguity in the spirit of “defining one’s terms.” A common result is that one group or another gets anointed as “the” community, and its absence is used either to explain a program’s problems or to exhort the reader to indignation.

In order to understand what Fighting Back was and how “community” fit into it, it is important to note that one of the origins of the “community orientation.” A central component of the Fighting Back ideology was the idea that substance abuse should be seen as a collective rather than exclusively individual problem. This “public health” approach mandated two novel outlooks. First, causes should not be sought only in individual
pathology and bad choices, but rather in the psycho-social environment in which individuals find themselves. Second, this approach emphasizes that the detrimental effects of substance abuse extend far beyond the individual abuser and so solutions should be at the supra-personal level. FightingBack was, in a sense, an attempt to change the definition of the problem. As we saw in Chapter II, the challenge for FightingBack was to persuade supra-personal entities (primarily organizations) that were in charge of the solutions to adopt this approach.

“Community” as a Community of Organizations

Despite the dominance of the rhetoric of community as participation among locals, funders, and in the literature, the more time we spent in the field, the clearer it became that the project was not about organizing people or interests or about psycho-social environments. FightingBack was an organizational intervention. The premise of FightingBack, remember, was that many efforts related to demand reduction – each targeting “community” in different ways – were already underway, but that they needed to be coordinated in order to be effective. Two of the program designers had written:

Despite the proliferation of local demand-reduction programs and activities, there has been little attempt to tie such endeavors together....There is no common understanding of the problem, no consensus regarding priorities, and, as a result, no overall strategy for deploying the community’s multiple resources in a focused, unified effort. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that few communities, if any, have turned the corner on the drug problem (Jellinek and Hearn 1991).

The “common understanding” they spoke about was not among the general population. The goal of FightingBack was to establish consensus within a population of organizations. The “community” in which the intervention took place is a community of organizations,
and the Fighting Back intervention was about improving the coordination between these organizations by creating organization among organizations.

To speak of a community of organizations is not to make an ontological claim about what communities “are,” and it is not to deny the existence or importance of other structural elements of communities (such as personal networks or classes). Rather, it is to suggest that some of the dynamics of modern community initiatives can be understood better from a perspective which sees communities as collections of organizations, and initiatives as attempts to organize organizations. A “community of organizations” corresponds roughly to what others have called an “interorganizational field” (e.g., Warren, Rose and Bergrunder 1974), but I use the term “community of organizations” to emphasize the centrality of organizations in the thing that we talk about as community in the context of initiatives like Fighting Back.

The Community is Not an Object of Intervention

Having adjusted our focus from people to organizations (remember, we are asking what kind of a thing a community is for doing things with organizations), there is one more thing we need to clarify with respect to communities and interventions like Fighting Back. For both Robert Wood Johnson and many of the scholars whose work contributed to the development of the Fighting Back idea, community was essentially a unit of intervention. Although rooted in the “discovery” that behaviors such as substance abuse are strongly influenced by environmental factors, the focus remained on community as a geographically defined place where the effects of individual acts of substance abuse accumulated to produce a “social” problem, making the community a potential collective actor that could “own” and respond to such problems. The original Request for Proposals was addressed to
"communities around the country who are beginning the difficult task of taking back their streets" (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1989). The question posed by RWJ (“did it work?”) and the research design employed by the evaluators (comparison of Fighting Back and non-Fighting Back cities) treated community as a setting for the intervention just as research subjects are settings for testing medicines or pupils for trying out education reforms.

Figure III-1 below illustrates the logic of community as an object of intervention. In the diagram “inputs” stands for existing conditions, demographics of the substance abuse problem, socio-economic conditions and so on. The intervention is Fighting Back and the expected outcome is reduction in the demand for alcohol and drugs. “Community,” in this model, is simply the locus of interaction in which the intervention mixes with existing conditions to produce outputs. The experiment is repeated in different communities with similar inputs to determine whether the intervention is effective in producing the desired outcomes. Under this logic, the lessons of the past are relegated to the inputs old interventions left behind and the wisdom from which future interventions can benefit.
Underlying the argument of this chapter, though, is the idea that inputs, intervention, and outcomes are deeply embedded in the community to begin with as illustrated schematically in Figure III-2. The intervention would both act upon organizations and be carried out by organizations. The “conditions” which constituted the “inputs” were the products of organizations - employment levels, public safety, real estate, education, substance abuse treatment, politics - and organizations themselves, as were the “outcomes” such as greater degrees of collaboration or newly established organizations. The community is the sum total of all these organizational phenomena and so the intervention, the inputs, and the outcomes are already in the community. Community initiatives do not simply act upon communities of organizations, they take place in communities of organizations, are carried out by communities of organizations, and they leave their traces in communities of organizations.

Figure III-2. Inputs, interventions, and outcomes as already embedded within community.

Thus, we have two parts of the answer to our question – “what kind of a thing is a community for doing community interventions?” The community is organizations, not
people, and it is neither simply object nor simply arena, but a complex of interacting organizations that is simultaneously subject, setting, and object. Where does this leave us?

**Characterizing a Community of Organizations**

Community typically connotes romantic visions of connections between people, feelings of camaraderie and solidarity, trust and safety. Within the social sciences there is a long tradition of explaining where it went, what chased it away, and how to get it back (Tönnies, Durkheim, Simmel). More recently there are several traditions which portray “community” as an important independent variable causing overall social welfare (communitarians, social capital, etc.). Intertwined with these is a tendency that we saw frequently in our field work, namely, the tendency to see “the community” as ordinary people in contrast to government, big business, etc. The simultaneous association of community with an idyllic past or future, with being “happier” or “better off,” and with ordinary people encourages us to fall back valorizing participation for its own sake, seeing individual rights and representation as primary problems, and on overly individualistic explanations for social things.

Individuals do, of course, matter, and counterbalancing the power of “the establishment” is a worthwhile goal. Here, though, I am arguing for is closer consideration of one aspect of community initiatives that tends to get lost when we are swept up in the enthusiasm for these more romantic aspects of “community.”

**Fighting Back in Theory: Organizations as Resources, The Past as Lessons**

In the theory of the Fighting Back “community” was a unit of action (“communities around the country that are beginning the long process...”), a spatially delimited population (the program was intended for cities of 100,000 to 200,000 population), a medium for the
transmission of norms (individual behavior would change when the community’s collective intolerance for drug and alcohol consumption increased), a population of persons “most affected by the problem” (substance abusers, their families, and residents of neighborhoods where the problem was greatest), or as the “bottom” in the sense of top-down/bottom-up processes.

When program designers did think about organizations, they acknowledged that there would be political problems, but their emphasis was on the rich array of (uncoordinated) organizational resources in communities like New Haven and the rich payoff to collaboration these promised. In addition, after forty years of “failed” programs, it was assumed that wisdom had accumulated in the community as it supposedly had among program designers about what works and what does not. In their limited view, the community of organizations, then, was seen as a stockpile of resources and experience to be drawn on.

From this perspective, New Haven was in a position to be an exemplary Fighting Back site. In fact, the grant was nearly lost and the program was something of a disaster, and, if anything, local participants blamed the past for their troubles. The question thus becomes what kind of a thing is a community for the accumulation of historical experience? How does the history of organizational activity in a community make itself felt in the contemporary community?

**Observations: History as an Obstacle**

New Haven had a long experience with post-WWII urban renewal and revitalization efforts, and, as already mentioned, many of those who ran earlier programs, or who lived through them, were still active in the community. In fact, some early Fighting Back meetings
were virtual reunions for veterans of New Haven’s experience with urban renewal, the War on Poverty or Model Cities programs. There was, in short, ample motive and opportunity to reflect on and benefit from the lessons of past programs in New Haven.

The “effects” of history were not, however, limited to the reminiscences of wise old “veterans of the struggle.” Many of the organizations had to work with, such as the Community Action Agency, the neighborhood development corporations, and the community health facilities, are “left over” from the 60s, and some are still lead by their founders. Also left over were all manner of organizational obstacles to ‘s work. These included things like taboo actions (“that’s been tried, you can’t do it around here”), stereotyped roles (“oh, they are just the new ______”), and a sense of whom to exclude (“everyone knows you can’t work with ______.”). The program was constrained by a rich sense of “they (unspecified) won’t let us do X or Y or Z again.” “You’ve planned on my neighborhood one too many times,” said one resident in a 1995 meeting (field notes). Task Force members were eager not to appear to be acting like their predecessors, though this manifested itself more in impression management than in changed behavior. Some members, veterans of stormy community politics of the sixties, were leery of involving grassroots groups that they perceived to be stuck in the adversarial approaches of that era. In addition to these things, the new initiative had to steer its way among broken promises, standard operating procedures, real estate commitments, budget precedents, alliances to be honored, and scores to be settled. The community of organizations was the antithesis of an historical vacuum and much of what it contained amounted to obstacles and traps.

Jones (1997) describes a similar pattern between Fighting Back sites and the Foundation, saying that a “culture of presentation” dominated the evolution of the project.
In addition to constraining what could be done, the past also positively shaped the present. Recruitment of staff and member organizations depended on personal networks which grew out of participants’ experience with earlier programs. Whole parts of the Fighting Back “coalition” were adopted from existing structures. The Consortium for Substance Abusing Women and their Children, for example, grew directly out of the Special Commission on Infant Health, a group of organizations originally brought together to combat infant mortality. When the neighborhood management teams were formed several years into the project, they were organized on the basis of similar to institutions developed twenty years earlier, although, at the same time, a concerted effort was made to be different from, exclude members of, or stay independent of, the neighborhood development corporations that traced their origins to the same period. By 1995 Fighting Back itself became a part of the New Haven’s institutional legacy when the management teams were employed as the basis of the “community component” of the city’s Enterprise Community application and later of the mayor’s Livable City Initiative.

Contrary to the imagery conjured up by the rhetoric, community coalitions do not emerge as the spontaneous response to a “call to arms.” Rather, they must be built, organization by organization, relying on existing networks and “pieces” of organization as starting points. The mandate to coordinate the uncoordinated could easily be seen as a suggestion that the community was “disorganized,” but it was not. In fact, Fighting Back’s real challenge would be to create new organizational structures and linkages in the midst of existing patterns of organization. Real disorganization would have been a far easier raw material to work with.
Local Explanations: Be Careful Whom You Talk To

New Haven activists sometimes commented that the problem with New Haven is that they all knew one another too well. After years of working on program after program, everyone had some dirt on, or a gripe against, everyone else. Knowing your way around amounted to knowing who liked whom and who didn’t. Newcomers often expressed the sense that there seemed to be a large quantity of salient “local lore” of which they felt ignorant. “It takes a long time to get a feel for all the history here,” they would say. They learned to be careful about whom they told what or about with whom they would acknowledge having a working relationship. Learning the ropes meant learning what sorts of alliances could be taken for granted and which ones should not even be considered. On many occasions participants were heard to express their disgust without how political things were in New Haven, but most just took it for granted and learned to live with it.

Much of the politics translated into personal explanations. The effort to maintain the independence of a management team in one neighborhood, for example, was the need to keep the “Smith” family’s hands off the group. In another neighborhood, the challenge was to be able to do things without needing “Bill’s” approval. The dominance of a large treatment provider was seen in terms of “Caroline’s” control tendencies, and “Caroline,” on hearing that someone had criticized her organization, said “... that must have been Tony, he’s never really liked us” (field notes). Similarly, our informants often explained how things worked in New Haven in terms of relationship histories. The project director’s successes, for example, were accounted for in terms of “pre-existing relationships” with the police chief, state officials and so forth. Charles Williams, we were reminded, had come up
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through the ranks in the substance abuse domain and so could “get along” with the likes of Roz Liss at APT.

What begins to emerge is a picture of community as network of good and bad relations between individuals and groups. The reader may think this all makes New Haven sound like a collection of cliquish high school girls or an argument for the importance of personal networks within a community power structure. Both may be partly true, but the critical point is that this is how the local participants perceived what was going on around them. Most were convinced that specific individuals, with their intolerance and inflexibility and inability to put the community first, were behind all of New Haven’s problems.

**Interpretation: Communities as Organizational Scrap Heaps**

But if we do not want to search for scapegoats, how should we think about community as a setting for *Fighting Back*? Given the idea of community as arena and context (as opposed to object) of the intervention, and given the idea of community as community of organizations, one structural alternative would be to see the situation in population ecology terms. Each wave of programs gives rise to a flurry of organizational births, and then, as programs wind down, a corresponding dying off of unnecessary organizations. A long term pattern of succession, adaptation, and survival produces a gradually evolving steady state which forms the condition (that is, a particular population of organizations) in which *Fighting Back* tried to establish itself (cf. Hannan and Freeman 1989). History, in this scheme, leaves behind a “net effect” rather than specific artifacts.

The logic of this approach resonates with how community interventions have frequently been looked at. Over the long history of “fixing” the inner city at the neighborhood level (Halpern 1995), communities have often been referred to as “urban laboratories,” rather
accurately describing the ways in which they have been used to try out new forms of social intervention and anti-poverty measures. Such programs are designed to leave something behind – transformed people or places, institutionalized changes, “capacity,” or “empowerment” – but their most noticeable characteristics are limited duration, lack of effects, and the prompt return of policy makers and researchers to New York, Princeton, Chicago or Washington to analyze results, write about “what works and what doesn’t.”

Programs and organizations, in other words, are assumed to “disappear almost without a trace” other than their putative benefits to participants. New Haven residents, though, frequently pointed out that the community showed the effects of “thirty years of innovative initiatives.” In general, they were not referring to salutary program outcomes. Sometimes they are talking about the physical manifestations of previous “good ideas” (like the Oak Street Connector) or the social injustices (“one fifth of the population was uprooted between 1956 and 1974. Community social networks were in part destroyed by the very officials who sought to stop decay and make New Haven slumless” (Fainstein and Fainstein 1986 cited by Gratz 1990, p. 20)). Most of the time, though, they meant the political and organizational infrastructure left behind by these programs. A significant fraction of what contemporary New Haveners consider obstacles to progress are features that were introduced to the community by programs of the past.

One particular manifestation of this that played a key role in Fighting Back was the existence of community development corporations in each of the city’s poorer neighborhoods. Originally established during the War on Poverty in response to demands for decentralization and local participation, they had grown into local fiefdoms supported by Community Development Block Grant funds. They were perceived as having monopolized
control over social services coming into their neighborhoods and as being generally ineffective in their efforts to improve the neighborhoods. When Fighting Back was starting out, the commitment to “get it right this time” specifically included keeping Fighting Back funds out of the hands of the neighborhood development corporation system and other “usual suspects” in the patronage system that had developed since the late 1960s. The “October surprise” incident that nearly derailed the program (see Chapter II) was a direct result of this.

Both the organizational obstacles that Fighting Back encountered, and many of the organizational patterns it adopted, were, then, leftovers and remnants from earlier programs. Rather than learning lessons from them, Fighting Back was bumping into the organizational debris they had left behind. Each successive program engendered new organizations and new organizational patterns, many of which did not “go away” when the programs had run their courses. Some programs became “institutionalized,” adding another player to the field, but most just left behind defunct, but remembered, neighborhood associations, networks of neighbors, and old unevened scores remained from old programs. As programs come and go, communities become social organizational junkyards littered with bits and pieces of social organization left behind by initiatives like Fighting Back.

Again, such programs are supposed to leave something behind - the Foundation, for example, spent large sums of money late in the program to hire a consulting firm to assist the sites in their efforts to “institutionalize” Fighting Back - but the evidence suggests that, as often as not, the main permanent effects of programs that pass through communities like New Haven are the haphazardly strewn organizational scraps they leave behind rather than improvements in the life of its residents or coherent chunks of infrastructure. Much of the
“community pathology” that we witnessed in New Haven was encountering history in the form of chunks of social organization created and left behind by earlier programs.

What is left over when an organization goes away?

In distressed urban settings like New Haven there is a constant flux of program startings-up and windings-down. Many services provided by the Health Department and the Human Resources Administration, for example, are largely funded by federal and state grants. Most are small efforts that are “replaced” when they expire by a successor program of similar design. The agency simply shifts gears slightly often with no perceptible interruption of service as both personnel and clients are shifted from program to program. A staff member in the Office of Housing and Neighborhood Development once answered my question about a loan program by saying “that was two programs ago, now we use this other program to do that – the funding and the eligibility rules are a little different but works out the same” (field notes). New resources flow in the well worn channel cut by previous sources of funding and all the “organization” used by the old program is employed by the new one.

Frequently, though, programs expire and are not replaced directly. Instead, a new program, perhaps not recognizably different from the old one, comes along that requires new everything. New organizations get established, new relationships are built, new categories of clients invented, new patterns of interaction between established agencies are initiated. Called innovative, hailed as a change in the way business is done, such programs – almost as if aware of the danger posed by organizational junk – jettison everything and start
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over. This pattern of disbandings and re-startings is familiar to anyone who works in urban communities.

When an organization dies, it is standard procedure for owners, boards of directors, or bankruptcy courts to arrange to sell off any remaining assets, including equipment, client accounts, buildings, and other material capital. Not generally included in thinking about the demise of organizations is the less tangible social organizational capital that may have accumulated during years of operation and for many of the organizations that populate communities like New Haven, these kinds of assets far outweigh material assets. The constant flux of new programs and accompanying organizational demises leaves the community full of discarded social organizational capital. I use the phrase “social organizational” capital to distinguish organizational junk from things like trust, name recognition, and familiarity that are usually connoted by the concept “social capital.” I call these leftover bits of social organization “organizational debris” to emphasize their character as “pieces of something” and the way in which they are “broken off” from the structures that were in place while the organization was up and running. Organizational debris comes in many forms so it may be useful to begin our analysis by constructing a simple typology of common types of debris.

Toward a Typology of Organizational Junk

In these preliminary steps toward characterizing organizational junk I will attempt to identify its underlying features rather than construct a exhaustive typology. To use a quantitative metaphor, I will conduct a factor analysis rather than a cluster analysis. Three “factors” stand out: “organizational fragments,” “individuals as carriers of organization,”
and “social ontologies.” “Organizational fragments” are relationships and patterns of organization that survive the demise to the organization of which they were a part.

“Individuals as carriers of organization” refers to the fact that a community of organizations is populated by individuals who move between organizations carrying marks of past affiliations with them. “Social ontology” refers to the fact that organizations create institutionalized “things” in the community which exist beyond the boundaries and life span of the organization itself.

**Fragments of Organization**

“Organizational fragments” are bits of social structure lying around in a community. These fragments can provide raw material for the construction of new organizational entities or they can provide the materials out of which obstructing, opposing and inhibiting structures can arise. They include dormant organizations and alliances, for which the new initiative provides a reason to become active, and past networks of cooperation or conflict that a new initiative “plugs into” inadvertently. Commonly these are leaders and groups that were “empowered” by earlier programs, but left without agenda or resources when the programs were over.

Consider the schematic in Figure III-3 which represents “Organization X,” the organization associated with some community program. Organization X is enmeshed in a complex web of connections with other entities in the community. The relations include exchanges of resources and favors, information channels, growing trust and respect, client-patron relations, successful collaboration on specific projects, being seen by the community as jointly responsible for things, conflicts and contests over resources, services provided to
particular clients, etc. The range of partners runs from outside funding agencies to local politicians to neighborhood based organizations to groups of residents.

Now consider what happens when the grant funding for the project runs out. Occasionally, organizations get morphed into something else and refunded, but often they just “die.” Sometimes when organizations die, loose ends get tied up, remaining projects finished, transferred to other agencies or mothballed, staff get placed, office equipment is returned to the leasing company, sold or left behind, and someone might even write a final report. More often, though, resources run out and staff disappear before most of these things get done. Once the cash stops flowing, the organization unravels quickly.

As the organization disbands, however, its organization does not simply disappear. Many of the relationships that constituted the organization break up, but some remain,
either active or dormant, and “fall away” from the organization and “into” the community. This “debris” includes names and addresses, letter head and post office boxes, favors owed, subcontractors in need of work, relationships of trust and distrust, etc. Like detritus on the forest floor, this social structural material contains a fraction of the negative entropy that constituted the organization. Some examples of this organizational debris is shown schematically in Figure III-4.

Organizational debris accumulates, as it were, on the floor of the community. While alive, organizations continually convert resources into organization. Relationships are built, patterns of behavior developed, and so on. When an organization ceases to exist, elements of this organization become available to other organizations in the immediate environment. This material can be either a help or a hindrance, and in Fighting Back’s case, examples of both can be found. Homelessness and infant mortality initiatives in the late 1980s consumed a good bit of community-wide sentiment and sowed a fair amount of cynicism about such approaches. Extensive repertoires of resistance to city hall efforts developed in the late 60s and early 70s evolving through what Yates called “street fighting pluralism” (Yates 1977) to what Fainstein called “conserving clientelism” (Fainstein and Fainstein 1986). When Fighting Back came along, a network opposition was in dormancy waiting to spring into oppositional action which it did around 1991. On the positive side, New Haven Fighting Back hired Barbara Geller just after John Daniels coaxed Nicholas Pastore out of retirement to serve as his police chief. Geller and Pastore had known one another for over two decades, and both acknowledged that this relationship made possible the cooperation

21 This metaphor has historical precedent. The urban ecology ideas of Park and Burress were originally based on analogy to the community ecology of plants. To my knowledge, however, no one has extended the metaphor in the obvious direction of considering the role of “dead” entities on the urban ecosystem.
between FightingBack and the Police Department that eventually resulted in the management teams.

Organizations are almost never built “from scratch,” but are created by linking together existing chunks of organization. Communities of organizations, as the arena for programs like FightingBack, are full of such chunks left over after the demise of past organizations. The resources consumed to maintain these organizations are to some degree stored in the organizational junk they leave behind. This material probably has a finite life, is not equally available to all, and can become attached to all manner of causes (cf. Laumann, Galaskiewicz and Marsden 1978 on how latent networks are mobilized) making it a part of both why it is possible to mount programs like FightingBack in places like New Haven and why it is so difficult to do so “successfully.”
Relationship Vacancies

While they exist, organizations enter into any number of relationships with other organizations. In some cases these are dyadic, contract-like relationships (such as subcontracting for a service), while in others the organization in question serves as a broker between two or more other organizations (as when Fighting Back brought unconnected partners to the same table). Contracts have two sides, one of which can remain even if the other goes away when the contract “officially” expires. Neighborhood groups, for example, may have depended on an organization for funds, technical assistance, or representation at City Hall, or a community development corporation have become accustomed to trading “protection” for political support. When a program organization goes away, the contract partner may slip into a dormant state, ready to re-emerge as soon as a new organization arrives on the scene. Declining CDBG funding levels during the 1970s and 1980s, for example, gave rise to a number of “starving agencies” by the time Fighting Back came along (cf. Fainstein and Fainstein 1986), so that when Fighting Back came along, it encountered numerous “ready to go” programs that wanted its money even before it had any plans of its own. Likewise New Haven’s rich organizational heritage gave rise to flocks consultants who lived off earlier programs and former executive directors who have gone freelance now looking for work.

When brokers go away, the adversaries may, in a sense, continue to stare at one another across the void, thereby creating an empty “virtual” brokerage relationship. A new organization can come along and fill this role without having to do all the legwork that was necessary to bring the two parties to the table the first time around. It appeared that something like this permitted the Yale Office of New Haven Affairs to pick up some of the
convening work that had been undertaken by FightingBack and programs run out of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. Of course, brokering voids can also trap a new organization that had intended to play some other role. A related phenomenon occurred.

“Registration” Official and Unofficial

While active, organizations adopt a legal name, mailing address, bank accounts, check books, and IRS registration as corporation. When an organization ceases to function, its registration may live on, even after it is disbanded, as may its name, letter head, and perhaps an address or post office box. Superficially trivial, these things can, by themselves, be the basis for a whole new organization.

Organizations get listed in directories of all sorts as a part of doing business. Such listings are updated on a periodic basis and so non-existing organizations still exist as listings for sometime after they go away. For directories that require payment (such as the Yellow Pages) there may be a time limit of a year. For those that have no fees and limited budgets for researching entries, organizations can go on for a long time in this manner.

Rules, Regulations and Precedents

It is not unusual for new organizations to require changes to law or government regulations to create a niche for their existence, and it is not unusual for these rule changes to outlive the organization for which they were designed. Similar effects can happen at the level of informal precedents. FightingBack was, for years, hampered by practices that had accreted in City Hall over the years, but it also managed to leave a few of its own behind. The practice of “staffing” the management teams (typing meeting agendas and minutes,
preparing and paying for mailings, for example) became a taken for granted part of Fighting Back’s relationship with the community. When other city agencies began to use the management teams, neighborhood leaders quite innocently mentioned to those agencies that their staff would be typing and copying the agenda and sending out the mailings. Sure enough, someone was assigned to the task. The Development Administration has adopted many of the support functions for the Enterprise Community committees that Fighting Back had carried out for the management teams without, apparently, any high level decision having been made to do so.

**Individuals as Carriers of Organizational Junk**

One of New Haven Fighting Back’s early directors, some said, was a good person for the job because he had “grown up” in the New Haven social work “industry” (field notes). His substance abuse specific qualifications and his management experience were satisfactory, but he was an especially good candidate, because people knew where he stood and could assume that he understood the local “rules.” Laurel Coleman, by contrast, had came with outstanding management credentials, but no experience in New Haven. She appealed to the mayor, in part, because of her lack of familiarity with the local New Haven scene and its with her. After the Coleman disaster, one of the attractive characteristics that Geller brought to the job was that she knew New Haven from her work over a decade before in the mayor’s office, but she had been working out of town for the previous several years. In both cases, the “personal” characteristics at issue are examples of how social organizational junk is carried by individuals as they move among organizations.

When a new initiative sets up shop, one of its first acts is to hire staff. As suggested in the previous chapter, one of the most common reactions to this “problem” is that other
organizations put forth persons from their own staffs who are soon to be unfunded. Staff come with qualifications and connections and past affiliations. One need not be in the field in New Haven for very long to begin to get a feel for the smallness of social and human services community. Previous affiliations both anoint (as in useful connections like Geller’s with the police chief) and taint (as in one staff member’s previous relationships with one of the neighborhood development corporations). In either case, the act of hiring involves taking on a certain amount of “organizational debris.” In fact, the process of “starting up” a new organization is, to a large extent, a matter of dodging some and making use of other organizational junk.

As they move from organization to organization, individuals who are active in a community carry with them traces of their former memberships. As a new initiative hires them, their résumés embed the new organization in a network of past affiliations. They carry ideas and practices from old employer to new, and give both old and new employers access to one another through contacts and relationships. The pros and cons, however, are probably not symmetrical. In other words, the constant movement of people between organizations probably does not, in net, increase the overall connectedness and decrease the fragmentation of the community. One reason for this is the existence of definite career paths. People often follow similar paths and certain organizations are feeders for others, while movement in the opposite direction may be rare. It may be the case, for example, that one class of folks always “ends up” at the University, whereas another routinely begins there and ends up elsewhere.
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We can schematically represent this aspect of communities of organizations as shown in Figure III-5. Organizations are “spread out” in the organizational space of the community, but for the purposes of this illustration, the dimensions of that space are not important. At time zero, people have a set of organizational affiliations, and the initial affiliations of three persons (person red, person blue, and person green) are shown at the bottom of the columns representing their different organizations in the diagram. At each subsequent time, their affiliations are shown and a colored path connects them. This same information can be recorded in a person by time chart as shown in Table III-1.

Table III-1. Organizational affiliations of three persons over five time periods.
This matrix can be transformed into an organization by organization table by counting the number of movements between each pair of organizations. In Table III-2, the matrix element in row $i,j$ represents the number of moves from organization $i$ to organization $j$. The table is asymmetric because we are paying attention to the directions of the moves.

Table III-2. Number of moves between pairs of organizations.

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This information is illustrated in Figure III-6 which can be seen as a time lapse view down the z-axis of Figure III-5 above. The implications of movements like this include the development of cliques and ghettos (clusters of organizations among which there is significant movement and clusters that are cut off from the rest of the community), concentrations of skill and expertise (as talent is hired away consistently in one direction), and institutional isomorphism (as ideas and practices are carried from high legitimacy organizations to lower legitimacy organizations).
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Figure III-6. How people move through organizations over time.

In New Haven many leaders of service providing organizations started as professional students at Yale and APT served as a training ground for substance abuse specialists. Others got their credentials at a local state university. As individuals follow conventional career paths the community becomes filled with organizations staffed by people with particular pedigrees who carry along status differences, practices, and attitudes toward the larger institutions in the community.

Affiliations

When an organization goes away, individuals who were affiliated with it become ex-members, ex-employees, ex-board members, or ex-clients. Ex-affiliations become entries in resumes or case files, and the individuals stand in relation to one another as having been “co-affiliates” at a particular point in time. At one end of the spectrum, this may mean only mutual non-awareness of one another but recognition by third parties that both were formerly affiliated with a particular organization. At the other extreme, the individuals maintain an active personal or business relationship, calling on one another for favors, information, etc. In between, there are various stages of shared identity based on mutual affiliation with a corporate entity (for example, “We worked on that CDC board together.
back in ‘78.’). This does not even require that the individuals were affiliates at the same time ("she’s also a Yalie, though we didn’t overlap... "). Such relationships can be the raw material of new organization or a road block to it as when it is the connection by which one person is guilty by (past) association.

**Practices**

Having been visible in a community, an organization leaves behind a sense of how it did business, especially if there was anything unique or peculiar about its approach, and even actual practices. Rosenbaum and Shin (1997), for example, argue that negative health care experiences may result for minority Americans as new managed care systems are grafted onto old practices. Private health care has a long history of subtle discrimination against the poor (e.g., denying admitting privileges to physicians likely to serve high numbers of minority patients) and even though federal and state laws regulate Medicaid managed care, it is a “virtual” health care system – that is, a system built from purchased packages of services - that “picks up” discrimination in those underlying systems. Similarly, because Medicaid eligibility is often sporadic, the clients have no incentive to “learn” the system, a practice that is assumed in the design of managed care.

In New Haven, the Task Force “designed” the neighborhood networks so as to keep control in the hands of Fighting Back, but when the networkers were sent out project supervisors were busy fighting other battles and so they became neighborhood outreach workers like those in any other project. Later, Fighting Back itself was the source of institutionalized practices. After Fighting Back had been in operation for a few years, one began to hear activists mentioning that a new project would follow “the Fighting Back
approach” which usually meant that they would be sure to invite too many rather than too few “stakeholders” to their initial planning meetings.

Social Cosmologies as Organizational Scraps

Any socio-cultural collectivity - family, team, club, organization, community, country - possesses shared ideas about objects that constitute its world and the relationships between them. A “social cosmology” can be thought of as a collective catalog of what is and what is the case. It is a locally specific set of beliefs about a local world. Community initiatives like Fighting Back contribute to the construction of shared knowledge of the “the way things are.” This knowledge includes varied “facts” such as where neighborhood boundaries lie, what constitutes a youth program, that city hall is useless and the university opportunistic, or that a particular percentage of resources always goes to a local organization. The determining property that these pieces of knowledge have is that community members “know” they are true without having any empirical experience to back up their knowledge.

In New Haven, for example, “the neighborhood” is spoken of as the natural subdivision of the city. Depending on the source there are fourteen to eighteen neighborhoods, and they are routinely used for aggregating the data that justifies the need for, or for designating the target area of, social programs. Numerous books valorizing the wonderful old days in New Haven structure their narratives around “the charm of Wooster Square” or “history of Dwight,” but many older residents of New Haven find this a little odd: they have no memory of this neighborhood focus from when they were younger, and likewise, few contemporary residents could really say where “the Hill” ends and “Dwight-Edgewood” begins (field notes). And yet program officials talk about neighborhoods as if they are THE
natural way to divide up the city and as if using them amounts to going back to the residents’ way of thinking about the city. It does not.

So, where do the neighborhoods come from? During urban renewal (approximately 1955 through 1970) the city was divided into sub-areas which were then “planned” by professional designers (e.g., Lowe 1967; Powledge 1970; Talbot 1967). The implementation was spread out over nearly two decades (starting with the “Oak Street plan in the 1950s) so that only one or two were ever actively happening at the same time. Each project involved studies, documents, meetings with residents and property owners and so on, effectively creating transient instances of organization in each of the project areas. Beginning in 1960, the U.S. census was based on tracts rather than wards and during anti-poverty programs of the 1960s the tract had become a basic reporting unit. Later in the decade, during the war on poverty, similar sub-areas were used and, in the wake of calls for “maximum feasible participation” local opposition organizations were founded in each area, with the boundaries corresponding more or less with census tract boundaries. These evolved into the “neighborhood development corporations” which still exist in New Haven to this day and which became the primary conduit for human services community development block grant funds throughout the 1970s. By the time Fighting Back came along in 1989, the idea of neighborhood as the basic unit of intervention and the “official” boundaries of New Haven’s neighborhoods were pretty much taken for granted by everyone in the community. Even most officials didn’t really “know” where the boundaries were, but they knew that these boundaries were set and needed to be respected in planning programs.

The point, then, is that “the neighborhoods,” which contemporary New Haveners will swear are the basis of the city’s cultural life and history, are themselves an example of
organizational debris. It’s creation follows the steps outlined by Berger and Luckmann for the “social construction of reality.” The first step is “externalization”: someone takes an idea and does something about it (for example, an organization assigns territories to its outreach workers). The grant writers may remember the afternoon on which they arbitrarily used color markers and a map to divide the city into zones, which to the outreach workers (and more so for their successors) are simply “how things are.” This corresponds to the second step: “objectification.” The workers realize that someone made up the boundaries, but they take them as having been decided before they were hired and thus not up for debate. Later, when they train their successors, or when the next grant-writer bases a proposal on the earlier one, the boundaries are taken to have always been this way and something that the new program must correspond to. At this stage, the neighborhood construct has the coercive power of an institution. Every organization that is founded, flourishes and dies contributes to this process leaving behind bits of social cosmology to be stumbled on by the next organization to appear on the scene.

Much of this “knowledge” is reinforced in solidarity rituals engaged in by groups of residents, activists, or professionals. New programs feed it when they “bash” earlier efforts and claim that they represent a new paradigm of intervention. When Robert Wood Johnson model was grafted onto New Haven it did not trump this local knowledge. The professionals knew how these processes worked and what needed doing and what could and could not to be done. The “community,” people who had watched “comprehensive community based efforts” before, knew how these processes worked and what needed doing and what could and could not to be done and they routinely reminded one another of all this implied.
The neighborhood corporations chose not to participate. They don’t want to be involved in planning. [They just want dollars to do what they want. They see this as another fad that will come and go, while they just do what they have been doing since the 60s. (Interview 1990).

Warren, et al. point to a similar leftover from the anti-poverty programs of the 1960s:

In our view, the slums have quieted because poverty area residents have lost their sense that the existing interorganizational structure in the inner cities can be made more responsive to the needs and wishes of low-income people through the avenue of citizen participation. ... [and] from a growing realization by low-income people that the tangible results that could be obtained from such a process were minimal as levers for making much difference in the institutional and physical structure of their surroundings (Warren, Rose and Bergrunder 1974, 173).

Their pessimism is, ultimately, organizational. Moynihan, they note, had written of the “tangle of pathology” in which the Negro family found itself, but “he did not emphasize the tangle of pathology that comprised the institutional structure in which so many inner city blacks live” (Warren, Rose and Bergrunder 1974, 173).

Quite understandably, there develops among long-time residents and activists, a culture of informed cynicism. Enthusiasts of innovative approaches are often met with claims of “it’s been tried” even before details of a new idea are heard. Veterans of “unsuccessful” programs develop theories of their community’s exceptionalism. In New Haven, we were often told that things that work in other places could never work there because of its unique character and history. Residents, still living in poor conditions after a generation of programs, are completely rational to doubt the transformative prospects of new programs, and their disappointment over past failures makes it even harder to “get folks to come out and participate.” There was, in New Haven, a general suspicion of professionals, planning processes, research, and lengthy consideration (“we know what the problems are!”). Past programs may have failed to increase economic outcomes, but they often succeed in
engendering and leaving behind high levels of “shrewdness” with respect to community initiatives.

Often, residents and professionals recognize that new programs resemble old ones, but both need the resources the program represents, and a tacit agreement emerges to pretend that the new program is different. This collision of history with the present can contribute to what might be called a socially constructed hypocrisy which becomes a key element in the community’s social ontology.

**Generic Organizational Roles**

This aspect of organizational junk is a generalization on the previous one. Clients, funders and organizations in different lines of business come to think of an organization as “the” organization that does what it does, effectively standing for that function in the community. Thus, organization X might be thought of as “the ones who deal with homelessness in New Haven” and working for the homeless becomes known as Xing. The organization can go away, but this synonymousness gets left behind. In New Haven, for example, activists attempting to get funding for the Regional Data Cooperative were constantly assumed to be forming “the new D.A.T.A.” (a recently defunct organization that few overlapping features but which stood in their minds for anything having to do with data and analysis). When Fighting Back appeared to be about to close up shop (before it was known that it would be extended) there was much speculation has gone on about who or what might take over the “neutral convener” role in Fighting Back’s absence. Commonly mentioned candidates were the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and the United Way. The former seemed unlikely in 1996 as they were highly unstable internally, while looking for a new executive director, but with new leadership, they may be
appropriate for the job. The UW has acted as such a convener for a few recent efforts, but, despite its built in network of relationships it does not appear to be as well networked with “the community” as this role demands. Although it will never be seen as neutral, Yale has behaved in a “Fighting Back” manner in several of its recent interactions with the community, convening broad categories of people to work on community problems. In sum, this role has been institutionalized in such a way that somebody has to play it even if it is not always the same organization.

Empirical Referents for Abstract Concepts

Programs like Fighting Back are implementations of ideas like “participation,” “stakeholder,” and “continuum of care.” Although scholars, academics, and program designers and populizers think long and hard about such concepts, they are usually new, mysterious, and undefined for most people in a community. After five years of doing what they did and calling it what they called it, New Haveners’ understanding of “residential empowerment” and “systems change” was enriched (or impoverished) by what they saw Fighting Back doing (or not doing). Probably the most common manifestation of this kind of organizational scrap was the discrediting of such concepts as locals come to see that all the new talk represents more of the same, but there were also positive versions. When Fighting Back began, “community involvement” meant the neighborhood development corporations which were, in many people’s minds, thoroughly discredited, but by the time of this writing, “the community” stood for the management teams and similar groups and so programs were less likely to shy away from “community involvement.”
Vocabularies of Motive

Part of being successful in a community of organizations is taking a line about what the organization is trying to accomplish and why. To be funded in the first place and to maintain the legitimacy necessary to continue operating, an organization has to “sell” its approach, the problems it is supposed to solve and its approach to solving them. This task typically involves a significant amount of rhetorical labor - organizational representatives talk up the organization’s angle at every opportunity. In New Haven, the continuum of care idea was pushed by both Robert Wood Johnson and the APT Foundation in this way. After a while, they could both go away and other organizations would be explaining what they were doing in terms of how it fit in with the continuum of care. The continuum of care had become a part of the community’s vocabulary of motives (Mills 1940). Likewise, when Geller took over she became fond of saying things like “no one agency can make a difference” and “we’re just trying to keep substance abuse on the table,” phrases that became part of the local vernacular for explaining efforts to improve New Haven.

The Accumulation of Debris Over Time

Organizations come and organizations go. Every time an organization is founded resources are expended to organize the unorganized. Positions and procedures are created, relationships established, agreements made, official and “name brand” recognition are won. When organizations “go” much, but not all, of these things unravel and disappear. The birth and death accounting used by population ecologists allows us to keep track of the number of organizations in a community, but not the amount of organization. The organizational debris described above accumulates in a community over time. During its
lifetime, each organization assembles raw material into higher order organization, chunks of which get left behind after the organization dies.

These observations about organizational scraps suggest an image of community as a kind of “organizational junk yard.” The arena in which Fighting Park attempted to set up shop and organize the organization of the community to create a “single community-wide system” was full of visible and invisible remnants of thirty five years of social experiments. The rate of organizational births and deaths can be expected to vary with environmental conditions (Hannan and Freeman 1989) – resources such as federal grants, for example, conditions such as crowding and competition – so that the overall population will rise and fall with time. It seems reasonable, however, to assume some non-zero rate of debris accumulation, so that the level of debris in the community increases over time. A hypothetical trace of births, deaths, population and debris level is illustrated in Figure III-7. The rate of organizational births rises and falls – perhaps tracking the introduction of new federal antipoverty programs – and is lagged by a few years by the organizational death rate curve – capturing the finite length of most program implementations. The net organizational population (the top trace in the chart corresponding to the total number of organizations active at any particular point in time) rises and falls over time, but the amount of organizational debris in the community increases monotonically. This means that organizational foundings late in the period here

22 A strict mathematical treatment of this issue would probably assign a decay coefficient to various kinds of debris which would imply that under certain conditions the amount of organizational debris in a community could decrease (for example, during a period of low organizational population and low turnover). Some factors affecting these decay rates would be the life time of individuals (generational effects), changes in political regimes, sunset laws and so on.
illustrated (around 1990, for example), take place in a different environment than those that occurred in, say, 1965.

This perspective does not radically change our understanding of what a community initiative is or how to run one successfully. It does point us toward a feature of communities that is left out of conventional ecological and organizational approaches. Just as biological ecology has gone beyond counting organisms to study things like “the uptake and transport of materials in nutrient cycles and the transformations and exchanges involved in energy relationships” (Britannica Online 1998), our study of urban communities might begin to examine the global effects of organizations in communities. When we try to understand what kind of a thing a community is for carrying out a program like Fighting Back, we see that a community is a system in which organization circulates.

Organizational Births, Deaths, and Debris
(hypothetical data)

Figure III-7. The accumulation of organizational debris over time.
When they are “born” large quantities of resources are converted into organization. Boards are formed, relationships developed, procedures hammered out, staff are recruited. Residents and other organizations become acquainted with a new organization, what it does, what it can be counted on for, etc. Later, if it is disbanded, pieces of this organization fall to the “community floor.” The rich heritage of organization that New Haven “enjoyed” was present not only as a proud history in people’s memories, but also as detritus of past relationships among people, positions, and organizations, a morass that was more often constraining than liberating or enabling.

Organizational Junk and Other Theories

The organizational junk concept resembles ideas found in the “new institutionalism” in organizational theory and in social capital “theory” as it has been applied to communities as well as organizations. With the former it shares the idea that organizational environments are full of socio-cultural constructions, while with the latter it shares the idea that “pieces” of social structure can circulate separately from where they were first built or developed. In this section we will briefly examine the similarities and differences between organizational junk and these two approaches.

Institutionalization as Process and Organizational Debris

The main motivating question for new institutionalism in organization theory is why organizations are so similar. Rejecting the idea that organizations are designed and built only according to rational, technical, and efficiency considerations, analysts working in this tradition show how socio-cultural factors – such as what everyone else is doing or what the state seems to be rewarding – determine organizational forms.
Like the new institutionalism, a part of the inspiration for organizational junkyards is that “what we observe in the world is inconsistent with the ways in which contemporary theories ask us to talk” (March and Olsen 1984, cited in DiMaggio and Powell (1991)). Sitting in neighborhood meetings, for example, one senses a certain hollowness as participants use words like stakeholders and consensus, collaboration and community-wide. They “talk the talk,” presenting decisions in terms of “logic models” and the principles outlined by the funder, but their actions seemed to be guided by a kind of seat of the pants opportunism, by which new programs were built out of whatever fragments of past organizations they come across in the community (cf. Levi-Strauss 1966). This illustrates the idea, common to both the new institutionalism and the organization junkyard ideas of this chapter, that the social worlds of organizational actors are littered with social facts, social constructions, cultural ideas, scripts, rules, classifications, and norms, which strongly affect what those organizations can and cannot do and how they do it. If the observer sticks adamantly with concepts that abound in the wisdom literature or rhetoric of government and private funders, much will be missed. If the program implementer does so, s/he will almost surely fail. Participants in New Haven and other Fighting Back sites hinted at this when, from very early in the program, they complained that the biggest challenge they faced was how to include existing programs (CTF900719; CTF910321), and throughout the planning period they struggled with questions of duplicating existing efforts and learning from the past.

The “social cosmology” component of organizational junk is directly analogous to “institutions” in the new institutionalism. Both borrow the ideas of externalization, objectivation, and institutionalization from Berger and Luckmann (Berger and Luckmann
1967). The ideas presented in this chapter differ from the new institutionalism in terms of where they see these “castoffs” landing. For new institutionalists the object of inquiry is typically an industry or organizational field - “those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognizable area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products” (DiMaggio and Powell 1991, 64-5), but our focus here is a local community. Their emphasis is on the diffusion of forms and practices driven by forces of legitimacy and imitation. Here we emphasize the garbage can like quality of the realm in which institutions circulate - organizational junk is always produced by organizational activity in the community and is less susceptible to sorting by forces like legitimacy than neo-institutionalism would have it. Ideas and forms may be no more subject to forces of legitimacy than to those of efficiency. Initiatives like Fighting Back bring new sets of organizational actors into contact with one another, stirring the pot, so to speak.

To return to motivating questions, another difference between the two approaches is that the new institutionalism is asking a why question, while the junkyard approach is mainly asking a “what” question: what kind of a thing is a community for carrying out programs in? If pressed, this could be translated into “why are communities such difficult places to get anything done?” but this remains an essentially descriptive question. Neo-institutionalist thinkers argue that the similarity of organizations cannot be explained by rational economic models of organization alone. and the organizational junk approach is an attempt to correct the idea that communities are mere objects of intervention, sterile arenas in which programs simply succeed or fail, places where only outcomes accumulate and from which organizations go away when they die. If the former protests under-socialized concept of
organizations, the approach being discussed here is critical of an under-organizational concept of communities.

The main unit of analysis in new institutional analysis is the organizational field. The advantage of this unit of analysis, practitioners tell us, is that it makes us pay attention not just to populations or networks but to “the totality of relevant actors” (DiMaggio and Powell 1991, 65). Seeing communities as organizational junkyards follows a similar strategy for similar reasons. This approach to communities was first highlighted by Warren, et al. recommended a similar shift in level, suggesting that community programs needed to be examined at the level of interorganizational fields (Warren, Rose and Bergrunder 1974). In a position that can be seen as standing at the intersection of the old and the new institutionalism, Warren, Rose, and Bergunder argue that innovation in anti-poverty programs was “prevented, blunted, and repelled” by organizational interests and the workings of an “institutionalized thought structure” which thwarts all threats to the status quo. The organizational junk approach takes this thinking one small step further by suggesting that many of the institutional effects found in communities of organizations are even more fragmented and irrational than this.

**Social Capital and Organizational Debris**

According to Coleman (Coleman 1990, 300) the concept of social capital was first described by Loury as “resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the organization or social development of a child or young person” (Loury 1977). Coleman offered a modified sociological definition: social capital represents social structural resources as a capital asset for the individual. To qualify as social capital two properties are necessary: (1) it has to be some aspect of social structure;
and (2) it has to facilitate certain actions of individuals within those structures. Like the new institutionalists, social capital theorists working in this tradition try to show that simple economic models of markets—atomistic individuals interacting with full information, etc.—are unrealistic, and that patterns of interaction and transactions in the real world always affected by social and cultural factors. As an example, Coleman describes a Cairo market place:

... the boundaries between merchants are difficult for the outsider to discover. The owner of a shop which specializes in leather, when queried about where one can find a certain kind of jewelry, will turn out to sell that as well—or what appears to be nearly the same thing, to have a close associate who sells it, to whom he will immediately take the customer. ... For some activities, such as bringing a customer to a friend’s store, there are commissions; others, such as money changing, merely create obligations. ... The whole market is so infused with relations of the sort just described that it can be seen as an organization... Alternatively, the market can be seen as consisting of a set of individual merchants, each having an extensive body of social capital on which to draw, based on relationships within the market (Coleman 1990, 304).

Two observations are important here. One is that economic behavior is embedded in social relations (cf. Granovetter 1985), and the other is that economic action can be facilitated by structures of organization that exist between the levels of the individual transaction and the system as a whole.

Coleman describes several variant forms of social capital, but comes closest to what we have called organizational debris in his discussion of “appropriable social organization.” “Organization brought into existence for one set of purposes,” he writes, “can also aid others, thus constituting social capital that is available for use.” As examples, Coleman cites Sills description of how the March of Dimes redirected efforts toward other childhood diseases after the polio vaccine was introduced (Sills 1957, cited by Coleman) and Merton’s unpublished piece on how public housing residents organized to resolve problems such as...
defective plumbing and then, when these problems were solved, found themselves with a “tool” that could be used for other purposes to improve life in their community (Coleman 1990, 312). Similar examples might be found in situations where superordinates organize subordinates for the purpose of ensuring docility, but inadvertently provide the latter with fragments of organization out of which resistance organizations can be built (e.g., company unions, school clubs, or activity groups in mental hospitals (cf. Goffman 1961)). Coleman goes on to say that while this form of social capital may, in fact, be decomposable into other forms making it theoretically redundant, “the phenomenon of social organization being appropriated as existing social capital for new purposes is such a pervasive one that a separate mention appears warranted” (312).

So far, this sounds just like the organizational debris we have been describing. Further points of agreement appear in his description of social capital as a public good: “As an attribute of the social structure in which a person is embedded, social capital is not the private property of any of the persons who benefit from it” (315); “… do[es] not benefit primarily the persons whose efforts are necessary to bring the norms and sanctions into existence, but all those who are part of the particular structure” (316). He also emphasizes, as we have above, that social capital is often a by-product of other organizational activity: “… most forms of social capital are created or destroyed as byproducts of other activities. Much social capital arises or disappears without anyone’s willing it into or out of being; such capital is therefore even less recognized and taken into account in social research than its intangible character might warrant” (317-8).

But how is it different?
Burt takes a similar approach to social capital, but it is far less intangible for him in his structural holes theory (Burt 1992). The subject of his book is “a description of the way in which social structure renders competition imperfect by creating entrepreneurial opportunities for certain players and not for others” (1992, 8). The social structure Burt has in mind is social networks which provide conduits for filtering, directing, concentrating, legitimating information. An actor’s network affects how much and what kind of information comes from the world to her and how much information about her goes out to the world. For Burt, the key consideration is the diversity of a person’s ties to other actors: “...increasing network size without considering diversity can cripple a network.... What matters is the number of nonredundant ties” (17).

Burt’s notion of social capital is notable for its egocentrism. In other words, social capital is seen as a property or attribute of specific individuals, or, more accurately, specific positions within a social structure. His theory might be useful in explaining Geller’s success as a deal maker or New Haven Fighting Back’s role as a so-called neutral convener, but, in unmodified form, it is less illuminating than Coleman’s approach for helping to elucidate the “kind of thing” a community is for carrying out a program like Fighting Back.

Other researchers, most notably Robert Putnam, see direct connections between social capital and membership in voluntary associations such as PTO’s, churches, block watches, and bowling leagues (see, for example, Putnam 1994). The logic of this work attempts to connect attitudes about civic life and community welfare with the organizational experiences of individuals. A related tradition, associated with James Q. Wilson, applies social capital-like ideas to neighborhoods by talking about threshold phenomena and the “broken window” effect – a broken window left unrepaired “causes” the breaking of other windows.
by signaling that ordinary standards of behavior are not expected in this neighborhood (Kelling 1996; Skogan 1990; Wilson and Kelling 1982). Hints of both these approaches to social capital can be found in Jane Jacobs who wrote almost forty years ago about the positive value of local networks of face recognition in urban neighborhoods (Jacobs 1961).

A major difference between social capital theories and the organizational debris model can be seen when we consider the curious fact is that so many in New Haven complained of the negative effects of so many years of programs. At first glance, these should have progressively increased the amount of social capital in the community, but the leftover effects and byproducts of previous efforts to improve life in New Haven proved to be obstacles at least as often as they were advantageous. In their study of Robert Wood Johnson’s local mental health authority program Morrisey, et al. noted a similar phenomenon – the project seemed to be more successful in cities without prior programs:

Another possibility is that the LMHA [Local Mental Health Authority] organizational form may only have dramatic effects in those settings where there is no prior history of local management of the mental health system/ CSS [community support system]. This observation certainly fits with the data profile for Baltimore and Denver, the two sites that had little or no prior experience with MHA-like arrangements (Morrisey et al. 1994, 74).

By definition, social capital would seem to be a good thing. Without it, goal achievement is difficult, with it, easier, but the social capital possessed by a Mafia boss or the perpetrator of war crimes is clearly an exception. The approach taken here, however, is not to examine the use to which social capital is put, but to examine the way social capital, as the residue of past organizations, can hinder as well as help at the community level. Although theorists like Putnam, Wilson and, to a lesser extent, Coleman, do see social capital as something that communities have, the underlying analysis remains individualistic.
Social capital refers mostly to bits of organization that bring positive benefits to those who have access to them. In communities as organizational junk yards, organizations throw off organizational scraps as a part of doing business and these specifically affect what kind of a thing such a community is for creating new organizations and carrying out programs like Fighting Back. Our enthusiasm for “organization” can lead us to putting a positive spin on any human activity that shows more of it even though it is clear that the effects are not always or exclusively positive.

Communities as Systems of Recyclable Social Organization

If you take a walk through New Haven with a city planner or preservationist or even a sociologist, you can spend hours looking at monuments to mistakes of the urban repair efforts of the previous generation. Not everyone agrees on every detail, but the litany is a familiar one. The Oak Street neighborhood was leveled to make way for the route 34 connector, a project which remains unfinished thirty years later, leaving a several hundred yard scar separating downtown from the waterfront and cutting several neighborhoods right in half. Massive out of scale architecture such as the Veterans Memorial Coliseum towers over blocks of abandonment around it. Interstate 91 runs alongside Wooster Square cutting off traffic patterns and isolating large parcels of space turning it into urban wasteland. In retrospect, an earlier generation of planners and builders was humbled by the realization that new buildings and new roads do not always represent net gains for a community in which they are erected.23 Developers are regularly required to assess the impact of a new project on community infrastructure, pay impact fees and in some cases

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23 During field work for this project, I often encountered “experts” who could give wonderful slide shows about the mistakes of the past, but whose faith in the “design” and “development” professions showed few signs of skepticism.
even post demolition bonds so that the community does not bear the cost of undoing projects that fail.

The historical coincidence of the physical renewal of New Haven and the organizational activity which gave rise to much of the organizational debris encountered by Fighting Back suggests a thought experiment. If community service organizations (for the moment we assume this definition to be wide) routinely strew the community with organizational debris, we might think about what the equivalent of “demolition bonding” or “community organization impact studies” for community initiatives would be. The point would not be to overly regulate or inhibit such programs, but to effect a measure of theoretical consciousness raising about community social structure, and to inform our approaches to evaluation and assessment of their actual impact on communities, as well as to heighten our awareness of the organizational debris that is left behind by such programs. Whether a new anti-poverty program or an institutional reform project in the former Soviet Bloc, an awareness of the community as a community of organizations that is full of organizational debris can inform both design and implementation. Some debris is, no doubt, “infrastructure” or “capacity,” but much constitutes clutter that contributes to making the community an almost impenetrable forest where, it seems, “everything is political.”

Summary: Doing Things with Organizations in Communities of Organizations

The implicit question motivating this research has been “why is it so difficult to do things like Fighting Back in a place like New Haven?” In previous chapters I have suggested that this is because organizations are inherently unwieldy tools with which to do anything and that interorganizational collaboration is a particularly ambiguous organizational
technology. This chapter has taken the pessimism one step further, arguing that communities (of organizations) are rather messy places to try to do anything. To make this argument, I began by trying to re-orient our thinking about “community” away from the tradition, stretching from Tönnies to contemporary boosters of community initiatives, that focuses on community and its opposite or breakdown, “feelings of community,” and the individuals who comprise communities. I do not think these ideas are empirically false or ideologically misguided, but they can blind us to important structural aspects of what a community is like for mounting a change effort like Fighting Back.

In place of these more or less sentimental visions of community, I suggest we employ the notion of a community of organizations. “Community of organizations” is not a new ontological entity or operationalizable definition. As a concept, it is simply a suggestion that when looking at community change programs like Fighting Back, we need to pay attention to the mass of organizations that will pay attention to or be called on by or get involved in such an effort. If we want to be provocative, we might say, “don’t worry about the people – only the organizations count.” Such rhetorical dismissal of “the people” is, of course, a bit over the top. Popular legitimacy certainly affects the decisions of policy makers, especially elected officials, and decisions about inner city neighborhoods have certainly been affected, from time to time, by popular uprisings or the threat thereof. As a corrective, however, to conventional perspectives in which generic organizational effects are virtually invisible, such provocation is useful.

New Haven is full of skilled people working in healthy and robust organizations. Recent history has been chronicled and analyzed, and when Fighting Back began there was an optimism that the wisdom learned in the lessons of the previous three decades of urban
repair programs put New Haven in a good position to “get it right this time.” Since they knew the history, these activists assumed they would not be doomed to repeat it, but as things played out, they not only repeated it, but may have had even fewer salutary effects than earlier programs had. The mistake they apparently made was to think that the history only leaves things behind as lessons and ideas in the minds of people (activists and scholars) who process them qua ideas. What I have argued in this chapter is that organizational activity always consists, in part, or organizing – using resources to set up structures and procedures, build relationships, etc. – and some of these become a part of the community’s landscape, even after organizations go away when their funding has expired.

Despite frequent use of environmental and ecological metaphors in the study of both organizations and communities, there has been little attention paid to the question of what kinds of organizational by-products organizations leave behind. For organizational ecologists examining rates and populations, the “death” of an organization is its disappearance from the dataset, but for activists or residents in a community, that death may provide raw materials for some new venture or obstacles preventing one. By looking at the environment in which New Haven Fighting Back tried to set up shop and implement the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s idea, we could see several kinds of organizational debris left behind by earlier programs and by Fighting Back itself as it wound down its operations. I have been successful if the reader is persuaded that communities are more than mere objects of intervention and that organizations cannot be set up in a community, operate and then go away without leaving any byproducts other than intended effects. These byproducts can both facilitate and hinder subsequent community improvement efforts, but, in any case, it is no longer satisfactory to assume them away.
Seeing communities as organizational scrap yards is not to introduce a new explanatory variable. Subsequent studies could, conceivably, operationalize and measure levels of organizational debris, the decay rates of various kinds of debris, and their specific effects on subsequent organizing efforts. It might also be possible to analytically distinguish how much organizational resources go into maintaining organization or creating new organization and how much of this “negative entropy” lapses into the community of organizations when an organization goes away. For the present case, though, we have to be satisfied with having provided a slight enrichment to the hand-waving explanation that “local effects” abound in the implementation histories of programs like Fighting Back.
...organizations are tools for shaping the world as one wishes it to be shaped.

Charles Perrow

IV

Doing Things With Organizations

The Fighting Back Idea

In a 1991 two senior officials at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation published an article describing the ideas behind Fighting Back. They argued that demand reduction (using public awareness, prevention, and early intervention to reduce the numbers of new users and treatment and aftercare to reduce the number of existing users) offered a way to overcome the polarization in drug policy discussions between the two “extremist” positions advocating massive increases in enforcement and those supporting decriminalization or legalization (Jellinek and Hearn 1991). In support of this “third way” they offered two observations. First, more and more communities “ha[d] turned the corner on the drug problem” was that there had been no attempt to coordinate these efforts (1991, 79). Because there was no “common understanding of the problem” and no “consensus regarding priorities,” there was “no overall strategy for deploying the community’s multiple resources in a focused, unified effort.” Fighting Back was an experiment “designed to find out whether, by consolidating existing programs, activities, and other resources into a single community-wide system of prevention, early identification, treatment, and aftercare services,
a community can achieve substantial reductions in the use of illegal drugs and alcohol” (1991, 79).

Jellinek and Hearn recognized that they were asking communities to “orchestrat[e] the efforts of their many public, private, and voluntary organizations” and that this was something that “few communities, if any, [had] successfully achieved in response to any issue...” (1991, 80). They also noted that early feedback from Fighting Back sites indicated that a frequent problem was conflict between “grassroots” and project leaders over whether the project was too top-down and insufficiently “community-based,” and that a “major challenge...[would] be to remain responsive to grassroots concerns without alienating the community’s established political, civic, and business leadership.” Many Fighting Back sites also experienced major disagreements between those who wanted to concentrate on substance abuse and those who saw it “as a springboard for addressing a broader social agenda” and advocated attacking “root causes.” To prevent this dispute from “paralyz[ing] the process” Jellinek and Hearn suggested that “project leaders will have to show that ... neither group is likely to succeed without the active participation and commitment of the other” (1991, 81). The real question, they said, is whether “concern about the drug crisis is sufficiently broad and deep for diverse community groups to finally set aside their differences in favor of what is widely perceived as a greater common interest.” In practice “the community” was organizations and Fighting Back was basically an organizational intervention.

**Everything Here is Political: The Importance of Organizations**

Organizations actually show up frequently in the substance abuse literature. A 1995 handbook of prevention, for example, contains chapters on law enforcement and regulatory
agencies, local government and community organizations, schools, health care providers, employers, religious organizations, voluntary organizations, sports organizations, the advertising industry, and mass media (Coombs and Ziedonis 1995). The chapter on community organizations discusses common political problems that arise between organizations in a community, referring to cases that are quite reminiscent of Fighting Back: “numerous examples of conflict between [grass-roots groups and formal organizations], [and examples of] impeding or completely terminating efforts to develop comprehensive community-based prevention programming” (Pentz 1995, 72). Other authors have borrowed ideas from organizational theory to talk about programs like Fighting Back (e.g., Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman 1993; Feighery and Rogers 1989; Gidron and Hasenfeld 1994; Goodman 1993; Moos, Pettit and Gruber 1995). What was different about Fighting Back was the degree to which organizing organizations was central to the project, or rather that this was, ostensibly, its exclusive focus.

Did this make any difference? Field work in Fighting Back sites confirmed the designers’ predictions about difficulties Fighting Back projects would face. Few, if any, sites can be said to have successfully built the kind of community wide organizational coalition the Foundation had envisioned, and local organizational politics was a frequent explanation for this shortcoming. Does this mean that the insights of organizational theory are useless in practice? Are organizational difficulties self-fulfilling prophecies? Why, given the initial acknowledgement that organizational issues would figure centrally in Fighting Back’s success or failure, does there seem to be little indication that any positive steps were articulated or implemented for overcoming or circumventing specifically organizational challenges?
Doing Things With Organizations

Some hints at answers to these questions can be found in the way that the substance abuse literature pays attention to organizations. In the prevention handbook mentioned above organizational problems are mentioned as something to watch out for or as something that can go wrong. Lack of evaluation, accountability, or formal connections between organizations are cited as typical problems: "communities have had various programs over last 20 years, but few have any formal means of figuring out what is working and what not;" or there is a "lack of cooperative linkages, and thus the potential for territorial competition between prevention and treatment services in communities;" or "lack of formalized local government involvement in most community based prevention efforts...[and a] weakness in linkages between systems" (Pentz 1995, 71-72). These organizational problems are described as if one merely needs to take care that there are good cooperative linkages or that there is a formal means of figuring out what is working. "Organizations“ have made it onto the substance abuse agenda, but, for the most part, in a thoroughly technocratic way: follow the protocol and they go away.

What is missing in the writing on Fighting Back and similar programs is a critical examination of the implications of carrying out an intervention with organizations. In the substance abuse and community initiative literatures organizations qua organizations are routinely treated as universal and therefore incidental. Programs are designed as if “community minded” organizations can, like jurors, reach consensus or, like laborers, simply decide to cooperate, or, like legislators, opt to form a coalition. When things do not go well (as often they do not) explanations are grounded in community pathology or individual orneriness. In New Haven there was an ample supply of scoundrels who could be blamed
for trying to sabotage FightingBack, and when these ran out, participants and funders alike attributed troubles to the fact that “in this town, everything is political.”

The goal of this chapter is to show how some of the so-called “political” problems faced by FightingBack in New Haven can be seen to be mundane organizational problems. I will make the case that FightingBack is an example of “doing things with organizations,” and that some of what bedevils the implementers of programs like FightingBack are problems that emerge when organizations are the units on which an intervention operates and when organizations do the kinds of things that organizations do. By uncritically analogizing from individuals doing things together to organizations doing things together we leave an entire class of emergent phenomena out of consideration and blame their effects on the voluntaristic agents that we can easily identify.

To accomplish this, I will begin by locating the FightingBack strategy in the context of other alternatives of philanthropic intervention. After seeing where “collaborative solutions” fit in the larger scheme of things I will unpack the logic behind this kind of solution and describe what I call the “collaborative paradigm.” The next section will examine what research has shown to be conditions facilitating collaboration and how unusual they are in real communities of organizations. Having introduced to the ideas of communities of organizations I will then describe more formally what FightingBack was trying to do. With this done we are ready to ask our main question: if collaboration is a good idea and if conditions favor successful collaboration, what sorts of properties would we hope potential organizational collaborators to have. This leads us to the examination of five properties of organizations that are likely to be important in the collaborative process.
and to evaluate what sorts of problems might emerge when they are absent, illustrating these with observations from the New Haven Fighting Back case.

Collaboration, Coordination and Coalitions as Techniques of Intervention

Collaboration and cooperation can seem like such an obvious good idea that it is easy to forget that they are but one of several alternative approaches to philanthropic intervention. Before we look more closely at the organizational aspects of Fighting Back as it unfolded, it is useful to consider briefly other forms of system-wide intervention.

A few years before Fighting Back, RWJF sponsored another multi-city comprehensive intervention, this one on chronic mental health. In that case, the Foundation opted to call for communities to establish a single centralized coordinating authority to achieve the coordination that was deemed necessary to improve services for the chronically mental ill (Goldman et al. 1992; Morrisey et al. 1994; Shore and Cohen 1994). A variation on this actually took shape in many states (including some where Fighting Back was active) in the form of state or regional substance abuse councils, but few succeeded in getting all substance abuse funding funneled through them. Other options would have been to design new protocols (i.e., legalization or radically intensified interdiction efforts) and fund any agency willing to implement them, or to select one organization to carry out the task and fund it extremely well so that resources are not a problem. Finally, the Foundation could simply have upped the amount of money flowing into the substance abuse domain, assuming that no one knew for sure what would work and that the most efficient use of resources was highly decentralized, ad hoc approaches that would maximize the amount of innovation in the system.
Where does Fighting Back fit in?

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation designed Fighting Back to be different from each of these strategies. It would support local efforts at increasing cooperation between agencies without advocating centralized coordination. The program was not based on a particular approach to substance abuse but on the notion of a “continuum of care” that linked public awareness, prevention, treatment and after-care together in a “seamless” system. Finally, the resources represented by Fighting Back were not intended to support direct services, but rather to support efforts to make existing services more effective by facilitating their working together.

“Collaboration” has become an increasingly popular buzz-word among those engaged in doing or funding community development work over the past few decades. Government and private funders alike have increasingly mandated all manner of collaborative partnering as a condition of funding, and to people in the “helping” professions the idea of working together is intuitively attractive. Collaboration, cooperation, and coalition are also quite attractive to those who fund programs like Fighting Back. As budgets are tightened and the mood of not “wasting” money on social programs takes hold, the more moves that can be cloaked in the rhetoric of efficiency and reduction of duplication become popular (e.g., see Nation's Health 1995). The lack of evidence of success in corporate collaborations notwithstanding, the call for more collaboration is also seen as a way to make the human services more businesslike (and thus, presumably, more efficient and effective).

What may be most curious about strategies collaboration, cooperation, and coalitions is the enthusiasm with which they continue to be pursued by activists, recommended by
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Organizations as Tools

consultants, and required by funders in the face of repeated problems. Weiss noted in 1979 that “the experience of implementing and managing service coordination and/or integration has been consistently frustrating, marked by repeated accounts of pain and failure” (Weiss 1978). Seymor Sarason, himself a witness to many such attempts in New Haven and elsewhere, has recently written “we have been witness to and participated in scores of formal efforts to improve coordination and utilization of resources in order to better serve their publics. ... It is correct to say that in almost all instances, these efforts were either outright failures or had barely discernible effects. Some instances met all of the criteria of a cure exacerbating the disease” (Sarason and Lorentz 1998, 55). But what is this thing that funders champion and researchers find so dubious?

The Collaboration Paradigm

Despite disagreements about what collaboration, cooperation, and coalitions (CC&C) mean, it is possible to define an ideal typical construct that we might call the “collaboration paradigm” that captures the apparent logic behind the conviction that CC&C is a good way to do things. The paradigm can be divided into three hypotheses: collaboration is more appropriate for some problems than others; collaboration is facilitated by certain domain level conditions; working together organizations can accomplish shared goals more effectively than they can separately. These are shown schematically in Figure IV-1.
The first hypothesis is that different kinds of problems require different kinds of solutions and that it is possible to distinguish problems that are best solved by separate agents acting on their own, problems that require the creation of new entities (teams, new organizations, or formal partnerships), and those that are optimally solved through cooperation and collaboration. Typical problems in this category include those that arise in crisis situations (Gray 1985), “‘indivisible’ problems, i.e., problems which are bigger than any single organization acting alone can solve” (Aldrich 1976 cited in Gray 1985), circumstances where conventional adversarial dispute resolution breaks down, and conditions of “turbulence” that arises when “competing organizations, acting independently in diverse directions, create unanticipated consequences for themselves and others (Emery 1977; Emery and Trist 1965 cited in Gray 1985).

The second component of the model is the hypothesis that certain structural conditions facilitate to cooperation, collaboration and coalition formation (see Gray 1985 for a review). Even if a problem requires a collaborative solution, it may not be possible for collaboration to occur for reasons that have little to do with the nature of the problem itself. A large number of researchers have worked in this area. Recently, the tradition of looking at the
role of social capital in interorganizational relations has addressed these same issues (e.g., Nohria and Eccles 1992; Putnam 1993; Sabel 1990).

Finally, the third hypothesis is that collaboration and cooperation do actually lead to efficient and effective problem resolution. That is, once a sufficient level of cooperation has been achieved, the resources and efforts of the collaborators combine to bring an irresistible force to bear on the problem. This third hypothesis is precisely what Fighting Back was intended to “test”: “whether, by consolidating existing programs, activities, and other resources into a single community-wide system of prevention, early identification, treatment, and aftercare services, a community can achieve substantial reductions in the use of illegal drugs and alcohol” (Jellinek and Hearn 1991, 79).

Both the designers and participants in Fighting Back seemed to subscribe to the logic of the paradigm. Collaboration and cooperation made sense to them as strategies and New Haven seemed like a place where it could be done. The results, though, were disappointing; collaboration proved difficult and desired outcomes were elusive.

This simple analysis of the “collaboration paradigm” suggests several lines of inquiry for understanding what happened in New Haven. First, we might attempt to explain the ideological appeal of this approach to contemporary social problems. Second, we could investigate whether substance abuse is actually well-suited to collaborative solutions. Third, we could try to determine whether community level conditions that facilitate collaboration between organizations were present or absent.

Weiss (1978) offers a neo-institutional answer to the question of collaboration’s popularity in the face of frequent frustration and failure, suggesting that efficacy is outweighed by symbolic appeal. Support for CC&C is “expressive of social commitments
to rationality, simplicity, efficiency, and comprehensiveness.” This suggests that as analysts we should be careful not to take the idea of actual coordination too seriously, and this certainly fits with the observation that words like “collaboration” and “cooperation” often seemed more like a kind of ideological currency exchanged among the players than a means or a goal.

But it is not all symbolic; players in New Haven did actually stumble about attempting to connect their organizations together. Kids were being shot outside of discos, babies were being born addicted to cocaine, and men who had struggled to overcome addiction were relapsing because there were no jobs and no support services for them after they got out of treatment. Activists and professionals who worked on the front lines really did feel that they were “all on the same side” and that building bridges between organizations was a good idea. Did the frustration they encountered result from the fact that substance abuse is not the right kind of problem for this kind of solution?

Some problems are open ended, don’t neatly fit into established jurisdictions, are the results of multiple diverse causes, or are just too big in comparison with the control wielded by any one organization. Gray cites Ackoff (1974) calling them “messes,” Aldrich (1976) “indivisible,” and Rittle and Webber (1973) “inherently wicked.” In the case of substance abuse, collaboration seems called for because the success of one intervention (say, sending kids an anti-drug message) is so easily affected by the failure of another (say, getting rid of street drug markets). Gray suggests that organizations have a hard time working together because they do not conceptualize problems and solutions at the domain level, but see events in terms of the individual organizations trying to maximize their own control and
well-being. The research and policy question here is whether or not substance abuse really is that sort of problem or not.

If we assume that it is, a natural question is whether New Haven possessed the kinds of conditions that seem to make collaboration succeed or fail. Gray (1985) reviews research on collaboration and presents a list of conditions that facilitate interorganizational collaboration that is particularly appropriate for thinking about Fighting Back because it focuses on the level of the interorganizational domain. These are summarized on the left side of Table IV-1, while the right hand column contains brief comments about the “reality” of most urban communities.

Most of the conditions identified as facilitating successful collaborations in Table IV-1 are relatively rare and this would certainly explain the high levels of failure mentioned by Weiss, Sarason and others. In addition to being unusual, because they are at the level of the interorganizational domain, few of them are readily manipulated by local actors. When the absence of these conditions makes collaboration difficult, local players come up with explanations that are quite close to the neo-institutionally flavored ones offered by Weiss. To further study collaboration along these lines we could undertake to determine which conditions held in New Haven and what effects these seemed to have on efforts to collaborate.

**Keeping Organizations at the Center of Focus**

There is a problem with our examination of the “collaboration paradigm” thus far. We slipped almost imperceptibly from problem types to domain conditions without ever problematizing the core of the third hypothesis: doing collaboration. Organizations are taken for granted as mere pieces on the game board that can be manipulated at will.
Nothing in what we have said so far acknowledges that interorganizational collaboration may be more trouble than it is worth.

In an under appreciated unpublished report from 1970 Litwak, et al. exhaustively theorize interorganizational linkages on the basis of their research on poverty organizations. Their work can properly be seen as a tilling of the soil in which the ideas of this study have grown. Then, as now, collaboration was popular among both social scientists and policy makers, but a theory of interorganizational linkages was needed because the support for interorganizational linkages is based more on simplistic notions of pooling resources, economies of scale and the virtues of “getting along with one another,” rather than a clear understanding of the conditions that make interorganizational linkages useful or not and the varieties of linkages that are appropriate to different situations. Three insights found in Litwak are worth remembering (Litwak et al. 1970). First, interorganizational relations come in a variety of forms. Second, interorganizational relations can be either distance closing or distance opening. In other words, not working together or not competing can be a form of relationship. Finally, collaborative relations need to be seen in their proper context as an intermediate position between total obliviousness and disconnection at one extreme and merging which amounts to using formal organization as the method of linkage (cf. Williamson 1975).

Thus, instead of the questions raised in the previous section, my approach here will be to look at interorganizational collaboration organizationally. If we suppose that collaboration is the right approach for a problem like substance abuse and that conditions in a place like New Haven were as good as they were going to get, what was it about the task that made it so difficult? To answer this question I will back off somewhat from the
interorganizational domain level at which Gray focused her inquiry and return to the level of the organization as tool. The research question now becomes “what are organizations like for doing something like collaboration?”
### Table IV-1. Conditions Facilitating Interorganizational Collaboration.\(^{24}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In Theory</th>
<th>In Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants must reflect the complexity of the problem under consideration.</td>
<td>The closer participation is to the problem, the more likely the solution is to reproduce conflicts that give rise to the problem in the first place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From information and networking standpoint, the more actors involved, the better.</td>
<td>The larger the network the more challenging the communication and the more difficult it can be to approach consensus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders must be convinced that problem requires joint solutions.</td>
<td>Talk is cheap.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders must expect benefits of collaborating to outweigh costs</td>
<td>Rational tallying is rarely done thoroughly. Collaboration sounds good until the “bills” start coming in.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of interdependence enhances likelihood of collaboration.</td>
<td>Recognition of interdependence probably results from, as much as contributes to, collaboration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some degree of power dispersion (non-oligarchical arrangements) enhances collaboration.</td>
<td>Rare.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared perceptions of legitimacy are necessary.</td>
<td>By their nature, collaborative efforts which draw from different sectors engage differing perceptions of legitimacy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic proximity facilitates structuring.</td>
<td>Ongoing tension between hyper-local parochialism (e.g., NIMBY) and need for regional cooperation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project must include ability to monitor changes in environment.</td>
<td>Difficult to do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevailing norms should support collaboration.</td>
<td>Great if they do, but how to get there?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction setting facilitated by coincidence of values among stakeholders.</td>
<td>And it would be a coincidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion of legitimate stakeholders during problem setting often constrains later implementations.</td>
<td>Inclusion of all stakeholders can cause project to become diverted toward side issues and small skirmishes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint information search by stakeholders contributes to emergence of coincident values.</td>
<td>Coordinating such searches is itself a big hurdle to get over.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration enhanced by skilled conveners who can teach others how to collaborate.</td>
<td>They are rare. To be effective broker you need to be connected. To be connected without being corrupted is difficult.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External mandate is not sufficient by itself.</td>
<td>External mandates become central.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category of all potential stakeholders must be seen as changing over time.</td>
<td>Signing up partners is labor intensive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There need to be negotiations among all stakeholders about how to regulate the domain.</td>
<td>Very difficult to implement. High transaction costs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{24}\) Material in left hand column is derived from Gray (1985)
Doing Things with Organization

In the case of Fighting Back, both inside and outside observers made liberal use of variations on all these theoretical approaches in their attempts to explain the difficulties encountered in trying to implement Fighting Back in New Haven and other sites. New Haveners and site visitors repeatedly noted that it was such a political town that little could be accomplished there. Parochial organizational self interest could not be trumped by community interest without more of an incentive than Fighting Back could provide. One explanation favored by the National Program Office was the leadership qualities of the project director. Local informants working with Fighting Back lamented that it appeared that “business as usual” would dominate the good intentions associated with Fighting Back. The lack of genuine consensus and the failure to get really influential players “on board” represented an insufficient implementation of an otherwise sound plan. None of these criticisms doubted the original construct and none asked about fundamental difficulties involved in working with organizations.

But what if they had good leaders, that everyone came to the table, that organizations were good citizens, and that there was wide support for systems change. Would this have made Fighting Back a smashing success? If these obstacles could be removed, what characteristics would we need to see in organizations in order for them to be good collaborators? In other words, is it possible that the mere act of trying to get an entire community of organizations to collaborate in the community interest will give rise to a number of emergent effects quite apart from the good will or community mindedness of any particular organization or person?
In other words, if pathology, guile, corruption, and spite were all minimized would things go well? If we recall one definition of collaboration: “By collaboration we mean: (1) the pooling of appreciations and/or tangible resources, e.g., information, money, labor, etc., (2) by two or more stakeholders, (3) to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually” (Gray 1985, 912) we can ask what properties organizations should have if the very act of collaborating itself is not to cause more problems than it solves.

We assume, first, for example, that organizations are be able to interact more or less benignly, so that mere contact and exploration of collaborative possibilities should not be threatening. Secondly, we equate organizations sharing a geographic area with being in the same organizational world. Thirdly, potential collaborators are assumed to be potential collaborators – in other words, we assume that organizations have the flexibility to join “the cause.” Fourthly, potential collaborators are assumed to be able to commit to the collaboration over the long haul. Fifthly, we take it for granted that as a collective a collaboration is able to monitor its efforts. Finally, we assume that resources can in fact accumulate and combine to create a larger whole. Gray notes that a reason for considering domain conditions and their relation to successful collaboration is that “domain level dynamics can be managed to improve the likelihood that collaborative relationships are achieved and sustained” (916). To the contrary, the argument of this chapter is twofold: domain level conditions can be difficult to access and even when domain level conditions are “right” there are organizational factors that make community-wide collaboration difficult to achieve.
Doing Things With Organizations

The Price of Organizational Diversity

Initiatives like Fighting Back bring a wide variety of organizational players “to the table.” Differences in their substantive agendas were readily acknowledged - in fact, the tension between overcoming differences and exploiting complementarity was central to the Fighting Back idea. Less common, though, was any acknowledgment of the effects of bringing together organizations of different kinds: large and small; service provision, advocacy, and research; nonprofit and for profit; elite and grass roots. Warren (1971 cited by Laumann, Galaskiewicz and Marsden 1978, 466) noted that the failure to appreciate variability in normative expectations and thought structures between organizational fields was a major weakness in the social service delivery literature. Seen only in terms of inputs and outputs, service niches, or geographic foci, organizations appear to exhibit obvious complementarity so that working together seems natural. In practice, though, when collaborative initiatives bring together qualitatively different kinds of organizations - in terms of style, structure, or culture, the resulting frictions often give rise to unintended consequences.

In New Haven, as we have seen, Fighting Back assembled a broad menagerie of participants. Figure IV-2 shows the degrees of involvement of organizations from different sectors in New Haven at the beginning of Fighting Back. At the center of the effort several pairings of unlikely partners gave rise to much of the dynamic that formed the core of the project’s narrative. These include the uneasy partnership between New Haven and the APT Foundation, the struggle to connect elite and grass roots organizations, and the difficulties of forging partnerships between businesses and social service agencies.
In this diagram, the substance abuse domain is divided into various pie shaped organizational sub-domains. The organizations and agencies mentioned in New Haven's original proposal are arranged by their sub-domain and degree of involvement with higher levels of involvement in the center. The innermost gray circle includes organizations that were involved in writing the grant while the next circle includes organizations that were represented on the original Task Force. The next two rings contain organizations listed as “partners” and “resources,” respectively, in the proposal, and the outermost ring contains
organizations whose only involvement was to write a letter of support to be included with the proposal.

Although we need to be cautious about over-interpreting what is at best a schematic representation, three features of the diagram are worth noting. The first cluster at the center shows that the organizations at the core of the original proposal were not substance abuse specialists. The cluster at the 2 o’clock position includes conventional family oriented service providers – YM/WCA, Jewish Family Services, Catholic Family Services, Volunteer Action Center, Family Counseling of Greater New Haven – that were listed as resources and cajoled into writing letters but were not directly involved in setting up Fighting Back. The arc-shaped cluster from 9 o’clock to 1 o’clock includes the bulk of New Haven’s substance abuse specific organizations and agencies. From this subdomain, only APT, Crossroads (an adult treatment center for men), and the Alcohol Services Organization (A.L.S.O. – an organization that contracts to provide alcohol related employee assistance programs (E.A.P.) for many local employers) were highly involved in Fighting Back at the start. Finally, at the 5 o’clock we have a cluster of neighborhood based organizations (and many more existed by are not shown in the diagram since it includes only those mentioned in the original proposal) that are mentioned as having a role in the implementation but are not involved in the process.

These things add up to a portrait of an effort that was undertaken by a small group of non-substance abuse organizations allied with one substance abuse specialist organization which was going to put together a plan to coordinate the efforts of a large number of organizations that would not be directly involved in the planning of the program.
### Table IV-2. Fighting Back Partners in Original Proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Alcoholics Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACGNH</td>
<td>Arts Council of Greater New Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AETNA</td>
<td>Aetna Insurance Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Archdiocese of Hartford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALANON</td>
<td>Al Anon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALSO</td>
<td>Alcohol Services Org of South CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APT</td>
<td>APT Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APTAH</td>
<td>APT Alpha House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APTCEP</td>
<td>APT Community Health Education Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATEEN</td>
<td>Al-a-teen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCBS</td>
<td>Blue Cross Blue Shield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BdAld</td>
<td>NH Board of Aldermen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BdEd</td>
<td>New Haven Board of Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM</td>
<td>Congressman Bruce Morrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BScout</td>
<td>Quinnipiac Council Boy Scouts of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Cocaine Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>Community Action Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CADC</td>
<td>CT Alcohol &amp; Drug Abuse Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPACT</td>
<td>CAPACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBGC</td>
<td>Clifford Beers Child Guidance Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>NH Office of Corporation Counsel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCHC</td>
<td>Children's Center/ Wavenham Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCWH</td>
<td>Children's Center/ Wavenham Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFP</td>
<td>Coalition for People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFS</td>
<td>Catholic Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM</td>
<td>CT Children's Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMHC</td>
<td>Connecticut Mental Health Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConCtr</td>
<td>Consultation Center, CMHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROSS</td>
<td>Crossroads Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARE</td>
<td>Project D.A.R.E. (Police Dept)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>US District Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Downtown Cooperative Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYS</td>
<td>CT Dept of Children &amp; Youth Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHR</td>
<td>CT Dept of Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOA</td>
<td>Dixwell Opposes Alcoholism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOPP</td>
<td>NHPS Drug Out Prevention Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPS</td>
<td>NH Department of Police Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPW</td>
<td>NH Dept. of Public Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Family Counseling of Greater New Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCB</td>
<td>First Constitution Bank (now First Federal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHHC</td>
<td>Fair Haven Community Health Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frei</td>
<td>Freshfathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GScout</td>
<td>CT Trails Council of Girl Scouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HANH</td>
<td>Housing Authority of New Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAP</td>
<td>CMHC Hispanic Alcoholism Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHC</td>
<td>Hill Health Center HomRec Home Recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRA</td>
<td>NH Human Resources Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSR</td>
<td>Hospital of Saint Raphael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBC</td>
<td>Immanuel Baptist Church Info InfoLine of South Central Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JFSC</td>
<td>Jewish Family Service Info InfoLine of South Central Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JL</td>
<td>Junior League of New Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMH</td>
<td>John Magee House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUNTA</td>
<td>JUNTA for Progressive Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LYD</td>
<td>Latino Youth Development, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTFA</td>
<td>New Haven Mayor's Task Force on AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Narcotics Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHA</td>
<td>New Haven Advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHDA</td>
<td>NH Dept of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHF</td>
<td>New Haven Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHPS</td>
<td>NH Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHR</td>
<td>New Haven Register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orph</td>
<td>APT Foundation's Orchard Street Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>NH Dept. of Parks, Recreation &amp; Trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEOPLE</td>
<td>P.E.O.P.L.E. (People Engaged in Organizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC</td>
<td>Private Industry Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTO</td>
<td>City Wide PTO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QHouse</td>
<td>Dixwell Community House Rep State Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWA</td>
<td>South Central CT Regional Water Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATU</td>
<td>CMHC Substance Abuse Treatment Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>St. Bernardette's RC Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCGC</td>
<td>Southern CT Gas Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIH</td>
<td>Special Commission on Infant Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCRC</td>
<td>South Central Rehabilitation Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sen</td>
<td>State Senators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFF</td>
<td>Shirley Frank Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNET</td>
<td>Science Park Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP</td>
<td>Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TempEm</td>
<td>Temple Emmanuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UI</td>
<td>United Illuminating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UL</td>
<td>Urban League of Greater New Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW</td>
<td>United Way of Greater New Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAC</td>
<td>Volunteer Action Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WELI</td>
<td>WELI Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTNH</td>
<td>WTNH Channel 8-ABC Affiliate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALE</td>
<td>Yale University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YCSC</td>
<td>Yale Child Study Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YDPsy</td>
<td>Yale University Dept. of Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>YMCA of New Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YSM</td>
<td>Yale School of Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YSMPed</td>
<td>YSM Dept of Pediatrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA</td>
<td>YWCA of New Haven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**APT and the City: Obvious Complementarity, Inevitable Friction**

The APT Foundation and the City needed one another to pull off the grant, but the tension between them was no secret. “[It’s] not appropriate for [APT] to take more responsibility,” said one participant, “[now] the City needs to take responsibility” (Interview...
1990). Some were even optimistic that this would happen. The head of a community-based health organization, who would be considered a friend to APT, said in 1990:

> [t]here was fear and distrust of the APT Foundation. They have a treatment and research mentality. [They have] new programs now: 80 cocaine slots, outpatient treatment programs. A year ago, [they served] 80% white middle class males, EAP and people who could wait. When APT became the driving force of the planning grant [it was] a problem, but the city has helped -- couldn’t have done it without APT and now the city can pull off the planning stage (Interview 1990).

Such optimism proved unwarranted; it became obvious that the project was not going to happen without significant input from APT. Even if the city had to appear to be in charge, it was APT, not the city, that could put a full time person on the task and spend “thousands of dollars...” to get the grant written. An APT official said,

> if we were [the lead agency], we would need to ask city to help.... City needs to take hold of the project. ...[we have] resources -- [we do] not [need to] change the structure and ... be the lead -- but [we] need to have [APT’s] name on it -- it brings credibility (Interview 1990)

A brief comparison of APT and HRA in terms of resources, capacity, style and culture gives a sense of how organizational differences gave rise to problems that had little to do with their willingness or not to work together.

The APT Foundation was founded just as new federal drug research and treatment funds were becoming available during the Nixon administration, and carefully built over the years into a efficient grant getting machine. A 1994 brochure proclaims that APT is “[a] world leader in the study and treatment of substance abuse.” It employed over two hundred people working at several sites in and around New Haven. Affiliation with both Yale School of Medicine and Yale New Haven Hospital gave it access to world class research and clinical staff, but its separateness from them meant that it could do things that the University would not, such as “accepting food stamps, or writing training grants at 8%
[indirect costs]" (Interview 1995). Its near monopoly in the local treatment market and location in the middle of the city’s poorest neighborhoods made it easy for researchers to find subjects for their projects, and its size meant that it always has experienced grant and report writers, spreadsheet jockeys, project supervisors, and sophisticated meet-and-greet staff.

APT saw its mission as getting researchers interested in substance abuse and ensuring that some of their research work had relevance to the New Haven community. When asked to describe their role in New Haven staff frequently mention sharing knowledge from research with primary care providers. APT is a busy place; an executive proudly notes:

> thirty five protocols at any one time.... Lots of research, from treatment modalities to genetics. Twenty faculty [are] currently involved in SATU [Substance Abuse Treatment Unit] programs. And they spend time thinking about transferring what they do, they don’t keep it to themselves (Interview 1995).

APT’s headquarters is located on the edge of the Yale medical area in a four story concrete building shared with the Housing Authority of New Haven. There is a guard at the front entrance to the building, and disheveled men loiter outside and in the vestibule inside the door. A tiny four person elevator is the main route to the offices on the second floor. Handmade signs taped to the walls direct employees and visitors to keep the doors between the two agencies locked at all times. Addicts and street people, plentiful in the lobby, never find their way in here.

The atmosphere at APT is a cross between a that of a medical office and a social service agency. At the end of a serpentine hallway, a receptionist sits surrounded by paperwork and

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25 The university’s reluctance to get into grant funded service provision probably has roots both in concerns about developing a client base that remains after funding goes away and the fact that service provision is not fully compatible with the career imperatives that exist at a research institution. Cf. Galatowicz (1997, 108ff) on AIDS services in the 1980s.
overflowing open-faced filing cabinets. The walls of meeting rooms are covered with shelves of binders with labels like “Adolescent Treatment Strategies” or “Proposed Continuum of Care for Pregnant Mothers.” Jargon and the names of drugs and treatment modalities fill the air, making it sound like a research facility, but the mismatched furniture and the crowding of staff into every available nook makes it look like any other community agency.

The city’s Human Resource Administration (HRA), where Fighting Back was located, is a startling contrast to APT. It is located on the first floor of the new City Hall annex on the New Haven Green. The building is comfortably corporate; pastel shades, earthy textures, wood and glass abound. Despite the look, it was not unusual for addicts to drop in to ask Fighting Back staff about getting into a program. There is no buzz there, medical or otherwise. The hall is lined with offices belonging to administrators of one or two person sub-departments like elderly or disability services. Much of the work done here amounts to overseeing small grants disbursed to community agencies as a part of the city’s human services community development block grant (CDBG) funds. Some desks have computers, but few are switched on. The workers here are career civil servants, not aspiring social service or medical professionals. In contrast to APT, the city almost always hires outside consultants for grant writing.

Throughout the first years of the project there were budget crises and hiring freezes in the City, and HRA sub-departments were battling for their budgets. Little energy was left for engaging in, and few employees had any experience at, exotic activities like grant seeking.

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26 At the start of the project Fighting Back and the Human Resources Administration had been located in a different building. The author began the research after the move had been made.
Where APT had a flexible, skilled and motivated staff, the city had almost no support staff, a shortage of appropriate skills among the staff they did have, and Fighting Back was not in a position to command a great deal of effort from even these. By contrast, although HRA was not exactly seen by city residents as a can-do organization, it could claim to work for “the community” in a way that APT, with its oft noted legitimacy deficit, never could. As one APT staff member admitted in 1990 “[We were] fighting a bad reputation in the community” (Interview 1990).

On the surface, APT and the City had complementary resources and needs, but their differences caused trouble every time they tried to work together. They were different kinds of organizations subject to different kinds of incentives and constraints. Different types of activity counted as hard work, success was defined relative to different audiences, and they brought very different sets of goals to the table. Building a community-wide coalition would require more than organizations “signing on,” and getting such different kinds of organizations to actually “work together” proved one of Fighting Back’s biggest challenges.

Local Interpretations: Capacity, Personality, and Politics

The polite way for organizations that did have working photocopiers and computers - staff who could run them, answer the phone, get out a mailing, run a meeting or write a grant - to talk about those that did not was in terms of “capacity.” The difficulties that

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27 New Haveners regularly relate stories of the poor community being “used” as research subjects, and of racial preferences in accepting people for treatment. Decades earlier, when methadone had been introduced to New Haven against the wishes of some community leaders, but “physicians courageously went in and went against community opinion,” as Galatowitsch quotes a APT Board member recalling the event (1997). APT is perceived to serve the community when federal funds support it and then to pull back when they don’t. Some years earlier, when waiting lists for treatment became common, informal research showed that the racial composition of the waiting lists was what was expected, but that composition at first admit was skewed in the direction of white patients, suggesting that non-whites saw the waiting list as an exclusionary mechanism (Interview 1997). To the people at APT, who work hard to obtain resources and deliver much needed services, these stories are atypical or even apocryphal, but they are the material of which its reputation in the community was made.
arose when they tried to work together was sometimes attributed to “lack of capacity” which was sometimes a way of saying that an organization’s staff were incompetent. When this label did not fit interorganizational friction was attributed to persons (“uncooperative individuals”), clans (“ongoing turf battles”) or community loyalty (“a lack of commitment to the process”). People regularly complained about the way other organizations worked (“they don’t know how to run a meeting,” “they’ll never understand the politics of these things”), but the frustration of working with one another more frequently elicited the sentiment “Why can’t we all just get along?” rather than inspiring thoughts of ongoing structural problems.

**The Emergent Effects of Organizational Differences**

Several New Haven informants were fond of pointing out that in another context the word collaboration meant “working with the enemy.” They felt it was important not to gloss over the fact that there were genuine conflicts of interests between potential “partners.” Indeed, much was made about how organizations needed to put their own interests aside in favor of collective community interests. Many of the conflicts that arose in connection with New Haven Fighting Back, however, didn’t originate in conflicts of interest per se. Sometimes, attempts at collaboration between otherwise “friendly” partners generated negative outcomes that seemed to come simply from the fact that the organizations were of widely different kinds.

The system that Fighting Back was supposed to be changing consisted of many clusters of organizations – churches, hospitals, clinics, treatment programs, businesses, and neighborhood groups, for example, – shared similar professional cultures, were in similar structural positions, or had achieved a negotiated status quo from routinely dealing with one
another. Within clusters, frequent transactions foster processes of isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) that “smooth the edges” making interorganizational contact unproblematic because of negligible transaction costs. Between clusters, though, transactions were quite non-routine and interorganizational differences regularly contributed to friction, violence or other suboptimal outcomes. Since the point of Fighting Back was to bring members of different clusters “to the table” in order better to coordinate their activities, it was destined to increase the number of potentially disruptive interactions between structurally dissimilar organizations. As a result of the conflicts engendered at the Fighting Back table, many participants became progressively more convinced than they had been at the start that cooperation in New Haven was impossible (field notes).

The interaction between APT and the City wasn’t the only place this took place. Domain level effects emerged from organizational level differences in a number of areas, including differences in organizational morphology (mainly size), sector (for profit, nonprofit, government), levels of organizational sophistication, and areas of substantive interest (e.g., prevention and treatment). We’ll examine each of these briefly in the next few sections.

Size

When large organizations with hierarchical divisions of labor encounter one another, protocol can be followed – VPs meeting with VPs, outreach workers with outreach workers, experts with experts – and neither party is at risk of being swallowed up, brushed off, or attacked. Encounters between small organizations are similarly easily managed. Interesting effects rooted only in size, however, emerge in encounters between large and small. Fighting Back brought together organizations that ranged in size from thousands of
Doing Things With Organizations
The Price of Organizational Diversity

employees to as few as one paid staff and so these effects played a frequent role in the history of the project.

In New Haven, contact among large organizations was exemplified by encounters between the two hospitals, APT, larger city agencies, Yale, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, while typical encounters between small organizations were those between the management teams and other neighborhood based organizations. Although such meetings could be difficult to arrange and were not always productive, size per se was not a factor. Organizations could “act like themselves” without introducing size related effects into the encounter.

When small organizations encountered large ones, though, the myth of being fellow organizational citizens was belied by the vast power differential between them. When, for example, the City Wide Youth Coalition, a group of several dozen small youth agencies, had the opportunity to work with one of the hospitals in an arrangement with resource benefits for the youth agencies, they were reluctant to do so because of the likelihood that the hospital would dominate the relationship, no matter how formally it was limited to a single “slot” like all the others (field notes).

Unexpected effects also arose when large organizations encountered small ones. When Yale worked with small, neighborhood based organizations, for example, it had overwhelming material resources, but often had to defer to the small organization because of the latter’s relative monopoly on street level legitimacy. Another example of this phenomenon played itself out in a kind of “mouse that roared” style when the New Haven project was nearly derailed by the letter from the hastily assembled “Federation of Inner City Neighborhoods” in 1991.
These dynamics recapitulate some characteristics of community politics that have been described by authors writing about New Haven over the years. The interaction between large organizations is reminiscent of Dahl’s pluralist description of New Haven – numerous significant players, none with a lock on power, coalitions shift with different issues. In contrast to this, the small-large and large-small encounters resonate with the Fainsteins’ “conserving clientelism,” in which powerful organizations establish status quo relations with a set of more local organizations in a system of exchange of resources and legitimacy, while encounters between small organizations are suggestive of Yates’ “street fighting pluralism” (Dahl 1961; Fainstein and Fainstein 1986; Yates 1973).

**Table IV-3. Effects of Differences in Organizational Size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happens when this kind of organization “encounters”…</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Protocol, heavy artillery (others get caught in crossfire) (Dahlian pluralism)</td>
<td>Legitimacy issues, gather grassroots info, access to “community” (Conserving clientelism)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client, subcontracts, satellite, concern about being swallowed (Conserving clientelism)*</td>
<td>Competition, deals, coalitions (“Street fighting pluralism”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Small-large is distinguished from large small because encounters are described from point of view of row type

**Organizational Sophistication**

A second dimension along which organizations of radically different kinds encountered one another might be called “organizational sophistication.” Influenced by the ideology of citizen participation, Fighting Back strove to involve “those directly affected by the problem” which meant residents of Fighting Back’s target neighborhoods. At the start New Haven was frequently cited by RWJ for being too “top down,” but after the first few years the typical Fighting Back meeting had representatives of both “elite” and “grassroots” organizations
sitting at the same table. At times this brought together rag-tag neighborhood groups accustomed to long informal gatherings that combined business with socializing and clinicians and agency administrators for whom meetings had to fit in narrow slots between other appointments. The latter had assistants who could maintain databases, type minutes and get out mailings. The former left their kids home alone while they came to meetings while the latter went to meetings as a part of their workday.

Sometimes differences in organizational sophistication played a direct role in conflicts that arose during the project. At first the management teams required intense “hand holding” by Fighting Back staff just to keep them together from month to month. A few years into the project, however, several of them had become more well established, and one requested that they be given a block grant to disperse in the form of neighborhood mini-grants rather than merely serving as a conduit for mini-grant applications. While this would appear to be exactly what Fighting Back wanted – all the rhetoric was about empowerment, after all - New Haven Fighting Back did not wish to relinquish control to a local group, and RWJ steadfastly refused to hand over funds to an entity that could not meet their accounting requirements.

At other times, differences in organizational sophistication played a more subtle role. A common “code word” among Fighting Back participants was “capacity building.” The implication was that the activities that Fighting Back was carrying out would accomplish some measure of skill and technology transfer from the haves to the have-nots. Over several years of field work, however, it appeared that the main effect was that the have and have-nots simply became more convinced about what one another could or could not do. A common reaction on the part of the former was “it’s easier to just do it yourself.”
Table IV-4. Effects of Differences in Organizational Sophistication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happens when this kind of organization &quot;encounters&quot;…</th>
<th>Sophisticated</th>
<th>Unsophisticated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophisticated</td>
<td>Technical division of labor, reports, lists, diagrams, committees, etc.</td>
<td>“…faster to do it yourself…” “apathy” “naivete” “can’t they do anything”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsophisticated</td>
<td>“Paralysis” as resources are consumed trying to imitate/keep up.</td>
<td>Inefficient informality, re-invention of the wheel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business and the Nonprofits

One of the most popular combinations among collaboration advocates is the partnership between businesses and nonprofits. From very early in the planning process representatives of both sectors played key roles in New Haven Fighting Back. Loaned executives from Southern New England Telephone were crucial to the project’s survival, but interaction between businesses and the nonprofits also contributed to frictions that threatened New Haven Fighting Back’s ability to be a “community wide coalition.”. Business representatives came charging out of the blocks, formulated a work plan and began to call in the promises of support only to be reined in by their more politically astute collaborators who better understood that “these things take time.” The corporate “just do it” ideology ran head long into the nonprofit administrator’s reality of “wait and see.”

When Fighting Back brought for-profit and non-profit together for the good of “the community,” emergent sentiments had an effect on how these players worked with the initiative (see Table IV-5). Businesses encountering non-profits were put off by their inefficiency and inability to follow through on things. When non-profits encountered businesses, they complained that the latter were insensitive to politics. Meanwhile, businesses working with businesses could get things done but not reach “the community”
and non-profits could go to meetings endlessly but sometimes found it difficult to put someone on the task and get something done.

**Table IV-5. Effects of Differences in Organizational Sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Nonprofit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Get right down to business. Restricted to things businesses can do. Community stuff not where they usually compete.</td>
<td>NPOs inefficient, can’t “just do it.” Seem to lack capacity. Business persons assume lack of market discipline in NPO sector.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>Business don’t understand subtle politics, NPOs can’t do things because of lack of capacity*</td>
<td>Complex dance, often very limited ability to put someone on the task. Community stuff is where they usually compete.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Business-Nonprofit is distinguished from Nonprofit-Business because encounters are described from point of view of row type.

**Treatment and Prevention**

Uniting prevention, intervention, and treatment services into a single continuum of care was Fighting Back’s main mission. The continuum of care represented a set of “natural” partnerships based on complementarity, but because of their professional origins, non-overlapping client bases, and different sources of funding (especially in terms of state and federal funding sources) connections between them were far from natural. As an illustration, consider the contact between prevention and treatment agencies.

Prevention specialists give talks, design curricula, and prepare public awareness materials (posters, brochures, radio and TV spots). They usually work in schools, places of employment, and other organizations that assemble audiences for them. Prevention has spawned an entire science-service complex of theorists, practitioners and evaluators, mostly drawn from psychology and psychological social work (Coombs and Ziedonis 1995) to provide it with underlying scientific paradigms, certify its practitioners, and measure its effects. In New Haven, the core of the prevention industry was a group of agencies and
programs associated with Yale Department of Psychiatry, the Yale Child Study Center, and the Connecticut Mental Health Center. In addition, since the “costs of entry” are low – few credentials (as a field, “prevention” is still being professionalized”) and little equipment are needed – and the technology loosely defined, a significant amount of “prevention work” was carried out by small community based organizations. Frequently, prevention professionals would partner with organizations that had a “captive” population (schools, community centers, etc.) to obtain funding that would allow the partner organization to buy their prevention services.

By contrast, treatment professionals tend to be physicians, psychiatrists, or psychiatric social workers. They most frequently do their job using pharmacological agents working in in-patient or out-patient clinics. Much of the funding for the services they offer is associated with clinical trials or follow-up programs, and the rest from state programs or insurance. The services they offer are denominated in terms of slots and the “technology” works on individuals rather than populations or groups. Like prevention, a science-service-evaluation complex has grown up around their work, but evaluation is a more central part of the work since many of the projects are trials or demonstrations. In New Haven, the largest cluster of treatment activity occurred in and around APT, but other organizations such as the Hospital of St. Raphael, the two community health centers, and the South Central Rehabilitation Center were in the business as well.

28 A whole other set of conflict is raised when we look at the other modalities of substance abuse treatment. A skirmish between the pharmacologically inclined and a physician who employed acupuncture was center stage for several months during Fighting Back’s early years (field notes). Although many see them as complementary, there are also conflicts between those who favor medical treatment or management and those who are enthusiasts for twelve-step, residential, or faith-based programs.

29 Although some New Haven treatment funding designated slots for members of specific populations such as youth or pregnant women.
Table IV-6. Effects of Differences in Professional Commitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Prevention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts over modalities. Competition for $ and people.</td>
<td>Seems ineffective, unscientific. They only see failures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can feel less expert (deference), bullied, resent medical model dominance</td>
<td>Competition for contracts, conflict over methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Treatment-Prevention is distinguished from Prevention-Treatment because encounters are described from point of view of row type.

Prevention and treatment, then, differed in terms of the status of their practitioners, the sources of their funding, their “scientific-ness,” and the unit to which their services were directed (individuals vs. “target populations”). In addition, while one component of the demand reduction platform was to shift funds from interdiction to prevention and treatment, another was to increase the emphasis on prevention and public awareness (possibly at the expense of treatment). Bringing treatment and prevention professionals together meant that the nascent coalition imported latent professional conflict and genuine differences in approach between them. On the one hand, prevention work is lower in status and cannot point to its successes the way treatment can. Treatment, on the other, lacks a populist appeal and was sometimes seen as the work of greedy researchers. The simple request to “put your differences aside” was not always sufficient to ameliorate the effects of these differences.

Why Organizational Differences Mattered

By definition, when a problem requires collaborative solutions it is important to involve a diverse mix of organizations, but a shared commitment to solving a problem does not guarantee net gain from collaboration. Differences in size, sector, organizational
sophistication, and professional specialization can engender interorganizational level effects that inhibit collaboration, cooperation and coalition formation, and these effects can outweigh those arising from the benefits of complementarity. The more stakeholders involved, the more such combinations giving rise to negative domain level effects are likely. The collaboration paradigm suggests that it is messy problems that require collaborative solutions. The negative effects associated with encounters between different kinds of organizations mean that such solutions are likely to be messy themselves.

Organizations Live In Different Cities

The complexity of the substance abuse problem coupled with geography to define the universe of organizations that needed to be at the table. Once there, the theory went, the recognition that they all “lived in the same community” would motivate them to put aside differences “in favor of what is widely perceived as a greater common interest” (Jellinek and Hearn 1991). Hidden in this logic is the assumption that shared geography implies that organizations “live in the same community.” As we watched Fighting Back evolve in New Haven, doubts were cast on this assumption.

The language of “setting aside differences” suggests that conflicts between organizations are primarily matters of opinion or values which can voluntaristically be adjusted as needed. There was almost no disagreement that substance abuse was a major problem in New Haven in 1990, but so were homelessness, infant mortality, AIDS, unemployment and the economy, and a deficit that threatened to bankrupt the city. At Task Force meetings, agreement was easy to achieve when the issue at hand was whether drugs were important or whether New Haven should “come together,” but as soon as it came to making choices or
prioritizing problems, it appeared that the players lived in different communities. For housing people the city was housing problems, for treatment people it was treatment numbers, and for the Chamber of Commerce it was the economy. Each had developed a routine of lobbying for the importance of its own particular slice of the problem pie and each looked out at the community through its own surveillance camera that saw mainly the thing it controlled or treated.

Each organization saw the substance abuse problem differently. Asked in 1990 about the major consequences of substance abuse, Task Force members’ responses ranged from crime and neighborhood deterioration to birth outcomes and family problems. They were also divided on what provided evidence of the community’s AOD problem: crime arrest data, treatment waiting lists, HIV data, babies and women getting HIV, state child abuse and neglect data, demand for treatment, drug screens, “one in four talk about involvement with drug trade,” “you can see people using in the streets,” increased homeless population, AIDS numbers; STD numbers (1990 PIRE interviews).

This tendency to be “all over the map” in their assessments left New Haveners convinced that their community was hopelessly fragmented into organizational fiefdoms lead by individuals who put the survival of their own program before the good of the community as a whole. A former project director noted in 1993 that there was simply a “[l]ack of good will in the community, skepticism about not for profits, [and] not enough trust.” (Interview 1993). Another noted that “Some of community based organizations are entrenched in ‘poverty pimping’ [and] maintaining their power bases” (Interview 1990).

Most informants could name a long list of organizations that were “corrupt” or “ineffective” or “hadn’t done anything in years.” There was quite a bit of overlap in terms
of whom they would name as the worst offenders, but almost everybody was on somebody’s list. The root of the problem, most seemed to think, was that the other guy didn’t really care about New Haven.

**Do Organizations in a Community of Organizations Even Live in the Same Community?**

It did not take much time “on the ground” in New Haven to see what they meant. Organizational parochialism was common. There was also, however, a sense that refusing to subordinate organizational interests to the greater good of the community was not the whole story. Most of the players were sincere and “corruption” not widespread. A member of the board of aldermen explained some of the conflicts arose from the fact that “People have different backgrounds. They get stuck on what is a priority other than treatment. Perhaps it will be economic development and families. Or the criminal side not working.” (Interview 1990). Depending on where in the city they worked and what “problem” they were trying to solve, different organizations knew completely different slices of New Haven. For APT “the community” was a map of where their methadone patients came from and where their clinics are located, for the fire department or the police department “the community” was a mental map of recent incidents. Knowledge about the community was ghettoized along lines of expertise so that participants were operating with “New Yorker magazine cover” distortions of New Haven – “the prevention specialists view of New Haven,” “the birth outcomes view of New Haven,” and so on.
Organizations As Highly Constrained Actors

“Imagine what we could do, if we worked together...”

In the Fighting Back “theory” the diversity of organizational members were seen as a cornucopia of resources on which the project could draw. Like children’s adventure cartoons, when the different skills and resources each player possessed were brought together a collective superhero would emerge. Substance abuse was a complex problem, but a solvable one, given the immense array of organizational resources that already existed in the community. All that was necessary was to get them “to the table” and develop a consensus that substance abuse was a top community priority. The written material produced by RWJ and the literature on community coalitions is rife with the message that communities already possessed the necessary parts and that success depended mostly on putting them together (e.g., see Falco 1992).

Easier Said Than Done

Unlike some communities that had too few existing programs to build an effective community coalition, New Haven had all the necessary ingredients. It always had an impressive arsenal of resources which never failed to impress visitors. One site visitor made a list of individuals and programs they learned about:

Dr. Dow and the Board of Education; Tomas Reyes and the Board of Aldermen; Dick Bell and the Chamber of Commerce; Edna Giradeau and the State Representative’s office; Helmar Ekstrom and the New Haven Foundation; Marcial Cuevas of “the housing group”; Cornell Scott of the Hill Health Center; Mustafa Abdul Salaam and the City Wide PTO; Mr. Burford and University Hospital; Roger Weissberg and the Social Development Program; Tom Kosten who just received a $10 million dollar grant for some study; Chief Farrel of the police department; Minnie Anderson and the Coalition for People (NH1230 1989)
To collaboration enthusiasts, lists like this represented an enviable array of resources which inspired musings of “imagine if all of this were made to cooperate and collaborate.” By getting these “heavy hitters” to the table, New Haven FightingBack should be half way there. Each entry on the list, though, was a “star” in its own right, with its own high profile program or project to promote and protect. The roster that so impressed outsiders as collaborative potential was a virtual map of the various fiefdoms that made up New Haven human services and research domain.

It was not only turf battles that limited the collaborative potential. Even when organizations overcame their turf-boundness, there were limits on what they could actually offer the initiative. The very characteristic which made them attractive partners – the fact that they were the leading organizations in their fields – meant that they were embedded in a rich array of obligations that severely limited their discretion. On numerous occasions it became obvious that while they represented a great wealth of resources, each partner was constrained in how those resources could be made useful to FightingBack, if at all. Four episodes – the debate over needle exchange, calling in support commitments, Yale involvement, and the effect of the changes in mayoral administrations – illustrate some of the ways that organizations represent highly constrained actors.

**Needle Exchange and Organizational Commitments**

A local activist had been carrying-out an illegal, needle exchange program in New Haven for several years, and in July 1990 the Connecticut legislature passed bill permitting, on a trial basis, intravenous drug users to receive clean needles in exchange for used ones as a measure against HIV infection (CDC 1993). The bill was supported by the AIDS Division
of the city Health Department and a small coalition of local health workers and researchers (Interview 1990).

In early summer, the Citizen’s Task Force was asked to help shape the community consensus that would be necessary to implement the program, the first real opportunity that FightingBack had to play a role in the human service politics of New Haven. The bill had its origins in New Haven, and was supported by people involved with FightingBack (including the mayor and police chief), but there was serious disagreement within the CTF over whether to support it or not (Interview 1990; Interview 1990; Interview 1990; Jackson 1990). Some CTF members said they understood the science but that needle exchange sent a message of hopelessness to the community. Other members felt bound by the skepticism expressed by some leaders in the African American community. The APT Foundation, needing to be in line with NIDA, came out against it.

Supporters emphasized that this was a pilot project designed to find out whether needle exchange reduced the spread of HIV among intravenous drug users and that Yale would be monitoring and evaluating the program.

In the end, the Task Force agreed to support the program, and the outcome would appear to be a case of “objective science” overcoming irrational skepticism. The process, though, illustrates the strength of the quasi-religious character of the organizational, professional or cultural commitments that organizations have. The individuals sitting around “the table” are limited in the options they can consider by these “irrational” commitments of the organizations they represent.

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30 See Galatowitsch (1997 pp. 123ff) for an account of maneuvering around getting the needle exchange program up and running.
Large Organizations are Not Monolithic Wholes

A second example of organizations as constrained actors involves the question of Yale’s role in the project. RWJ frequently asked New Haven was about Yale’s participation in *Fighting Back*. The fact that “New Haven is the only finalist site with a major university medical center,” one of the early proposal readers had noted, made it an especially attractive site, but Yale’s lack of explicit participation troubled the National Program Office.

In response to these concerns Benno Schmidt, Yale’s President, sent a letter (ghost written by APT staff) to the NPO listing Yale’s existing substance abuse related activities, the involvement on the Citizens Task Force of Secretary Wellington, James Comer of the Yale Child Study Center, and Myron Genel, Dean of Yale School of Medicine, and the University partnerships with the Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Substance Abuse Treatment Unit (SATU), and the APT Foundation. He added that “the central distinguishing notion of the City’s grant application is that the product of medical research can and will be immediately integrated into a service delivery system in the inner city” (NH1234 1989).

Schmidt was saying that Yale was “involved” on the basis of the many “*Fighting Back* related” things its component parts were already doing. RWJ, though, wanted to see Yale qua Yale doing something the way a small college might mount an anti-alcohol campaign. Their continued frustration was rooted in the fact that a university is not a monolithic entity that can be either involved or not, it is a complex institution that can be “involved” in parts. The loose connections between the parts of the university and the tight connections each of

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31 The Secretary of the University is the second highest official after the president at Yale. Wellington was generally represented by an assistant, Susan Godshall, at CTF meetings, but would attend herself when RWJ or outside visitors came to New Haven for site visits.
those parts had with outside funders, academic fads in different disciplines, and commitments to ongoing projects, combined to produce an enormous mountain of resources, very few of which were available for any sort of “contribution” to a project like FightingBack at the discretion of the University leaders (See Johnston 1995; Szanton 1981 for more on this issue.). Yale was one of several institutions whose size, central location, and role in the economy meant that when one moved, the ground shook for miles around, but for all practical purposes, no particular piece of such an institution that might come to the table could influence the whole to only any significant degree.

Some Commitments are More Symbolic than Real

Collaborative projects like FightingBack grow by “signing up” organizational participants from the community. New Haven did this for its first proposal, listing over a hundred organizations and programs that would “participate” in the program along with what they would do and contribute.

In October of 1991 an executive on loan from the Regional Gas Company suggested that FightingBack follow-up with the organizations that had written support letters “to re-affirm promises and enlist commitments to FightingBack” (CTF901015). His initiative was met with alarm among Task Force members who knew that much of the support had been symbolic, in exchange for other favors, or merely an indication that an organization’s activity resonated with FightingBack, rather than a commitment to ante-up. They cautioned him to proceed slowly, and by December he had been instructed to contact only the business organizations. The CTF minutes note that “[m]embers of the utilities, media, etc., who submitted letters of commitment will be contacted at a later date by staff and/ or CTF members” (CTF901220).
Over the history of the project, “partners” accumulated in the FightingBack database, but there are few records of substantive follow up. Part of being a good organizational citizen was writing support letters and the like and part of being a good fellow citizen was taking these offers of support as gestures rather than firm commitments. Organizations are more capable of “standing for” than “handing over” resources, so the collaborative “adding up” of what various organizations represent is more symbolic than substantive. The reaction of the CTF to the loaned executive’s suggestion suggests that they felt that if every gesture of support involved an actual transfer of resources, it is likely that far fewer “partners” would sign up in the first place.

Organizations are Embedded

A last example of how organizations are constrained in terms of what they can do concerns their embeddedness in ongoing events. As the project got underway in New Haven, the new Mayor was struggling to establish a governing coalition and to deal with a massive deficit left by its predecessor.32 Many of his efforts to change “business as usual” had the effect of exacerbating conflict within New Haven, as players scrambled to be in position to benefit from new arrangements. In addition, the deficit meant cutbacks and hiring freezes that reduced the spoils available from the change in administrations. City departments and organizations throughout the community were more concerned with adapting to this new environment than with making FightingBack work, no matter what their orientation to the project might be.

The problems between FightingBack and the Human Resources Administration and the conflict with the neighborhood development corporations both represented instances of organizations behaving toward FightingBack partly on the basis of other disputes they were involved in.

**Resources you can see, but can’t use**

New Haven did a good job at signing up the “heavy hitters” and the organizations “at the table” represented millions of dollars, thousands of employees, and vast quantities of other resources, but in practice, extracting these resources to “fight back” proved difficult. Most “contributions” consisted of whatever organizations did anyway and the contribution calculus amounted to noting that these efforts were resonant with FightingBack’s goals. Organizations had their own trajectories and commitments which joining FightingBack did not change. A physical analogy may be apt here: larger organizations represented larger resources, but they also have more internal and external commitments making those resources harder to move. Organizational inertia means that it may take more force to move the resources represented by large organizations than those represented by small ones.

To some participants this suggested insincerity – some partners are all talk, no action – or lack of power – representatives were not high enough in their organizations to deliver on promises. Others simply accepted the fact that many organizations could not be held literally to what they had committed in letters of support. There was some reneging, to be sure, but the more basic failing was to overestimate the impact of each organization’s participation. Having a police department representative at the table, for example, was equated with getting “law enforcement” to participate, when, in fact, it might mean only
that the police department was willing to take on a Fighting Back funded youth worker.

Getting substance abuse agencies to sit down together was seen as an opportunity to form a “united front against a common enemy,” but each agency’s discretion was limited by where their funding came from and what their day to day obligations were.

When all is said and done, organizations are rather stiff and clunky coalition members. Votes can be traded in a political coalition, and pairs of partners can entrepreneurially combine forces to achieve a common goal, but efforts to organize all the organizations in a community can produce a coalition of bureaucracies that may be less flexible and resourceful than its component organizations. The symbolic value of “mere” symbolic participation should not be underestimated, but it should be distinguished from “actual” participation when we try to understand how such initiatives succeed and fail to attain their objectives. The four episodes described above illustrate how organizations are, by their nature, constrained by their professional competence, existing commitments and ongoing practices.

**Organizations as Highly Distracted Actors**

**Recruitment and Participation in Theory and Application**

Both local and national Fighting Back staff were fond of saying that a part of their mission was to “get substance abuse on everybody’s agenda.” One strategy for accomplishing this was to recruit “everybody,” by which they meant the hundreds of agencies and organizations in the community. Fighting Back would make its pitch, organizations would sign on, and representatives would attend meetings, providing a conduit through which the Fighting Back message could reach all corners of the community.
Task force members saw ever wider participation as the path to success: “Get as many people involved at grassroots to come up with a solution...” (Interview 1991); “[I] would like to see the planning process involve the total community -- government, neighborhoods, business and coordinating each others activities. Avoid duplication and turf fighting” (Interview 1991). As more and more organizations and agencies were “signed up” (in practice this meant being asked to join the Task Force or one of its committees, write support letters or simply being listed as a resource), though, they found that it was not easy to keep organizations involved, especially those that had been recruited because broader participation was an end in itself or because some group or interest or area needed to be “represented at the table.”

The process tended to wear people out. An early project director noted that “People are too busy. [And there was] not enough effort to invite people who [do] have the time. [We need] more grass roots people” (Interview 1991). They listed over two hundred partner organizations, but only half of these appear to have had any concrete involvement in Fighting Back activities and only a tiny fraction (perhaps ten percent) were regularly involved. Most appear to have been somewhat active immediately after being recruited, but then to have disappeared.

Local Explanations: “We’re ALL busy, but some are more committed than others...”

New Haven Fighting Back knew that time constraints limited participation, but the prevailing sentiment seems to have been “we all have time pressures, but some of us manage to participate anyway.” Participation was seen as an indicator of commitment to the process, of one’s community spirit, and participation problems were seen in terms social control – how to enforce attendance requirements, for example. Keeping people at the
table, though, sometimes actually increased their wariness: “The business community sees the city as ineffective. They are not really involved in Fighting Back, not invested,” explained a Task Force member in 1991. When the complexity of the drug problem came to the fore, people got discouraged: “They are burned out on attempts to make changes and stretch resources. No one can fix the economic problems, and they don’t want to go through the process.” Thus, just as inactivity drove people away, so did active engagement.

**Causes and Effects of Intermittent Participation**

The ebb and flow of active participation made it was easy for participants and observers to become cynical about the partners who were willing to sign up but had never attended a meeting or contributed anything concrete to the effort. But before accepting this phenomenon as a measure of “community spirit” we should ask whether it really makes sense to expect high levels of participation in a community of organizations. Organizations joined because their mission was related to substance abuse or as a show of support, but the longer the process dragged on without concrete action, the more they saw their participation in terms of waiting for dollars or watching to make sure that a few organizations didn’t make off with the entire grant. Community coalitions, then, face a problem similar to that faced by some student organizations in more academically inclined colleges – potential members have better things to do, and as a rule, we want them to have better things to do.

All organizations are not equally distracted. Small organizations, for example, may find on-going participation in a deliberative planning process more expensive personnel-wise than it is for large ones. Hundreds of small organizations were invited to participate, but the larger organizations – hospitals, APT, the city and the university – were more likely to
have staff whose primary job was going to meetings. When this resulted in a “participation gap” it was easily misinterpreted as representing differing levels of commitment to Fighting Back priorities, but what it actually revealed was that participation is a luxury that imposes a heavier tax on smaller organizations than larger ones.

The ensemble of active participants affects what the coalition does. Community initiatives are often premised on wide-participation but planners often overlook the fact that actual participation is influenced by the ways in which potential members are distracted, and these may vary systematically by organizational size, location, type of work, etc. Organizations, far from being the potential participants assumed by the collaboration paradigm, are, in practice, highly distracted actors.
Conclusion - Doing things with organizations

The ultimate end of Fighting Back was to change individuals’ behavior - reduce their desire to abuse alcohol and illegal drugs - but the means to this end was to change the behavior of the substance abuse related organizations in the New Haven community. Robert Wood Johnson’s original claim had been that few communities had “turned the corner” on substance abuse because there had been no attempts to coordinate efforts on a community-wide basis. As an experiment to determine whether such coordination would make existing efforts sufficiently effective to allow communities to turn that corner, Fighting Back is inconclusive because of the high degree of qualitative and quantitative variation in the independent (what Fighting Back was in each site) variable and the lack of measurable differences in outcome between Fighting Back and control sites (Saxe et al. 1998; Saxe et al. 1995). In other words, the treatment was so difficult to implement that it is impossible to say on the basis of Fighting Back whether it works or not. The case can, however, help to shed some light on the process of setting up community-wide systems of public awareness, prevention, intervention, and treatment.

In this chapter we have looked at organizations as the unit of intervention in a community initiative. To better appreciate how the organizational properties described in this chapter fit into what Fighting Back was trying to do, it is useful to think of the community as an interorganizational network and then to ask what changes Fighting Back was hoping to accomplish in the structure of such a network.

In a 1978 review article on communities as interorganizational networks Laumann, Galaskiewicz and Marsden identify three components of networks: nodes, linkages, and
modalities (1978). Nodes correspond to organizations, linkages to the connections between them, and a modality is the overall social context that influences the pattern and texture of interorganizational networks including “institutionalized thought structures” (Warren, Rose and Bergrunder 1974), values, such as norms of legitimate organizational behavior in transactions. They identify two ideal typical modalities: competitive and cooperative, which is further broken down into contingent and mandated. In the competitive modality, interorganizational relations are basically those of the competitive economic market. By contrast, in cooperative modalities “the implicit assumption is that social welfare will be maximal when organizations with partially differentiated goals consciously cooperate to attain a collective purpose for which the interorganizational field has responsibility” (1978, 467). A contingent cooperative modality is one in which organizations are expected to voluntarily combine pursuit of their own goals with their contribution to the collective goals of the community. Under mandated cooperative modalities, on the other hand, some sort of centralized control has the power to structure the entire network” (1978, 468).

Laumann et al. analyze the two modality types in terms of two dimensions: “degree of prescribed collectivity orientation” and “level of environmental control over unit organizations” (466). These two dimensions can be combined to create a space of network formation modalities as shown in Figure IV-3.
Doing Things With Organizations

Conclusion

High environmental control of unit organizations

Mandated Cooperation

Low prescribed collectivity orientation

Competitive Market

Low environmental control of unit organizations

Contingent Cooperation

(Regulated Market)*

High prescribed collectivity orientation

* Not described by Laumann, et al. Included for completeness only.

Figure IV-3. The environments in which networks form (after Laumann, et al. 1978).

Communities or organizational domains can be located in this space according to the kind of normative environment they provide for network formation. In domains that are higher in the diagram member organizations are more subject to external controls such as coordinating agencies (e.g., mental health coordinating councils), strict rules about how organizations can behave (e.g., S.E.C.), or strict funder requirements. Domains that are lower have fewer such controls and organizations are left to operate as they see fit. The further to the right a domain is situated, the higher the level of normative pressure to define organizational mission in terms of the collective welfare of the community.

In the lower left quadrant 3, the ideal typical modality is the competitive market in which organizations are expected to act independently and in their own interest. In sharp contrast to this is the environment corresponding of quadrant 2 which Laumann et al. refer to as “mandated cooperation.” In this mode “the implicit assumption is that social welfare will be maximal when organizations with partially differentiated goals consciously cooperate
to attain a collective purpose for which the interorganizational field has responsibility. To realize the overarching collective goal, a conscious effort to structure organizational activities vis à vis one another is thus regarded as a more effective strategy than the operation of the “invisible hand” of an unrestrained market mechanism” (1978). Typically, this includes the establishment of formal coordinating bodies and the devotion of significant resources to the maintenance of interorganizational relations, “some of which may reduce the autonomy of individual units.” The authors note that this normative environment frequently “gives rise to an almost hortatory ‘cult of coordination’ in much of the social service delivery literature.” Between these two modes lies the environment of quadrant 4 in which the ideal type is “contingent cooperation” whereby “organizations are expected to balance their commitments to collective purposes with their more specialized goals; while linkage facilitating agencies such as coordinating councils or federations may exist, the network is regarded as essentially self-regulating” (1978).

The intermediate goal of the Fighting Back idea can be seen as a shift a community’s position sharply to the right and, given that the program remained somewhat ambivalent about strong centralized control, slightly upward. In other words, the Fighting Back idea can be interpreted as an attempt to increase the normative pressure within a community of organizations to think more in terms of overall collective benefit when planning to use substance abuse resources and to orient programs and agencies more toward formal cooperation in the guise of a continuum of care.
Figure IV-4 represents the Fighting Back idea as trajectory in the modality space. The fragmented system with which Fighting Back began would be located on the left toward the lower quadrant. This represents a system in which there is a low level of collective community welfare orientation (e.g., “Some of the CBOs are entrenched in ‘poverty pimping’ and maintaining their power bases. They are used to CDBG moneys where they don’t have to cooperate” (Interview 1990)) and in which organizations and agencies act completely independently of any centralized control. Since most agencies were partly constrained by various funding requirements and since most at least claimed to be working for the community, the starting state is not closer to the competitive market situation in the lower left corner.
Now recall that moving along this trajectory was only the means to the real goal of improving the community by reducing demand for alcohol and drugs. The justification for employing resources to move the community along this trajectory was the belief that the it would be better off in the final state than in the start state. If we add a third dimension, “net community welfare,” to Figure IV-4 we can define a surface representing states the community can occupy (on the modality dimensions) and their corresponding “community welfare” levels. In other words, for any combination of norms and control there is a corresponding level of overall community welfare. The result is shown in Figure IV-5 where the higher the peak, the better off the community is. The starting state (A) is locally optimal, which means that any small changes will make the overall system worse off (in the
short run). To reach a state like (B) which is superior (A) a community has to pass through states where things are much worse than they were to begin with (for at least some players). The short term negative effects correspond to disruptions in standard procedures, breaking of old alliances prior to the formation of new ones, bringing together parties who are not accustomed to dealing with one another, making explicit disagreements and conflicts that had been avoided in a fragmented system, elimination of unproductive entities, and so on. If these affect primarily organizations that have sufficient influence to block the move, the system will probably remain in state A.

We can generalize the x-y dimensions in Figure IV-5 so that they represent arbitrary structural arrangements. Thus movement between (A) and (B) corresponds to a change from one way of doing things in a community or organization with net increase in benefits to the collective. The analytical task is then to characterize the conditions and forces that inhibit the transition from (A) to (B). Much of modern social science can be seen to be about why communities, groups, and organizations are not able to follow trajectories from collectively less desirable to collectively more desirable structural locations. Successive paradigms in organizational theory, for example, either offered a way for organizations to accomplish such moves (e.g., scientific management, classical management theory) or explanations why they were not achieved even though people wanted them to be (e.g., institutionalism).

This chapter has suggested that even before we consider poor job performance, bad management, nest feathering, empire building, politics, and corruption it is useful to examine the ways in which organizations are not built for collaboration to begin with affects the ability of a community to move from (A) to (B). For an intervention like Fighting Back
to succeed, designers and implementers should work with what real organizations are really like rather than blindly treating them as if they were just like individuals. Structural differences between organizations - size, for example - give rise to emergent problems quite separate from politics and good intentions. Well designed collaborative ventures can identify the liabilities associated with organizational diversity and, in light of project goals, set up counterbalancing structures. Designers should also appreciate the fact that organizations that share a common geographic community do not necessarily inhabit the same world and environment. Efforts to identify “subworlds” within a community of organizations and to explicitly share information across boundaries may do something to alleviate the impediments caused by the lack of a common environment. Designers would also do well to build into the structure of the project and its associated rhetoric an appreciation for the fact that organizations are constrained and distracted actors. If the logic of the project depends too much on consistent, long term, active participation and contributions by most or all organizations in a domain, it will surely not succeed.

A word of warning is perhaps in order here lest these observations be read as pessimistic repudiations of the possibility of anything ever coming from the exhortation to collaboration. While organizations do indeed seem not to be built for broad collaboration, there may in fact be salutary effects from pretending that they are. Thus, the conclusion must be worded carefully. What I am arguing against are first, glib “cult of collaboration” approaches, second, technocratic “call Joe the organizational consultant” solutions, and third, the very insistence that everyone getting along is necessarily the goal in the first place. In answer to the first I’ve suggested that collaboration cannot be treated as a “something for nothing” solution. In response to the second I have argued that the right combination
of mission statements and stakeholders is not necessarily enough to overcome limitations that arise “naturally” from the fact that the entities composing a community are organizations, not people who should simply try to get along. Finally, as we saw in the previous chapter, the community may best be served not when “everyone gets along” but by implementing highly selective combinations of cooperation and competition driven by problems rather than the vision of a community without conflict.
Organizations are often observed to do nothing to implement a
decision after having devoted much time, energy, and enthusiasm to
making it; or to make apparently major decisions with only minor
participation by key administrators and significant constituents; or to
combine a struggle over participation rights with an indifference to
exercising them; or to make argument over ideology without [e]
effective action; or to separate the outcome of a major political dispute from the
details of the political process involved. Though the examples are new,
the stories are old.

*James G. March, Johan P. Olsen (1976)*

**V**

**Networks of Garbage Cans**

In the previous chapter *Fighting Back* was described generically as “doing something with
organizations” and I argued that to understand what happened in New Haven and other
*Fighting Back* sites we need to reconsider what organizations are like as tools for carrying out
initiatives like *Fighting Back*. The main point of that chapter was that organizations - qua
organizations - lack some important attributes that we take for granted in potential
“collaboration partners.” Success in implementing - or offering technical assistance to or
evaluating - a program like *Fighting Back* is potentially enhanced by a better understanding
of how organizations fall short of the idealized “partner” they are conventionally assumed
to be. Explanations of program failures would do well to begin with the effects of such
generic characteristics rather the various pathologies that are attributed to the players when
things fail to go smoothly.

Two ideas were introduced in the course of making that presentation - that
organizations have these properties and that communities can be seen as communities of
organizations - but thus far, I have not attempted to connect these ideas. In other words, I have not yet addressed the question of just how the generic properties of organizations aggregate when organizations interact in a community of organizations to produce the community effects I have implied. In this chapter I will try to make that connection by asking what happens when organizations are connected together to create a “community-wide coalition.”

**The Theory: The More Organizational Members the Better**

Robert Wood Johnson’s vision of *Fighting Back* was that substance abuse efforts in most communities were carried out by separate and poorly coordinated organizations which could be brought together in a continuum of care to be more effective. A similar vision is held by the sponsors of other programs of the kind that have come to be known as “comprehensive community initiatives” (Connell et al. 1995; Smock 1997). The hypothesis implied by this vision is illustrated by the straight line in Figure V-1; the investment in *Fighting Back* should result in a net improvement in community conditions. RWJ implemented their vision by advising *Fighting Back* sites to include “all those institutions, organizations, and public and private agencies whose participation is required to implement the proposed initiative, including news media, civic and religious organizations, schools, businesses, major health care providers, human service agencies, drug and alcohol treatment providers, ... local government and law enforcement...” and “those members of the community most affected by the problem” (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1989).
The argument of Chapter III, was that the benefits of coordinating organizations are probably not a linear and increasing function of efforts at collaboration because organizations are not natural collaborators. To use a physical metaphor, coordination is not a friction free process. Several informants in New Haven were fond of the phrase “herding cats” to describe what they were trying to do. Our observations in New Haven and other Fighting Back sites – that steps toward coordination led to increased conflict and decrease in "community benefit" during the initial attempts to coordinate the organizations in the community – is illustrated by the J-shaped curve in Figure V-1. At least in the beginning, the more organizations that were added to the mix, the more difficult things got. As the program went on, the conflict decreased, but the evidence to date is inconclusive about whether the eventual net increase in effectiveness and overall community benefit happened. The dotted portion of the curve in the figure represents this postulated benefit that may or may not have been realized.
Broad Participation in Practice: The More the Murkier

Following the Foundation’s advice, New Haven Fighting Back grew quickly from a small grant writing effort involving a handful of staff from APT and HRA to the naming of the Citizen’s Task Force on Substance Abuse (CTF) in October, 1990. The initial Task Force included leaders in the substance abuse field, business, churches, hospitals and universities. As the project moved forward, the NPO often intervened. “OK,” they would say to New Haven, “but where are the X?” – where X might be “schools,” “police,” or “people in recovery” – leading New Haven to pour a great deal of its early efforts into expanding membership. Early site visitors were duly impressed by the resulting wide range of involvement. “...all groups including the Hispanic population,” one noted in his report (NH1230 1989). Another added that “[t]his is an extremely impressive group of leaders who appear to be dedicated to addressing the problem of substance abuse in the New Haven Community” (NH1263 1989).

The more “impressive” the group got, though, the less coherent the project seemed to become. Each new member put ideas and options on the table and the initiative found itself “servicing” these “options” as much as building its own program. When the prospect of new positions became known, a patronage machine sprang into action. One project director lamented that she had a non-stop parade of people to her door who wanted to get something out of Fighting Back (field notes). Participants who were connected to state agencies brought opportunities for state grants and requirements of state programs to Fighting Back’s attention. Treatment providers talked endlessly about gaps in services and under-served populations, and prevention specialists lobbied for newly “discovered” prevention needs to be Fighting Back’s focus. Others insisted on minority focused treatment,
youth activities, attacking root problems, or neighborhood improvement as the crucial ingredient in demand reduction. Each asks for an increase in its own resources; none asked for increased resources for coordination and cooperation.

Bringing “resources” to the table was often a thinly disguised form of making a grab for a budget. Participants would “offer” a staff member, program, or space that was currently, or soon to be, under-utilized and that Fighting Back could inexpensively buy from them. Researchers interested in maternal and child substance abuse offered to help to make mothers and babies a priority area for the project. The school system was developing a social development program that could be the Fighting Back’s youth component. The police department was about to launch a community policing effort which would neatly fit with Fighting Back’s neighborhood component. Neighborhood organizations offered to host neighborhood organizers, administer youth programs, and organize street festivals if Fighting Back would pay for them. Residents wanted cleanups, more police protection, and drug sweeps. Other players advocated for theme songs and tee-shirts, town meetings, and advertising slogans.

The grant-writing timeline also became more, rather than less, chaotic over time. In early 1990, led by two loaned executives, New Haven had developed an elaborate chart depicting a step-by-step process with deadlines, milestones, and deliverables. The subcommittees of the Task Force – public awareness, prevention, intervention, and treatment – would intensely collect information and ideas, filter them, and pass the best on to the Task Force which would assemble them into a coherent plan.

In practice, though, things did not proceed as linearly and rationally as envisioned. Instead, the process recorded by meeting minutes has the appearance of routine
disorganization punctuated by occasional emergencies, as the committees alternated between wallowing, in-fighting, and frenzied crisis management. The calendar was dominated not by the executives’ chart, but by RWJ site visits, grant due dates, and the innumerable other “pressing deadlines” that members shared with Fighting Back in the name of “collaboration.”

With each expansion in participation, the list of things that the community could and should do about substance abuse ballooned. The more solutions that entered into the picture, they less connected with substance abuse they seemed to become. Over the years, a number of activities were funded that had no recognizable connection to substance abuse, and, in fact, creatively coming up with a connection came to be primary challenge for organizations petitioning Fighting Back for funding.

Fighting Back was designed precisely to foster such a diversity of approaches, but the theory was that diverse inputs would lead to innovation as the best ideas were selected by community consensus. In practice, this free market fantasy was countered by the desire to maintain cordial relations and solidarity. No allowance had been made for the fact that everyone was “stuck” on one thing or another, and that the flood of ideas would make it difficult to focus, and that a coalition of organizations was even less able to rationally evaluate alternatives than a single organization could. Rather than debating and deciding, they nodded and made faint-hearted attempts to do everything.

**Fragmentation: Networks as a Metaphor for New Haven’s Problems**

Although neither the designers, funders, nor participants ever explicitly described the question in such terms, organizational networks were at the heart of both the problem Fighting Back was meant to solve and the method by which it would do so. The strategy
was, essentially, to increase the density of connections in the interorganizational network that made up the substance abuse domain in New Haven in order to “close gaps, eliminate duplication, and coordinate efforts.” A denser network, they reasoned, would be more efficacious. To achieve this goal they created new entities (such as the Citizens Task Force and its committees), had meetings, got “everyone” to the table, produced lists and inventories of services and charts showing how each agency related to the continuum of care, and directly funded a small number of organizations through subcontracts.

The problem all this was meant to correct was referred to as “fragmentation.” By this participants and program designers meant lack of connections between the many organizations that, ostensibly, were working toward similar goals. In some cases it was a matter of agencies being “at one another’s throats” – poaching clients, prestige, employees, and resources from one another. APT was seen as trying to put other treatment providers out of business, for example, and neighborhood development corporations as sabotaging programs that threatened their monopoly over federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. In other cases fragmentation meant that drug treatment case managers did not know enough about housing or employment agencies’ services and eligibility rules to be able to effectively refer clients to them after they got clean. Practitioners were frustrated by their inability to keep track of clients accessing their services and possibly getting multiple shares of benefits from “the system.” Case managers cringed when they thought of the clients who got “lost” between one service and another. Fragmentation meant that funds intended to solve a particular problem were divided among so many organizations that few resources were left after organizational overhead to actually get something done. Neighborhood balkanization had resulted in each subpart of the city
having to have its own programs. Finally, from the clients’ perspective, the system was fragmented to the degree that they had to get service A from one agency and then go across town to get service B from another.

Implicit in the *Fighting Back* idea was the hypothesis that increasing the overall density of connections among the entities in the community would have at least some salutary effects on this situation. What they discovered, though, is that information, resources, and clients are not the only things that flow through such networks.

**Organizations as Garbage Cans**

Conventional wisdom and “classical” organization theory portrays organizations as rational structures for the pursuit of goals. Organizations exist for a purpose (for example, to make profits by manufacturing and selling widgets) and they develop procedures, hire workers, survey their environments, make decisions and carry out actions to achieve this purpose. Numerous pathological conditions, such as bad managers, unmotivated workers, incorrect assessments of market conditions, or technological failures, can interfere, but the ideal typical organizational behavior is goal seeking, cost-benefit calculating rationality.

In the garbage can model of organizational behavior put forth by James March and associates, the starting point is the day to day processes of how typical organizations work rather than an ideal typical construction of how they should work. The model portrays the process of organizational decision-making as the confluence of four streams: problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities. Problems are issues that require attention, concerns of people in and around an organization. Problems “arise over issues of lifestyle; family; frustrations of work; careers; group relations within the organization; distribution of
status, jobs, and money; ideology; or current crises of mankind as interpreted by the mass
media or the next door neighbor” (1976). Solutions are essentially “answers looking for a
question.” They can include things that people can or could do, equipment that can be
purchased, or changes that could be made. There is also a stream of participants. In real
organizations people do not sit around a table endlessly considering options, but rather they
come and go as other activities compete for their attention. A fourth stream drives the
system. Choice opportunities are occasions when the organization is expected to produce a
decision. These opportunities “arrive” intermittently and unpredictably. They are often
generated outside the organization giving decision making a decidedly reactive quality
(March and Olsen 1976). As portrayed in the garbage can model, an organization is not so
much a “super actor” that encounters problems, considers alternatives and makes decisions,
as it is an arena in which somewhat random and unpredictable social processes unfold as
solutions find problems while participants come and go.

Although formulated as a model for individual organizations, the garbage can model
may be even more useful when applied to a community of organizations. For “practicing
administrators,” Perrow writes, the garbage can approach is helpful

since it makes some kind of sense out of the bewildering shifts, turns, and
unexpected outcomes in daily organizational life. It notes that people fight hard to
gain access to committees, then rarely attend, because of unstable priorities and
limited attention spans. People struggle mightily to formulate rules or plans, then
forget all about them as new problems arise and the membership of coalitions
shifts. For those doing case studies of organizations it is also indispensable,
checking the tendency of social scientists to find reason, cause, and function in all
behavior; and emphasizing instead the accidental, temporary, shifting, and fluid
nature of all social life (Perrow 1986).

The model also resonates with what we have described having seen in New Haven. In
our attempt to describe communities as settings for community initiatives the garbage can
model helps us to see parts of the collaboration process that arise “naturally” from the structure of the community as a community of organizations. This moves us closer to our goal of describing those problems which arise not from flaws in the theory behind the intervention or in the individuals or agencies involved, but from what is generic to doing these sorts of things in “communities of organizations.”

**But Wasn’t Fighting Back an Anti-Garbage Can Initiative?**

At first glance it might appear that we are going to argue that Fighting Back was designed to reduce the garbage can-ness of the substance abuse domain. It was, after all, intended to cut down on irrational inefficiencies and take some of the randomness out of the war on drugs. The problems that were identified as needing to be solved were things like gaps, disconnects in the community network, poor coupling between organizations, bad information flow. Take a dose of Fighting Back and the problems will go away; conflict and randomness will give way to consensus and rationality. What I am calling “garbage can-ness” here, though, arises as a part of the solution to these problems. It is a structural property of communities of organizations, and an initiative like Fighting Back, I am arguing, effectively taps into the “latent” garbage can-ness of the community.

**Why Can’t We Just “Come Together”?**

Participants explained New Haven’s problems as unwillingness to overcome differences in favor of the greater community good, a lack of leadership, or even the presence of saboteurs (field notes). When concessions were made, people groaned that the project leadership was becoming scattered and unfocused, that it was politics as usual, or that the “usual suspects” were calling the shots. When the neighborhood corporations tried to
block FightingBack, one CTF member mentioned that her “first impulse was to give [in], but rest of committee said [that we] have to hold firm – no blackmail” (Interview 1993). They were perplexed at the inability of the community to “come together” over such an important issue, especially when millions of dollars of funding were available. One informant complained that “these folks just don’t get it, they don’t understand what RWJ is really looking for, they can’t change their ways” (field notes). Another Task Force member said that the problem was that “people have different backgrounds. [They] get stuck on what is a priority other than treatment.” (Interview 1990). To New Haveners, the inability of organizations to “come together” was basically a people in organizations problem.

**Individual vs. Structural Explanations of Community Level Effects**

The problem with explanations such as lack of political will, lack of leadership, disorganization, poor organizational development, and organizational hustling is that they smuggle in the assumption that the underlying task is naturally non-problematic to begin with, that creating a coalition in a community of organizations is straightforward as long as the ornery and selfish tendencies of individuals can be kept in check. This assumption leads to the view that difficulties such as those experienced in New Haven are indicators of things that were wrong with the community. By steering clear of this assumption, we may come to see that some of what was taken for granted as idiosyncratic New Haven “politics” and individual “bad behavior” was rooted in the ability of initiatives that “bring all the players to the table” to allow the “latent garbage can-ness” of communities to become manifest.

One reason for this was that partner organizations were carriers of problems and solutions; increased involvement meant increased flows of problems and solutions into the FightingBack garbage can (March and Olsen 1976, 26-7). Each entry on the extensive roster
of Fighting Back partners had something to offer and while combining these resources seemed a path to success, as more organizations joined, the project’s sense of what it was trying to accomplish became more diffuse, and the potential tools for accomplishing these vague goals multiplied.

**Problems**

March and Olsen define problems as concerns that capture the attention of people inside and outside an organization, things that people care about and call to the attention of others (1976). Unlike interests problems need not remain attached to their original “sponsors.” Once added to the garbage can they circulate freely until they disappear or are paired with a solution. Problems are not necessarily related to an organization’s main activity; they can originate in participants’ other involvements, in conditions external to the organization, forgotten history, or idiosyncratic concerns.

Ostensibly, Fighting Back’s problem was to design a $600,000 a year demand reduction plan that would be acceptable to the Foundation, but as the entity carrying out that task grew, all manner of issues landed on the organization’s agenda as each new partner organization that came to the table dumped new issues, concerns, and problems into Fighting Back’s garbage can. The problems they added to the mix can be classified in four groups: convictions about substance abuse, extraneous priorities, organizational needs, and practical reminders.

**Organizational Convictions**

Among the substance abuse “experts” involved with Fighting Back in New Haven, some favored acupuncture, some thought it quirky; some adamantly supported methadone, others found it suspect. Treatment professionals did not want to waste resources on prevention,
and prevention professionals felt that the community had to stop drug abuse before it started, not after. Supporters of twelve-step programs focused on issues of denial, while medical professionals appreciated the importance of “group work,” but were certain that it should take second place to pharmacological treatment. While the substance abuse domain had been “fragmented,” the contradictory intellectual commitments of these organizations (that really were “on the same side”) had only limited opportunities for outright clashes.

Bringing these practitioners together exposed Fighting Back to a rich broth of contradictory convictions. Perrow described a similar situation with regard to mental hospitals:

But if the mental hospital began to develop extensive links with the environment through social workers, public relations personnel, legislative lobbying activities, and contacts with courts and law enforcement agencies – all in an attempt to improve its services and responsiveness to the community – it could expect divergent views to develop regarding the services it should provide, the techniques it should use, and the goals it should pursue (Perrow 1986, 126).

The more contact these substance abuse professionals had with one another and the more their views about what needed to be done entered the conversation, the more having positions for or against particular approaches became problems for the organization as a whole. The solution – sitting down at the same table – gives rise to a whole new series of problems that need to be solved.

**Symbolic Priorities**

Almost as a condition of coming to the table, New Haven organizations articulated one or another priorities associated with their organizational identity. Whatever the plan was, it would, for example, have to: have separate components in each neighborhood; include multi-cultural training for outreach workers; support needle exchange; or make women and babies a priority. Some of these issues would begin as “identity markers” (“this is what we
focus on”), evolve into demands (“we won’t sign on unless... “), and then become
disconnected from their original sponsors, but continue to circulate.

This was particularly common around the issue of representation. An utterance along the lines of “we need more ... “ or “such and such organization ought to be here” was almost never challenged. In the name of openness and inclusion these suggestions were rarely evaluated or prioritized, accepted or rejected. Instead, they seemed to hang in the air, available at any time to anyone who wanted to raise a concern. The status of any particular idea in a discussion depended on who was present to lead a ritual bow in its honor.

Other ideas would remain as hot symbolic issues that had their foundation in a critique of a particular player or faction or idea. They would initially be championed by one faction or another, but after this they were available to anyone, anytime a little status one-ups-manship was in order. APT’s lack of community legitimacy was frequently used in this way. Objections to suggestions made by APT staff could always be attacked along those lines, whether it was relevant to the issue at hand or not. As the project proceeded, there was a supply of such ideas available for shooting down almost anyone’s suggestion.

Pragmatic Logistics

Throughout the process, RWJ grant and budget requirements and submission deadlines were trotted out as problems to be solved. Usually these were brought to the fore by the players most closely dealing with RWJ, but sometimes, when things started going off in one direction or another, someone would derail the conversation by reminding everyone that they had an agreement to sign or a piece of legislation to prepare, or, as in the spring 1991 incident, a grant to write. These were “genuine” problems, but they often functioned as
random intrusions as one or another member insisted on them upon becoming bored or uncomfortable with the direction of a conversation.

**Organizational Needs**

Partner organizations continually approached FightingBack with requests for funding disguised as offers of resources. Agencies had staff members whose grant support was about to expire, or a new program for which they were seeking funding, and these would be presented as something that FightingBack could make use of. Amidst a city budget crunch and a change in mayor, city officials tried to make FightingBack a tool in the effort to get the new administration off the ground. Organizational needs like these arise all the time, but FightingBack, by virtue of appearing “rich and friendly,” attracted a inordinately large number of them.

Overall, the more players that were brought to the table the more problems were tossed into the FightingBack garbage can. One project director of short tenure said there was a complete “lack of respect” for the integrity of the program and that it was all just “power struggles. [I have] never had to answer to so many different people” (Interview 1993). As more problem carriers joined up, the inventory of problems “available” to attract FightingBack’s attention became fuller and fuller. When partners came to the table they “left politics (or egos) at the door” as advised, but they always brought their problems to add to the mix. The wider the net of inclusion, the larger the number of problems for the organization to consider.

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33 Paul Johnston provides a helpful description of the change in mayoral administrations (Johnston 1994).
Solutions

As new organizations joined Fighting Back they brought along things that they could do that the project might want to fund as well as far fetched ideas for things the project could do. Sometimes the need to “service” these offers transformed a solution into a problem, but often, like problems, they were easily detached from their sponsors and become free floating elements in the organizational garbage can.

Solutions are, ostensibly, the raw material of a program like Fighting Back, the logic of which is to draw on a diverse pool of resources, expertise and experience to put together an effective system, but several factors frustrate the realization of this “all star team” approach. First, solutions get added to the garbage can for different reasons. Carriers may be looking for a subcontract, want to impose their understanding of the situation, want to be understood, or may simply feel the need to have some input. Second, as solutions get added to the mix, they are only exceptionally treated as actual alternatives, compared to other solutions, ranked, accepted, rejected. Disconnected from problems, they prove difficult to evaluate, people forget whose idea it was, whether anyone is championing it or not, etc. Third, because execution is so easily separated from inspiration, solutions lack the discipline imposed by the realization that “somebody has to do it.” Since there are different organizations that could execute any given solution, they did not appear to require decisions about resource allocation by Fighting Back. Solutions presented as sequences of actions can easily become unattached from one another.34 Some solutions are presented as “something

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34 During field work an interesting variation on this was frequently observed. One participant would present of a definite sequence of actions that would be required to accomplish a goal as “step one would be this, step two this” and so on. Later in the discussion, participants would treat these sequential ideas as alternatives, often almost picking one without anyone noting the sequence into choice transformation.
that someone could do” and so, while they are available to the project, it is unclear how they would be operationalized.

As time went on, the people trying to make Fighting Back work reminded one another that they needed to keep the mayor happy, work with Community Policing, find a role for the information and referral service, help the new detox center get off the ground, be “neighborhood focused” to keep the development corporations happy, funnel funds to the board of education, not slight APT after all it had done to support the program, and find a role for people in recovery. The resulting lack of focus and direction was unsurprising.

These processes occur in most organizations. What is new in a collaborative effort like Fighting Back, though, is that because members are broadly recruited from different institutional realms, most of the solutions in the mix at any given point will be foreign to most of the participants. This adds to a lack of feedback and a general sense of vagueness about available solutions. Organizational culture would limit the range of what can constitute a solution in a single organization, but such constraints may be absent in an organization of organizations. Community initiatives create garbage cans in which solutions and problems carried by the partners they assemble accumulate and interact in ways they may not in the community at large. The greater the number of partners, the greater the flow of solutions and problems. As we’ll see in the following section, solutions and problems are not the only things that flow through networks.

**Communities as Loosely Coupled Networks of Schedules**

The Foundation’s design of Fighting Back had innovatively addressed three common temporal issues: timing, effort, and duration. Fighting Back’s success would, first of all,
depend on being the right idea applied at the right time. The RFP argued that the country as a whole was ready to consider demand reduction at the community level as a strategy in the war on drugs (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1989). The challenge would be to identify individual communities that had reached a stage of readiness to take on the problem.

The program would also have to provide enough person-hours to get the job done. Many of the communities that had begun to “fight back” were staffed by volunteers (cf. Falco 1992), but to be successful more person-hours than volunteers could supply would be needed. **Fighting Back** grants would fund full time staffs for the effort. RWJF also recognized that it in addition to the time it would take to develop a “coordinated system of prevention and treatment,” merely organizing themselves as a site - recruitment, relationship building, and the development of consensus - would be a slow process. Thus, the initial funding was for a two year planning period with five additional years of implementation funding.

Despite the fact that the Foundation was forward thinking enough to see time as a resource and had allocated generous amounts of temporal resources, conflicts and problems related to time plagued the project from start to finish. Unexpected crises constantly diverted participants’ attention, meeting times could not be agreed on, and there were constant disagreements about the pace of the project. Participants and observers complained that the project was completely unable to stay “on task,” and that everyone was too busy to get together to work on **Fighting Back**. Just when the Task Force was finding its rhythm, for example, a member organization got defunded and the next several weeks were spent undertaking “emergency measures” to prevent it from going out of business, or, when
the group decided to form a new subcommittee, no one at the table could participate because there were no meeting times that all could make. Resident groups and planning professionals sparred about how long it should take to draw up plans, and one category of participants or another was always offended or put out by the times chosen for meetings. Mid-day disrespected working residents; late afternoons slighted those with children; evening meetings required professionals to put in extra hours; the police would only meet at the beginning or end of shifts.

These observations suggest that time was more than just a quantitative resource of which more is better. The imperative to be “community-wide” generated time-related problems that were rooted in the socio-temporal structure of a community. It could be said that these problems arose not because there was too little time, but because the initiative involved mixing together too many different kinds of time.

When we view time as history, effort, and duration we treat it as a scarce resource and the community as a vessel to which more of this resource can be added as illustrated in Figure V-2.

![Figure V-2 Time as quantitative resource, community as vessel.](image-url)
Robert Wood Johnson’s inclusion of these temporal considerations made Fighting Back a cutting edge program as far as community philanthropy goes, but this conventional view of time as a quantitative resource overlooks important social structural properties of time, and, more specifically, how these properties give rise to effects such as those we observed in New Haven and other Fighting Back sites.

**Time as a Structural Entity**

Numerous social scientists have written about time, communities and organizations (e.g., Hawley 1950; Moore 1963; Sorokin and Merton 1937; Zerubavel 1981; Zerubavel 1985) Moore discusses synchronization, sequence, and rates as fundamental socio-temporal processes with respect to a variety of institutions (e.g., the family, career, organizations, voluntary associations, and the city). Building on the work of Amos Hawley, he examines the phenomena of temporal concentration and segregation and “off-phase” activity in cities (fresh food wholesaling, for example, takes place in the wee hours so that produce and fish can be in the stores for shopping hours, and in some cities refuse is collected at night when traffic permits a faster paced round of pickups). He also looks at the effects of temporal complementarity and the use of schedule staggering to ease loads on systems (as when flex-time reduces rush hour congestion), but which can, in extreme cases, result in temporal mismatches which lead spouses never to see one another or workers never being able to do their shopping (see also Hochschild 1989; Hochschild 1997). Moore’s work combines two perspectives. Using what might be called a “man in society” perspective he first looks at the effect of temporal arrangements on individuals subject to them. Later, he turns to system-
level effects, employing a functional ecological perspective to note the way things are structured as a part of a working system at equilibrium.

Zerubavel offers a complementary perspective showing, among other things, the qualitative differences between “kinds of time” used by different entities within a community or organization, and that time boundaries and spans are socially constructed by members of temporal subcultures. Different walks of life take place, and different cultural groupings exist, as it were, in different temporal worlds (Zerubavel 1979; Zerubavel 1985 (1981); Zerubavel 1989 (1985)).

“Kinds” of time can be distinguished in terms of rhythms, boundaries, speeds and markers. In a community of organizations a variety of “kinds of time” can be identified. In police, fire, and medical organizations, time is structured in terms of rotating shifts of “coverage.” Neighborhood groups build on family time with schedules dominated by the comings and goings of children to school and adults to work. Many professional realms have fairly neatly bounded periods (such as 9 to 5) when things can happen. State agencies often have time horizons that facilitate comfort with long delays and drawn out processes whereas local activists operate in a world where windows of opportunity rarely open wider than a few weeks. Finally, each organization has a roster of specific events and happenings, its schedules and calendars.

When thinking about a community of organizations as an arena for a project like Fighting Back, it may be useful to think of it as a loosely connected network of networks of schedules and calendars as illustrated in Figure V-3. Under ordinary circumstances – that is, without
interventions like *Fighting Back* promoting community-wide participation\(^{35}\) - temporal conflicts are uncommon because clusters of organizations that frequently dealt with one mutually adjust calendars and schedules so that they end up living in what might be called temporal enclaves. Each such enclave had its own sense of “how long is long” and “what are good times” and sets of regularly scheduled events. The APT Foundation and other medical treatment providers could run on “hospital time” but the prevention specialists had to run on “school time.”

![Community as a network of calendar/schedule networks.](image)

When an intervention like *Fighting Back* brings unfamiliar partners into contact with one another temporal conflicts can flare up. In New Haven *Fighting Back*, this took many forms. The central organization found it nearly impossible to stay on task, partner organizations took offense at one another’s sense of how long was too long, and the community appeared to participants to be much busier and closer to gridlock than it actually was.

To understand how this happened, it is useful to return once again to March et al.’s “garbage can model” (March and Olsen 1976). Recall that organizations do not make decisions by rationally considering problems and devising solutions, but by arbitrarily pairing

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\(^{35}\) Interventions are not the only thing that can bring this about. The “discovery” of a new problem or opportunity that elicits a response from a variety of organizations can have similar effects. Disasters are perhaps the most common example. One part of “disaster preparedness” is specifying how “emergency temporality” will replace “temporality as usual.”
at hand solutions and problems when decision opportunities – occasions when the organization is expected to “do something” – arise. The model portrays the stream of decision opportunities as a property of an organization’s (or organizational subunit’s) environment rather than as a result of considerations inside the organization, and the “garbage can-ness” arises from the independence of the choice opportunity stream from the rest of what is going on in the organization. One reason organizations do not behave rationally is that they cannot control the arrival of decision opportunities.

Under ordinary operating conditions, these random flows of decision opportunities are a part of each organizations “schedule and calendar” and organizations in a given temporal enclave are probably subject to more similar decision opportunity streams than are organizations in different enclaves. In the case of Fighting Back, as the project, following the NPO mandate to expand participation it effectively tapped into the decision opportunity streams of all of its partner organizations. The closer the partnership, the more the partners’ crises and deadlines were “shared” with Fighting Back, but even marginal participants often managed to sidetrack the effort by bringing to the Task Force’s attention issues Fighting Back could otherwise have ignored. The initiative’s apparent inability to “stay on track” partly reflected the fact that simply showing up at the table, partners routinely contributed their scheduled and unscheduled events and crises to Fighting Back’s garbage can.

This phenomenon began with New Haven Fighting Back’s relationship with the National Program Office (NPO) in Nashville. The NPO sponsored regular site visits by representatives of the Foundation, NPO or National Advisory Committee who would spend a day or two meeting with Task Force and committee members, visiting agencies
around the community, and generally poking there nose wherever they could. Notice was provided well in advance, but despite their predictability, preparation for site visits generally caused ongoing planning to be abandoned in favor of crisis management.

As a rule, New Haven did very well with site visits. They dropped whatever they were doing, crammed, put their best people on it, and arranged for all the big shots in the community to come out and put on a performance that rarely failed to impress outsiders. But even though they often performed well at them, site visits wreaked havoc on the planning process. The better connected participants took over briefly, made the phone calls necessary to ensure the elites’ attendance, and briefing them about what was going on. The NPO would breeze in for two days and then be off to another site. In the meantime, the challenges that plagued the program on a day to day basis were set aside, often not to be taken up again, as the NPO’s newest criticisms became the new high priority items on the agenda. By the time they’d finished showing the NPO that what they were doing really did meet the grant requirements, chances were good that one partner or another had a new deadline or crisis for the Task Force’s attention. Site visits, then, were routine items on the NPO’s calendar, but they were interruptions for New Haven’s, amounting to a cacophony of temporal noise that drowned out the chimes of the local clocks.

The same pattern of routine disruptions came from local partner organizations. A member would learn of an “opportunity” – as in late 1990, when the state was designating regional substance abuse coordinating councils – and present it to the Task Force as something “Fighting Back should really take the lead on” and then a large block of time was spent debating whether or not the Task Force should take on this new task. The luxury of a two year planning period offered no insulation from the tendency to set things aside and
respond to the latest opportunity, state or city legislative schedule or new federal funding
deadline. The process of unscheduled schedule importation was multi-layered, with one
disruption often interrupted by another.

What we have then, is a model of a community of organizations as a linked structure of
organizational schedules and “unschedules” – in garbage can terms, a network of decision
opportunity streams. The more organizations the initiative brings together, more temporal
streams get mixed together. We might call the schedule and unschedule that organizations
“broadcast” to their transaction partners through such a network “calendar noise.” Each
organization’s own schedule and unschedule are affected by the calendar noise they are
exposed to through transactions with other organizations as the garbage can model
suggests. When the community was more highly fragmented and cooperation was limited
to small clusters, organizations were exposed to relatively minimal levels of calendar noise.
Projects like FightingBack, which seek to solve problems with community-wide collaborative
efforts, create a network connecting multiple flows of decision opportunities – subjecting
the community to high levels of calendar noise. Coordination, in other words, can increase
the “garbage can-ness” in a community of organizations. Full coordination, if it could be
achieved, might eliminate this amplification of garbage can-ness, but the process of
coordination – of moving toward “full coordination” – subjects a community of
organizations to much higher than usual levels of calendar noise.
Figure V-4 shows schematically that we might expect the aggregate level of temporal noise exposure to increase on the way to “coordination.”

This somewhat counterintuitive result – that increased network density can have specific negative community level effects – hearkens back to issues raised in Chapter III. Essentially, we are once again identifying what might be called the “down-side” of social capital. The structure behind this process can be illustrated by looking at a community of organizations from the perspective used by Burt in *Structural Holes* (Burt 1992). A structural hole is the disconnectedness between network partners to whom a given actor is connected. Burt analyzes organizational networks as sources of entrepreneurial opportunities. There, an organization wants to have as efficient a network of contacts as possible to ensure that the information reaching it about entrepreneurial opportunities is maximized. Being connected to two partners that have similar sets of connections does no good since your investment in the second connection brings no additional information. Being connected to clusters that are not related to one another is better. Structural holes exist between the
unrelated clusters as illustrated by the grey bars in Figure V-5. In Burt’s perspective, structural holes generate social capital.

In the configuration A in Figure V-5, there is a higher degree of connection among the numbered organizations than there is in the configuration B. Seen from the perspective of the organization at the center, the configuration B is more advantageous to the central organization because each of its network connections represents a nonredundant source of information and opportunities. In Burt’s terms, organization B has more social capital.

Just as information flows through networks, so do schedules and “unschedules.” An organization that maximizes the level of structural holes among its partners also maximizes the number of different schedules and unschedules that it is exposed to. Clusters of organizations that engage in frequent transactions will be on similar schedules. Thus, the collaborative arrangement on the left in Figure V-5 (which might represent Fighting Back linking up with, say, four substance abuse providers and four youth service providers) would provide the organization at the center with less information and fewer brokerage opportunities that the scenario on the right (which might represent Fighting Back linking up

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This suggests the possibility of carrying out a formal analysis in which different network configurations and different types of temporal interdependence are used to characterize the “space” of interorganizational temporal relations (Ryan In preparation).
with representatives of eight different kinds of organizations), but would also expose it to less calendar noise. By contrast, the central organization on the right is in a better position for entrepreneurial activity, but would be subject to four times as much calendar noise and so have far more decision opportunities to deal with. Configuration B corresponds to “getting all the stakeholders to the table.”

This would suggest, and observations in New Haven lend preliminary support to, the idea that entrepreneurial advantage and garbage can-ness may co-vary. As Fighting Back followed its imperative to be community-wide without becoming a new, centralized authority, it appeared less and less able to operate as a “rational” organization in control of its own calendar. When we conceive of a community of organizations as a loosely knit network of schedules, the origins of this become clear. In the fragmented or cliquish state, a community of organizations contains clusters of organizations that are subject to similar schedules and calendars. All of the substance abuse organizations, for example, pay attention to federal and state drug funding deadlines and ongoing changes in rules about insurance reimbursement for substance abuse treatment. Criminal justice agencies, on the other hand, pay attention to timelines for Justice Department grants, announcements of crime rates, and deadlines for submitting statistics to the FBI. When Fighting Back established partnerships with organizations from these two realms and dozens of others, the Task Force found itself veering from its agenda to deal with “opportunities” brought to its attention by dozens of well intentioned partners to which it was, in principle, committed to listening.

The more temporal noise exposure in a community of organizations, the harder it is for anyone to do anything. The end goal of programs like Fighting Back – a coordinated and
coherent system – may have performance advantages and be broadly accepted as a goal, but the path to that goal requires that the community pass through very unstable and conflict ridden territory. Participants in New Haven Fighting Back certainly recognized the problems of incompatible schedules. It was crucial, they would say, “[to] get everyone to buy into the shared timeline” (Interview 1991). A common phrase in the rhetoric of community programs concerns the need to “get on the same page,” a metaphor drawn originally from musical performance, an activity where temporal coordination is crucial. As the project unfolded, though, it became clear that merely “coming together,” without a central authority or a common score, could not accomplish the necessary reconciliation of temporal differences. Instead, we saw that communities of organizations are full of calendars and schedules, each running at different speeds and full of different markers, so that bringing everyone to the table gives rise to second order temporal phenomena which are easily misinterpreted as political differences, community pathologies, and individual intransigence.

The Technology of Coalitions and Collaboration

One final topic needs to be addressed to complete our consideration of process. Thus far we have basically been arguing that there is more to organizations than was often acknowledged in the planning and implementation of the Fighting Back initiative. Now we want to raise a few questions about the technology at the center of the project: collaboration. In organizational theory “technology” refers to the processes by which an organization produces outputs from its inputs. Technology includes rules for determining what is or is not relevant about inputs, rules for combining and transforming them, means for monitoring the process and outputs and for feeding information back to the
organization. As a variable in organizational behavior, one of the dimensions along which technology varies is ambiguity. In an unambiguous technology organizational members understand its processes, know what to pay attention to in inputs and environment, can distinguish good raw material from bad, and can distinguish good output from bad.

Definitions

The words “collaboration,” “coalition,” and “cooperation” were used interchangeably in and around New Haven Fighting Back over the years to label what they were doing. The absence of any attempt to define or operationalize them or even any debates over what they meant suggests that participants assumed that they knew what the terms meant. The scientific literature was not much more help. Articles on community coalitions spoke vaguely of “… multiple interventions aimed at both individuals … and at risk-producing environments” (Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman 1993, 315), “an organization of individuals representing diverse organizations, factions or constituencies who agree to work together in order to achieve a common goal” (Feighery and Rogers 1989, 1, cited in Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman 1993), “an organization of diverse interest groups that combine their human and material resources to effect a specific change the members are unable to bring about independently” (Brown 1984, 4, cited in Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman 1993), or “the pooling of appreciations and/or tangible resources by two or more stakeholders to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually” (Gray 1985).
Theory

Fighting Back’s emphasis on fragmentation of existing efforts as an explanation for their ineffectiveness was not new in the substance abuse field. Early in this century lack of coordination between narcotics and alcohol control agents has often been cited as a factor in the “failure” of prohibition, and since the 1970s every new federal drug policy has promised some variation on “a thoroughly coordinated national attack” that would solve the drug problem once and for all (Zimring and Hawkins 1992, 47). In 1989 William Bennett claimed “that the drug war was being won in America, through the combined efforts of interdiction, deterrence, and prevention “ (Bennett, 1990 quoted in Pentz 1995, 69). What was different about Fighting Back was that it made local communities the locus of the effort and defined it in terms of a decentralized continuum of care. The logic of Fighting Back as a community change process is illustrated in Figure V-6.

![Figure V-6](image-url)

Figure V-6. Simplified causal sequence connecting Fighting Back to demand reduction.

A “comprehensive community-wide system of prevention and treatment” was the overarching vision that guided the designers of Fighting Back. Such a system, they believed, would be an effective tool to reduce the demand for illegal drugs and alcohol. It was not that there were no existing programs, RWJ reminded applicants, it was that there had been, in general, “little attempt to tie such endeavors together” (Jellinek and Hearn 1991). As a part of the grant application process communities had to document the extent of their substance abuse problems, assess the resources available in the community to combat
substance abuse, and describe how these could be brought together to form a single system. This was the task they set out for themselves for the five year implementation period and coordination, collaboration and coalition building were how they were supposed to do it.

**Observations: The Challenge of Involving Existing Programs and Initiatives**

From the start the goal of the “single community-wide system” proved elusive. New Haveners talked endlessly about collaboration and the continuum of care, but it proved nearly impossible to subsume existing programs “under” Fighting Back. In their first few months of operation, New Haven Fighting Back learned repeatedly that you don’t just come in and coordinate existing organizations. At the end of their first year, project leaders attended a meeting with other Fighting Back sites and were relieved to learn that other sites were also stymied by the “how to involve ongoing initiatives problem” (CTF910516).

Unsuccessful attempts had been made to position the Task Force as a central policy making body, a grant approval body, and a promulgator of prevention and treatment protocols for all AOD agencies in the community. Even achieving a semblance of cooperation became such a challenge that by the end of the two year planning period the overall goal of the program was changed from “to reduce demand” to “to enable all concerned citizens ... to work together ... to measurably reduce demand...” (CTF910321).

With this revised mission New Haven Fighting Back retreated from actively trying to coordinate the entire system, opting instead to facilitate, catalyze, and broker. In this role, which came to be known as “neutral convening,” New Haven Fighting Back did achieve several “collaborative” successes, but in each case, it was a small group of partners rather than the entire system that was “coordinated,” and it took an enormous amount of work to make it happen. The Consortium for Substance Abusing Women and Their Children, for
example, coordinated several grant-writing efforts and played a central role in the formulation of the city’s state legislative proposals on substance abuse. *Fighting Back*, in the person of the project director, also helped to broker an agreement on how chronic inebriates were treated by the emergency medical system, and it played a pivotal role in organizing local agencies to design and lobby for a drug court in New Haven.

In contrast to these successes, long standing efforts to create a centralized case-management system, a central intake facility for treatment, or even the adoption of common intake forms that would institutionalize a continuum of care never really got off the ground. After seven years of *Fighting Back*, the coordinated system envisioned in the RFP does not exist, although some service coordination and coalition formation occurred as substance abuse treatment providers circled their wagons in response to managed care companies taking over Medicaid.

**You can’t coordinate those who don’t want to be coordinated**

For the most part, participants in New Haven agreed with *Fighting Back*’s designers about fragmentation being a central problem, and they also agreed that the lack of full cooperation represented a failure to “get everyone on board.” Like Jellinek and Hearn (1991, 80), they believed that the real question was whether “concern about the drug crisis is sufficiently broad and deep for diverse community groups to finally set aside their differences in favor of what is widely perceived as a greater common interest.” When collaboration *was* successful it was often attributed to the project director’s ability to “work” people and do deals. When it was not, they explained events in terms of turf battles among service providers, neighborhood organizations, and city and state agencies, and the obstructive behavior of particular individuals and organizations. Local *Fighting Back* officials
would also frequently castigate the National Program Office and the program officers at RWJ as being clueless about how things really worked “on the ground.”

Collaboration as an ambiguous technology

The people who designed Fighting Back realized that asking communities to “orchestrat[e] the efforts of their many public, private, and voluntary organizations” was asking them to do something that “few communities, if any, [had] successfully achieved in response to any issue...” (Jellinek and Hearn 1991, 80). Few had done so, however, not because they were unwilling, but because they didn’t know how. Other than coordination by centralized bureaucratic control, Fighting Back was left with few obvious alternative “technologies” for transforming the substance abuse domain into a coordinated system. Everyone, from the Foundation to neighborhood residents, talked incessantly about collaboration and coordination, but no one, it seems, had any idea of how to build a system out of neighborhood groups, treatment providers, hospitals, businesses, politicians, academic researchers and churches.

Coordination, collaboration, and coalitions among organizations are what can be called “ambiguous social technologies.” Although they are frequently invoked in connection with community initiatives, it is often unclear just what they are, when to use them, how they work, or why they fail. Genuine collaboration is difficult to achieve when the actors are persons; among organizations the calculus is more complicated still. The cult which emerges around the idea of collaboration easily blinds participants to several important characteristics of this social organizational technology. Some of these are described in the next several sections.
First, they are non-standard institutional forms. Second, their apparent symbolic value may far exceed their real effects. Third, it is difficult to tell when they are happening, when they are not, and to ascertain when enough is enough. Finally, in the long run, it may be that everyone doesn’t need to get along, and that real changes come about through minimal amounts of highly targeted cooperation, collaboration and coordination among small groups of partners.

Collaboration is a Non-Standard Institutional Form

The RFP and the National Program Office treated Fighting Back as if collaboratives and coalitions were standard, off the shelf community institutions like police departments, chambers of commerce, parent-teacher organizations, or sports teams. Some models for the Task Force did exist – for example, Blue Ribbon Panels (on which the CTF was modeled) – but there were few prototypes for the coalition part of Fighting Back. New Haven’s and other sites’ struggles over “how to include existing initiatives” were struggles to invent and implement structures of coordination lying somewhere in the unfamiliar territory between bureaucratic control and laissez-faire market interaction.

The experience that community based organizations did have with coalition building was usually in cases where the “opposition” was more easily identified as a specific organization or institution. Available models were oriented toward opposing what City Hall or large institutions were doing, or pitting one group against another, but in the case of substance abuse, the culprit was amorphous and too easily seen to be inside rather than
outside the community. Every “coming together” to combat substance abuse ran the risk of being seen as an attempt to “bash” one part of the community or another.

Furthermore, the structure of the domain itself – large numbers of small, special purpose organizations – and the nature of these organizations – dependent on an annual funding cycle and their ability to justify their existence in terms of the special niche they filled – made cooperation an “unnatural” strategy. Many of these organizations had themselves evolved out of frustration with pre-existing organizations and had developed a pattern of institutionalized non-cooperation over the years.

**Inter-organizational cooperation may be more trouble than it’s worth**

New Haven’s *Fighters Back* learned early that cooperation and coordination are costly. Each time the organization grew, significant resources had to be dedicated to bringing new participants up to speed. Keeping all the collaborators abreast of ongoing developments requires significant investment in communications. Even the main players had trouble staying on the same page. One CTF member, asked what he’d do differently, said he “would bring co-chairs together to review what grant is and lay out expectations and go through a process to develop a shared vision” (Interview 1991). There was a constant tension between the care and feeding of their stable of partner organizations and putting these partners to work for the project. Often more resources are expended to foster cooperation than the benefits (“buy-in” or “feelings of ownership,” themselves hard to detect) won by that cooperation.

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37 In some *Fighters Back* communities this seems to have been somewhat diffused by concentrating on issues like billboards, graffiti, liquor store licensing and the like that can be portrayed in terms of threats to “our” community.
Are we collaborating yet?

Without specific projects to work on, it was difficult to recognize whether collaboration was happening or not, and most of the time meeting attendance was the only evidence of working together. Collaboration and coordination were thus easily confused with “lesser” forms of participation. To fulfill the funder’s mandate, they needed to take a “Noah’s ark” approach, ensuring that all the various “sectors” were on board; from the members’ perspective, it was important to be at the table to get a share of the resources when the budget was drawn up. Pre-occupied with these motivations for just getting people to show up or making sure that everyone was represented, most of the players had little energy for developing a more rigorous means of “detecting” cooperation and collaboration.

How much collaboration is enough?

There may be a diminishing marginal rate of return to collaboration. The difficulty of measuring collaboration, made it impossible evaluate the benefits of striving for more collaboration. In other words, as a circle of cooperation expands, it may cost more to add one more member than the payoff for having that member on board, but it is hard for participants to tell. The symbolic premium placed on community-wide involvement can easily mask such diseconomies. Sometimes New Haven Fighting Back sought out particular partners because they needed some resource the partner controlled, but more often because RWJ expected involvement from that sector. In practice, there was no reliable mechanism for deciding whether further expansion was warranted, what they should expect from new members, or how expansion related to concrete projects. Finally, collaboration also imposes costs on collaborators, and it may cost more for small organizations than for large
- excessive coordination can even be a threat to such organizations – further complicating any attempts at a calculus of collaboration.

**Maybe Everyone Doesn’t Have To Get Along**

Over the long term, it turned out that New Haven Fighting Back’s most significant accomplishments were pulled off by a few limited groups of partners assembled especially for particular tasks. Furthermore, it became obvious that the “need” for across the board coordination was often a surrogate for the identification of a few specific conflicts that needed to be resolved. The real coordination work was not among everyone, but among small subsets of organizations within the community. Despite the rhetoric of integration and single systems, the absence of complete cooperation and participation may be less pathological than is usually implied; in communities of organizations the level of cooperation and coordination that would constitute “non-fragmentation” may be much less than 100% (cf. Warren, Rose and Bergrunder 1974).

**Ambiguous Technologies**

None of this should be taken to suggest that collaboration in a community of organizations is impossible or undesirable. There are, in fact, many ways in which organizations can coordinate their activities: sharing information, space and other resources; referral; competition; merging; funding one another; and subcontracting, but as a system building technology they are fraught with ambiguity and it is difficult to know how use them to bring about a systemic result. Consider this description by garbage can theorists Cohen, March and Olson:

Technology is often unclear. Although the organization manages to survive and even produce, its own processes are not understood by its members. It operates on
the basis of simple trial-and-error procedures, the residue of learning from the accidents of past experience, and pragmatic inventions of necessity (1976, 24-5).

And that is how Fighting Back seemed to proceed most of the time. No one really knew how to facilitate coordination or what would count success, and a spirit of “anything goes” developed. The premium on cooperation and collaboration as “what the community needs” may have undermined attempts to make other changes since it fostered the belief that “we are doing the right thing, but there is no effect because our efforts are too fragmented.”

Conclusion

In the previous chapter we tried to make the case that the mandate to cooperate, collaborate, or form coalitions tend to assume that organizations can do things that individuals can do, but that, in fact, organizations tend to be rather bad at many of the “skills” that are key to successful collaboration.

Garbage can theory can be read as saying that organizations are not very good at exactly those things we treat them as if they are good at – the efficient use of resources in pursuit of a goal. It argues that organizations do not have straightforward goals and purposes, and that they do not routinely solve problems by researching all possible solutions and selecting the best alternatives. In this chapter, we have looked at what happens when we try to connect such entities together in a purpose built community level system, a structure named in the title of the chapter: networks of garbage cans. While the program designers saw “being at the same table” and building a “community wide system” as an obvious recipe for overcoming endemic fragmentation and combining complementary skills and resources for the community’s benefit, the result was more often chaos, confusion, and conflict. The
collective entity, despite being composed of the “best and the brightest” leaders in the community was perpetually adrift and directionless.

What we were seeing, this chapter suggests, is that linking organizations together can just as (or more) likely to lead to the emergence of a kind of community-wide garbage can as to community-wide coordination. Because the technology of collaboration and coordination is ambiguous, project leaders have almost no leverage to produce one as opposed to the other if their overarching strategy is to “involve everyone.” When they followed other instincts and included only those “partners” necessary for a given initiative, they were often successful, but when they followed the rhetoric of community-wideness for its own sake, little or no progress followed. This suggests a basic, but unacknowledged, tension in the ideology of “stakeholder participation” : who defines whom as a stakeholder? Having multiple perspectives at the table enriches information and reduces “search costs” as participants contribute information to the conversation, but when the participants are organizations, they cannot help but bring solutions and problems and schedules along with that information, further muddying the waters through which the project has to muddle.
VI

Conclusion

The Fighting Back Idea

Policy makers and program funders have been encouraging and requiring cooperation, collaboration, and coalitions among community agencies and organizations for a long time. The explicit enthusiasm for having everyone “work together” waxes and wanes, and each time it is newly championed it seems like the most recently discovered silver bullet for fixing the problems of the inner city. This study is neither about the cyclical rise and fall of enthusiasm for coalitions nor an attempt to assess the strengths and weaknesses of this approach vis à vis others. It is, instead, about how the structural properties of the object of intervention – communities of organizations – affect the outcomes of attempts to employ interorganizational collaboration to effect change. The conclusions outlined here, drawn from an interpretation of how events unfolded in one case, are offered as potentially relevant for how “collaboration” is employed in the future and what we expect from it when it is.

As conceived by program officers at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Fighting Back program was typical of such programs in the 1990s. It was intended to support efforts to form community-wide coalitions that cut across professional sectors and that extended
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from the grassroots to community elites. These coalitions would build “working systems of prevention and treatment” with the goal of reducing the demand for drugs and alcohol (Jellinek and Hearn 1991; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1989). Communities were chosen on the basis of their ability to document their substance abuse problem and design a program that appeared feasible and likely to have a significant impact on demand. Grantees were awarded three million dollars over five years to implement their plans.

The program officers at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation who designed Fighting Back had put together one of the more sophisticated programs of its time. Sensitive to past failures attributed to oppressive centralization, rushes to implementation, and insufficient duration of funding, they had prescribed two years of planning, during which sites would develop their own strategies for demand reduction, and five years of implementation funding. They recognized that community size was an important variable and so limited the program to communities of 100,000 to 250,000 population. They were also aware that local politics would prove the most challenging barrier to program success, and counseled grantees accordingly. As they themselves liked to say, they had learned a lot from the past.

Despite all of the wisdom that went into its development, though, both participants and observers agree that the FightingBack never lived up to expectations. The main conclusions of this study are that the difficulties encountered in the attempt to implement the Fighting Back idea in New Haven can be explained as the result of three failures: the failure to appreciate the implications of being an organizational intervention; the failure to anticipate the structurally imposed limits of collaboration; and the failure to understand the ways in which the history that teaches theorists “lessons” accumulates as social organizational debris
in the social space where it happens, and how this effects subsequent efforts such as Fighting Back.

Affirming the Null Hypothesis

Since 1990 New Haven, Connecticut has been one of thirteen Fighting Back programs funded by Robert Wood Johnson. New Haven’s experience with Fighting Back and Fighting Back’s experience with New Haven have been troubled and troubling. At times, the funding opportunity seemed to be more trouble than it was worth, and on several occasions the grant was nearly lost. In the name of combating drug and alcohol abuse, dormant intra-community battles were rejoined. In the name of community involvement, hopes were raised, but not fulfilled, in places that had suffered the worst effects of substance abuse and related problems. In the name of collaboration, partners were brought to the table only to be alienated by the processes they encountered there.

According to its designers, the purpose of Fighting Back was to see whether “a community can achieve substantial reductions in the use of illegal drugs and alcohol” by “consolidating existing programs, activities, and other resources into a single community-wide system of prevention, early identification, treatment, and aftercare services” (Jellinek and Hearn 1991, 79). Researchers who conducted the multi-city evaluation commissioned by the Foundation were asked to answer the question “did it work?” where “it” was “the Fighting Back idea” and “working” meant producing a measurable decrease in the demand for alcohol and illegal drugs.

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38 There were originally fourteen sites, but Oakland, California was defunded early in the program.
Conclusion

When the evaluation team compared *Fighting Back* communities with comparison sites, no significant differences were found (Saxe et al. 1998; Saxe et al. 1996; Saxe et al. 1995). For all practical purposes there was no measurable *Fighting Back* “effect.” There are several alternative explanations for this apparent confirmation of the null hypothesis, but the upshot is that the zero effect finding makes it impossible to answer the question “does *Fighting Back* work?” in the affirmative. While Foundation officials and other researchers argued over whether or not there was, buried somewhere in the data, a natural or pseudo-experiment that would tell us something those of us who had done field work in *Fighting Back* sites were not surprised by the results. In city after city we had seen agencies, organizations, community leaders and residents spend incredible amounts of time, energy, and money fighting one another rather than “fighting back” against substance abuse.

What did leave us perplexed was the distance between how Robert Wood Johnson officials, the literature on community coalitions and collaboration, and even participants, talked about programs like *Fighting Back*, on the one hand, and the on-the-ground reality of the implementation that we observed in the field, on the other. The implicit conceptual structures with which all the aforementioned groups apprehended what was going on in community programs like *Fighting Back* seemed inadequate both for explaining and for influencing what was happening. This observation provided the motivation for this study. In the face of rampant confusion about what kind of a thing communities are, and what kind of things organizational interventions like *Fighting Back* are, it is possible, by a careful examination of how the *Fighting Back* idea interacted with local conditions to extract “findings” from these null results.
The Theories in the Case

Throughout this case study, my strategy has been to “compare,” in turn, the theory or expectations of program planners (including that expressed by funders and enthusiasts of “get everybody to the table” approaches), field observations, and local participants interpretations and explanations. First, I compare how what was “supposed to happen” differed from what we observed. Then I consider participants’ explanations — usually expressed in terms of blaming specific individuals or organizations or the entire community. Rather than attempt to explain what happened in New Haven as compared to other Fighting Back sites or similar cities that did not have a Fighting Back program, I proceed, borrowing ideas from organizational theory, from these expectations and observations to hypotheses about generic organizational processes as alternatives to both participants’ explanations and those associated with conventional wisdom about community initiatives.

This strategy was inspired by an oft repeated impression made on the researcher during the field work: participants, funders, and researchers alike theorized about what they were doing or observing in fairly matter-of-fact terms that took little account of the possibility that they might be undertaking a fundamentally difficult task. Terms like “the community,” “the coalition,” and “partner organizations” — the very things that I was studying and that were at the center of the Fighting Back “idea” — were tossed about carelessly giving the sense that speakers had a simplistic, taken-for-granted model of what these things were and how they fit together. The funder had announced that coalitions were good and so the grantee started to recruit member organizations and have meetings. No one asked what a coalition was or whether “good meetings” automatically made “good neighbors.” Novel institutions like “community wide coalition” and “citizens task force” and “comprehensive system of
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prevention and treatment” were treated as if they were off the shelf forms of social organization like chambers of commerce or rotary clubs. And, while local participants called whatever they were doing by the names RWJ had specified, all manner of conflict accompanied what was supposed to be a consensus oriented process built around a problem that everyone agreed was serious and a real threat to the community. More and more the important question – that no one was asking – seemed to be “why was this so difficult?”

The analysis of this case study is oriented toward discovering a “sociological” and “organizational” answer to this question as an alternative to the more common answers in terms of incompetent communities full of villains, traitors and rogues.

It is an important question because there is little evidence in the current wave of enthusiasm for collaborative solutions that anyone is confronting the rhetorical certainty that collaboration solves all problems with the empirical difficulties that hobble most actual efforts at collaboration. “Knowledge” about collaboration often takes the form of exhortations and pronouncements as, for example, when congress recently found that “Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination through national, State, and local or tribal leadership and partnerships are critical to facilitate the reduction of substance abuse among youth in communities throughout the United States” (U.S. Congress 1997), and that “[c]ommunity anti-drug coalitions throughout the United States are successfully developing and implementing comprehensive, long-term strategies to reduce substance abuse among youth on a sustained basis” (U.S. Congress 1997). Despite a lack of evidence, the government insists that “[t]he Drug-Free Communities Act builds upon the success of community anti-drug coalitions throughout the Nation in developing and implementing comprehensive, long-term strategies to reduce substance abuse among youth on a sustained
basis” (U.S. Government 1998). Whether or not they “work,” foundations and government agencies continue to fund, and local communities continue to try to implement, collaborative solutions.

One problem with such approaches is that the motivations and justifications for advocating cooperation, collaboration, coalitions and partnerships are varied and even contradictory. They include recognition of the complexity of the problem, the need to appear to funders to be united, the expectation of economies of scale in the face of budget cuts, and the conclusion that profession-based carving up of social problems had ceased to be “productive.” Resource efficiency is probably the most commonly cited motivation: “This meeting is a recognition – a recognition that we must work in partnership and we must use our limited resources wisely,” said an administrator of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration describing a conference on collaboration, adding that partnerships were essential in light of House and Senate proposals to both cut the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA) budget and transfer Medicaid into a block grant to the states (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1995). Other professionals make the same point:

Mental health and substance abuse professionals came together in an unprecedented display of collaboration recently, saying the only way to move ahead in the face of shrinking budgets and shifting power structures is to work together. (Nation’s Health 1995)

Curiously, no one asks why, if system-wide collaboration is such a “no-brainer” that offers communities “something for nothing,” it has not been implemented already. Over and over it is presented as a strategy with no down-side.
When difficulties are acknowledged, there is a systematic tendency to ignore the structural and organizational aspects of problems that arise in favor of individual level explanations. A common manifestation of this is the tendency to slip uncritically back and forth between talking about individuals and organizations. In an RWJF newsletter extolling the virtues of collaboration, for example, we learn that “[f]orging a coalition among diverse organizations can seem at times like ‘an unnatural act among non-consenting adults’” (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1995). For experts and power brokers who live in worlds where action means having meetings, collaboration means individuals getting along around a conference table, but “out there” in communities of organizations, instituting and maintaining working relationships between organizations present far greater difficulties than achieving consent among well-meaning adults.

This tendency also shows up in the conflation of democracy, participation and political support that goes with the concept of “stakeholders.” The report quoted above goes on to say:

Problems like AIDS and substance abuse require multiple interventions by a number of organizations -- many of them not even in the health field, such as the police, business, schools and housing authorities,” Sofaer says. “Today there are many more stakeholders than ever before in determining whether a problem gets solved.

...  

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has identified the coalition as one of the most effective ways to initiate and sustain social change. “The basic coalition model is a way of harnessing as much community energy as possible in a way that is cost effective,” says Tito Coleman, RWJF program officer. “Because a broad section of the community is behind it, whatever is done has more of a chance of succeeding.” (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1995)

It is never quite clear whether stakeholder participation is important to success because of the resources they can bring to the effort, because they have a moral right to participate and
determine what is done, or because involving them will keep them from opposing what a project is trying to do. Coalitions, the argument seems to run, are good ideas, then, because problems are multi-faceted, because organizational participants are partisans of divergent interests, or because of the efficiency of collective action. In each case, there is little recognition that organizing organizations may be fundamentally different from organizing individuals.

Early On, Experts Predicted Problems

The experts who reviewed the New Haven proposal in 1991 were not optimistic about the program’s likelihood of success. One noted, bluntly, that New Haven had “[m]any programs in place, skilled people working, serious problems, but that it was not very likely that a coordinated, integrated program will be developed” (NH1006 n.d.). Still, New Haven was a good candidate for Fighting Back because it had “good programs, innovative procedures, though poor coordination and integration.” In particular, he noted, there was a “[s]ignificant chasm between professionals and the community.” In short, it was a “great plan, but…. As one reviewer commented: “This would be a dynamite program, if it could be implemented!”

Already at this early stage, two issues that would remain central throughout the duration of the program had emerged. The first was the idea that the “real” problem is not drugs but jobs (“They have everything in place, but [job training and placement],” noted reviewer two.), and the second was the struggle to overcome the contradiction between the mounting of a program of organizational coordination and that of mobilizing grassroots involvement. Reviewer number three thought the plan was good on paper, but that it
would be hard to carry out: "... this looks good, however, it will probably not reach as many people as it plans because it is a City-Hall run effort and doesn’t engage the community-based organizations in an outreach and community organization/empowerment process." But, he noted, more outreach might make for a messier program that could not be completed in five years:

[If] the community groups assert themselves and seek to take over the project, as in Kansas City, there could be a lot of time lost in the process. However, it would probably make for a better overall long-term outcome if this were to happen. The prospect makes the present five-year time horizon look unrealistic.

In short, the reviewers and the National Program Office put their finger right on the things that would prove challenging to the implementation of New Haven Fighting Back. Their descriptions, however, remained at a level that did not inform the implementation efforts in the community. No one knew what it would mean to “engage the community-based organizations in an outreach and community organization/empowerment process.” That would require more than just getting people “to the table,” but no one could say what more. Ultimately, what was needed was ongoing interorganizational interaction, but it turned out that it was quite difficult to think about these things in organizational terms.

The Difficulty of Thinking Organizationally

In a recent book, Barbara Czarniawksa notes that the stories we tell about organizations tend toward one of two extremes: either they are told by economists and remain “general, abstract, and hypothetical,” or else we get “glossy (and glossing) annual reports, or stories of villains and heroes” (Czarniawska 1997, 2). Organizations are so familiar to us that we tell highly formalized stories about them so that “the most pervasive social phenomenon of contemporary Western societies remains unknown, glossed over, revealed in snatches, or
disguised as something else: a romance, a spy story” (2). This fits the FightingBack case well. Half the time we heard abstract ideas about pooling resources, reaching consensus, becoming more efficient (the theory of the program). The rest of the time we listened to the exhortations of boosters and inspiring anecdotal accounts of little successes (from the wisdom literature) or explanations based on the deviousness of saboteurs or longstanding community pathology (the local “inside scoop”). From none of these could anyone derive instructions for dealing with day to day organizational realities.

**Overcoming the Tendency to Psychologize**

While FightingBack did represent a big step forward for the medical and psychological professions in recognizing that substance abuse was a problem at the community level, the public health thinking on which it was based still did not admit social structural and organizational factors into the picture. The multiple motivations behind the advocacy of collaborative solutions partly explain the uncritical use of the concepts described above. Whether one is thinking like a technocrat, a liberal, or a pragmatist, “working together” seems like an unqualified good. Since it is inherently a good thing, when difficulties are encountered in projects like FightingBack, individuals, particular organizations, or a community’s ethos are held up as blameworthy. Such explanations of a program’s problems encourage the assumption that we understand communities and organizations just fine and that collaboration is a non-problematic concept. What this study tries to show is that there is something to learn from questioning exactly this point. Our motivating questions, then, have been: what kind of a thing is an organization as a tool for carrying out an initiative like FightingBack, and what kind of a thing is a community as an arena for carrying out an initiative like FightingBack?
To answer these questions I have engaged in three theoretical “moves.” First, communities are conceived of as communities of organizations. Second, organizations are conceived of organizationally, not “as if” they were individuals, just bigger. Third, communities of organizations are thought of in terms of the connections between and among organizations and the social organizational environment in which individual organizations exist.

The emphasis in this study on communities of organizations is intended to counter two separate but related tendencies in the literature. The first is the tendency for activists and analysts to over-value participation and the sentimental aspects of community “feeling” (cf. Hunter 1997). It is indeed moving and encouraging when groups of individuals come together and successfully mount collective action in defense of their neighborhoods, but all community initiatives are not social movements in the Alinsky tradition, and it does not further the achievement of their goals to treat them as if they are. The fetishism of stakeholders, too, often leads activists and scholars alike to treat participation as a panacea and end in itself. The point, then, is not to be anti-participation, but not to be blinded by the ideal of participation.

The second tendency that this study takes aim at is the over-simplistic treatment of organizations in some of the literature on community initiatives. In a 1943 piece with the title “The Professional Ideology of the Social Pathologists” C. Wright Mills criticized students of social problems for their slavish devotion to theories that explained social problems in terms of individual deviation from norms (Mills 1943). Much of what has been borrowed from organizational theory has been imported in a similarly therapeutic/diagnostic mode. The challenges of working in and with organizations are reduced to the
things that can go wrong with organizations; and consultants, boosters, and “experts” give workshops on setting goals, writing mission statements, and avoiding common pitfalls. By promulgating theories such as cultural lag, insufficient socialization, and community disorganization Mills’ social pathologists had barred explanations rooted in social structure and ruled out attempts to change the underlying conditions that gave rise to social problems. Similarly, the neglect of the structural realities presented by the dominance of organizations in communities prevents us from identifying generic organizational effects that arise from the organizational characteristics of organizations, rather than from inept operators who don’t know the latest management theory, or from corrupt administrators who want to sell the community out.

Thus, we can summarize by saying that I am trying to make three points about communities that are relevant to understanding the trajectory of programs like Fighting Back. The first concerns the things that communities are made of – organizations. Organizations have specifically organizational properties that warrant paying attention to because when organizations are your tools, these properties interact to change the behavior of those tools. The second point relates to the way that organizations “add up” to constitute a community. A community of organizations is not one big open marketplace, but a highly articulated networks of networks of organizations, and changing patterns of ties can produce both positive and negative system level effects. Finally, the third point is that we cannot do things to communities using organizations without leaving debris behind and without encountering the debris left by past organizations. Organizationally, there is no such thing as starting from scratch. In sociology and in everyday life, we think of organizational “death” as an exit from the population, but what we are emphasizing here is that because
they leave behind a residue, old organizations neither die nor fade away, they simply breakdown and clutter the landscape with social organizational debris. Communities are not merely unlevel playing fields, but a bumpy ones, full of gullies, hillocks, and ruts in which the history of organizations past lives on.

**Postulate 1. The “community” in community initiatives is a community of organizations**

Interorganizational collaboration is too easily thought of as being a matter of “all getting along.” Friction and defection are interpreted in terms of “individual” pathology and politics – things would have worked fine if so-and-so (or such-and-such an organization) had not been so selfish and un-community minded – and overcoming such problems is a matter of improving individual or organizational behavior. After the letter-writing incident, for example, the NPO advised New Haven players to sit down and work out their differences, and then wondered to themselves whether there was enough political good will in New Haven to make the program successful. The advice is built on the assumption that the disagreements were personal rather than organizational and the “concern” treats community as if it were an undifferentiated entity. Both perspectives presume to analogize from individuals to collectivities. My argument here is that in order to understand what happens in communities of organizations, we need to remember that organizations are not “just like persons,” and that collectivities made up of organizations do not behave “just like” a polity of individual persons.

The expectation that *Fighting Back* would succeed as long as no one played the rogue or saboteur, that is, treating collaboration and cooperation as if they were natural behavior for healthy and properly socialized organizations, is built on just such a flawed model of what a
community is. By taking organizations seriously, our analysis here leads to several “observations.”

**Observation 1.** When initiatives bring radically different kinds of organizations together, the interaction between organizational differences can generate emergent negative effects independent of greed and nastiness.

A fundamental assumption of the “collaboration paradigm” is that organizations can interact with one another benignly, or at least with transaction costs that are outweighed by collective benefits. Traditionally, this question is evaluated in terms of interests – participation is made worth an organization’s while by horse trading and exchanging tits for tats, but mere contact can threaten secrets, require adjustments in standard operating procedures, or expose an organization to charges of being inefficient, threaten symbolic stances taken in the past and so on. Differences in size, professional orientation, sector, or level of sophistication can generate unanticipated consequences that can either prevent collaboration to begin with or produce effects not considered in the original call to cooperate. These organizational differences can make interactions non-benign regardless of levels of trust, community spirit, or expected collective benefit. On many occasions in New Haven, an organization’s inclination not to collaborate was a realistic assessment of potential negative repercussions rather than a lack of community spirit or grounds for getting a low grade in “gets along well with others” on its organizational report card.

**Observation 2.** Within communities of organizations, clusters of organizations can live in non-overlapping empirical worlds rendering problematic the concept “the community” and the assumption of organizational commitment to it.

Perhaps the most common fragment of rhetoric heard during the planning and implementation of programs like Fighting Back is “in the interest of the community.” The
logic of such initiatives is based on the idea that there is such a community interest, and that organizations, if called upon, cannot fail to share it. If an organization balks at participating, it is assumed that this represents a specific anti-community sentiment. Just as the belief that buying Japanese is “anti-American” implies that being American means allegiance to American companies, we take for granted that organizations will show allegiance to the community in which they are located. The logic is even more flawed in the case of organizations than individuals, though, because, in very real ways, organizations that are neighbors do not necessarily live in the same communities. By their very design, organizations are “specialty-sighted,” seeing only the features in the community that are directly related to their mission. In the social and human services realm, this means that treatment organizations know where the addicts are, the police know where crimes happen, and that the fire department exists in a community of structures and homeless shelters in a community of homeless hangouts. We can decry “categorical social services,” but by creating specialist organizations, we have created a pseudo-community of entities which do not, in fact, all live in the same world.

**Observation 3.** Organizations are highly constrained actors. They often “represent” vast quantities of resources, but, as members of collaborations and coalitions, organizational representatives have limited discretion over contributing these resources “to the cause.”

One thing that makes collaboration attractive is the economy of scale that we assume comes with collective action. Given all the resources in a community, imaginations are stirred by thoughts of “imagine what we could do together,” and that the case for community collaboration is built partly on the idea that potential collaborators have “so much to contribute.” As organizational representatives come “to the table,” we frequently
count the resources of each organization as “pledged,” but most organizations are very limited in the kind or amount of what they can offer. Latent contradictions within a community of organizations become manifest conflicts as organizations are forced to reveal ways in which they are not free to contribute to the collective effort. Having their resources called upon can reveal all the ways in which potential collaborators are constrained by other commitments. Organizations turn out to be far more constrained and rigid than individual actors. Models of community-wide coalitions based on analogies to individual behavior often omit this potentially determinative fact.

**Observation 4.** Organizations are highly distracted actors. Collaborative solutions that depend on continual attention from organizations are in direct competition with what “responsible” organizations are supposed to be doing.

Even if they were more flexible, organizations tend to be very distracted actors. Much thinking about collaboration assumes that the heavy lifting lies in persuading community entities to “sign-on,” but this turns out to be the easy part. Most organizations in a community of organizations operate at or near capacity just to stay in existence. When called out to join a new initiative they attend a few meetings, make a quick assessment about whether the project represents potential resources or not, and then, if nothing happens, they retreat to business as usual. Some enlightened community organizers take special notice of how, say, single mothers are potentially distracted participants, but few activists make the same allowances for organizations. In New Haven, everybody was willing to sign up, a fewer number than that would show up, and still fewer participated actively. A realistic model of community coalitions, then, cannot be based on the assumption of attentive members.
Observation 5. **Members contribute problems and solutions to the collective garbage can rather than resources to the collective effort.**

RWJ advised Fighting Back sites to include “all those institutions, organizations, and public and private agencies whose participation is required to implement the proposed initiative, including news media, civic and religious organizations, schools, businesses, major health care providers, human service agencies, drug and alcohol treatment providers, ... local government and law enforcement...” and “those members of the community most affected by the problem” (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 1989). This advice reflected the public health strategy of turning an individual problem into a community problem as well as the belief that the combined resources of the entire community would be the most formidable force possible. The entity created by getting “everyone” to the table, however, proved unwieldy, directionless, and ineffective. It suffered from a diversity of goals, a tendency to be overwhelmed by possible courses of action, and a chaotic calendar.

Often, bringing “resources” to the table was a thinly disguised form of marketing. Participants would “offer” a staff member, program, or space that was currently, or soon to be, under-utilized and that Fighting Back could inexpensively buy from them. Researchers interested in maternal and child substance abuse offered to help to make mothers and babies a priority area for the project. The school system wanted its social development program to be Fighting Back’s youth component. The police department’s community policing effort could easily be Fighting Back’s neighborhood component. Neighborhood organizations “offered” neighborhood organizers who could work out of their offices if Fighting Back paid for them, and said they would be willing to accept money for youth programs and street festivals. Residents wanted cleanups, more police protection, and drug
Other players advocated for theme songs and tee-shirts, town meetings, and advertising slogans. The more partners the project recruited the richer the mix of things it had to take into account and the more “offers” it had to consider.

The ideas behind the “involve all stakeholders” approach are a natural extension of older images of how communities should function. Much of the early literature on communities was about decision making (e.g., Dahl 1961; Hunter 1953). At issue was whether or not American communities tended to be ruled by elites or an open and fair interplay among a variety of interest groups. In some ways, the enthusiasm for stakeholder involvement and community-wide coalitions can be seen as pushing the system beyond pluralism toward genuine participation (in the sense of power to the people). When seen from an organizational perspective, what the coalition approach reveals is heightened level of “garbage can-ness” that comes with participation. This observation is not normative, but descriptive. As the proposal evaluator described above noted, there is always a tension between getting people involved and getting things done, between getting the same old stuff done and getting done what people want and need. When the participants are organizations, it is especially important to remember that participation is a means, not an end in itself, and that the returns to broad participation probably decrease with the number of organizational participants suggesting that targeted, task specific collaborations may be more effective in the long run than broad, community-wide assemblages.

Observation 6. Collaboration, coordination, and coalition formation are ambiguous organizational technologies.

Collaboration is not a part of the standard repertoire of operating procedures in most organizations. They need to be taught how to start doing it and how to keep doing it. The
people who designed Fighting Back knew that it would be difficult for communities to implement because it was something that had not been done before. Everyone, from the Foundation to neighborhood residents, talked incessantly about collaboration and coordination, but no one, it seems, had any idea of how to build a system out of neighborhood groups, treatment providers, hospitals, business, politicians, academic researchers and churches. Coordination, collaboration, and coalitions among organizations are what can be called “ambiguous social technologies.”

Although they are frequently invoked in connection with community initiatives, it is often unclear just what they are, when to use them, how they work, or why they fail. Genuine collaboration is difficult to achieve when the actors are persons; among organizations the calculus is more complicated still. The cult which emerges around the idea of collaboration easily blinds participants to several important characteristics of this social organizational technology. Some of these are described in the next several sections.

First, they are non-standard institutional forms. Second, their apparent symbolic value may far exceed their real effects. Third, it is difficult to tell when they are happening, when they are not, and to ascertain when enough is enough. Finally, in the long run, it may be that everyone doesn’t need to get along, and that real changes come about through minimal amounts of highly targeted cooperation, collaboration and coordination among small groups of partners.

This is not to suggest that collaboration in a community of organizations is impossible or undesirable. There are, in fact, many ways in which organizations can coordinate their activities: sharing information, space and other resources; referral; competition; merging; funding one another; and subcontracting. As a system building technologies, on the other
hand, they are fraught with ambiguity and it is difficult to know how use them to bring about a systemic result.

And that is how Fighting Back seemed to proceed most of the time. No one really knew how to facilitate coordination or what would count success, and a spirit of “anything goes” developed, and furthermore, the premium on cooperation and collaboration as “what the community needs” may have undermined attempts to make other changes since it fostered the belief that “we are doing the right thing, but there is no effect because our efforts are too fragmented.”

**Observation 7.** Organization does not disappear when organizations die, but accumulates in a community of organization in forms that can be either a help or a hindrance to subsequent efforts.

America’s inner cities have long been called “urban laboratories” by both well-meaning scholars and policy makers and critics of the kinds of programs that have been carried out over the last half century or so. One element of the laboratory metaphor that has not been explored is the degree to which we tend to treat communities as mere objects of intervention on which a new technique can be tried, results measured, and then left as it was or perhaps marginally improved in wait of the next intervention. The fact of the matter is, most programs involve the creation of large numbers of new organizations and new organizational relationships and much of these does not disappear when programs shut down and leave.

The organizational junk left behind by successive generations of programs takes many forms, from “simple” things like a name, post-office box, or 501c3 registration, to defunct boards, dormant neighborhood organizations, networks of former activists, or institutionalized patterns of conflict. Organizational junk can be employed by skilled...
activists and organizers or they can give rise to unexpected resistance when new programs are initiated. Scholars have long recognized that the social space in which organizations grow is not “level,” that interorganizational contests rarely find the players evenly matched in terms of resources and allies. To this image I am adding that that social space is lumpy and full of relevant social organizational “stuff” outside the bounds of recognizable organizations. By seeing communities as organizational junkyards, we improve our sense of the kind of thing a community is in which to carry out a program like Fighting Back. Disabusing ourselves of the notion that a community is simply a collection of interests that need to be optimally satisfied or an entity that possesses a simple set of collective goals that merely need to be recognized and agreed upon equips us much better for either implementing programs like this or understanding what goes on when others attempt to do so.

Conclusion

The community development “field” is a surprisingly divided one. Community organizers are divided into sects that rarely see eye to eye and readily castigate one another’s approaches. A similar animosity exists between “street level” organizers and those who work for foundation funded programs. This study makes no attempt to weigh in on these debates (indeed it has no data for making such an evaluation), but, if my hypotheses are correct, they may partisans of any one of these approaches to better appreciate the kind of thing that community is as the object/ arena upon/ in which they labor.

To paraphrase Max Weber, it is, of course, not my intention to substitute a one-sided organizational explanation for everything that happens when efforts are put forth to
improve life in urban communities. Rather, I hope to draw attention to effects which are “always there,” but which, because of our predilections to think in terms of individuals and reifications of the collective, we often lose sight of. In the real world, people often do not have the advantage of comparison groups and such to look for concomitant variation. There is a tendency to explain what goes wrong in a particular case by comparing it to the ideal (often fantasy) case (in which everything works out just fine) by looking for some characteristic of the situation at hand that will explain why it is different from the ideal. My counsel here is rather that we revise the ideal. This is what I mean by “generic” organizational effects: certain effects arise because interventions like Fighting Back are organizational interventions. When we try to do things with organizations and to/ in communities of organizations, these effects need to be identified and “ruled out” first.

Am I saying that coalitions are impossible and that the ideal of “all getting along” is not worth pursuing? No. A simple minded realism is not the answer. In order to get a program off the ground, secure funding, get individuals and organizational representatives to listen, it may very well be necessary for to engage in hyperbole. In many cases, no doubt, the first step can only be taken when the task, which if evaluated realistically would seem enormous, is portrayed as doable and achievable (cf. Clarke 1999). Another reason not to read this study as dismissive of coalitional approaches is because of their potential Hawthorne effects. In some situations, contrary to what some purists claim, any program is better than no program. The organizational debris perspective may actually provide some tools for deciding when this is true, when not, or at least a framework for describing the ways that it is not.
It would be a mistake, then, to conclude from this study that a more cynical realism is the recipe for success in community initiatives. Many of the tasks undertaken by initiatives like *Fighting Back* - such as producing a measurable reduction in the demand for drugs in an urban community - are truly daunting. As problems they are so complex and the result of so many intertwined causes that one might literally have to be mad to set imagine one could really do anything about them. A certain amount of rhetorical and ideological simplification is always necessary. What the community of organizations and organizational junkyard perspectives offer is a tonic to keep us from being duped by our own exhortations.
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