"American Standards for American Children:"
Mobilizing for Child Care during the 20th Century

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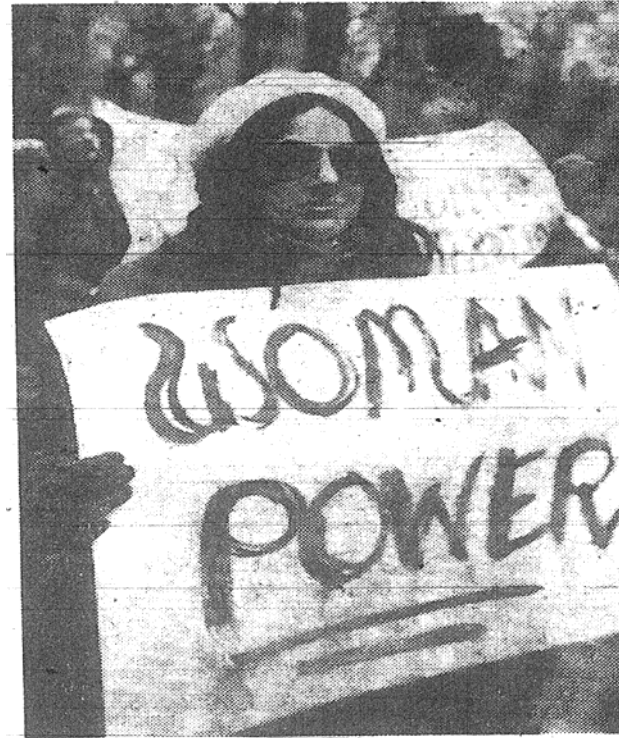Dimig@Memphis.edu

From "Mothers Protest Day Nursery Cuts, *The New York Times*, February 3, 1948.

From "Feminist Marchers Brave Icy Rain," *The New York Times*, December 13, 1970.

"Building Public Will and Community Mobilization for Children"

Introduction

The Second World War placed the issue of child care prominently on the nation's agenda for the first time. The war accelerated changes on the homefront, including rapid urbanization, the return of full employment, and a sharp increase in the number of women in the workforce (Yellen 2003). Almost half of all American women held jobs at some time during the war, and the profile of the working American woman changed dramatically. By 1942, 75 percent of women in the workforce were married, 60 percent were over thirty-five, and more than 33 percent had children under fourteen (Boyer *et. al.*1993). More than a quarter of the women employed at the Kaiser shipyards in Portland Oregon, for example, had preschool age children (Goodwin 1995: 417), and while female employment in manufacturing fell sharply after the war, the overall rate of female employment climbed steadily, soon passing its wartime peak. These changes had a profound and lasting effect on American society, not least in terms of our changing political conception of child care (Beatty 1995: 187; Goodwin 1995: 622).

Congress responded to the wartime need for child care by extending federal funds through the Lanham Act to child care programs in order to support the defense industry. By Christmas of 1942 some 105,000 children were cared for under the act. "A mere drop in the bucket" one reporter noted, when perhaps two million children needed care (*Saturday Evening Post* October 10, 1942: 20). All told, by the end of the war, some $50 million in federal funds had been directed toward child care, and more than a million and a half children were in day care (Steinfels 1973: 67, quoted in Goodwin 1995: 418).

The war's end brought a precipitous withdrawal of both government and business interest and involvement in child care provision(Michel 1999: 150). Just two weeks after the Japanese surrender, Kaiser shipyards closed its model day-care center and dismissed all the teachers that had been recruited from across the country (Goodwin 1995: 622). The withdrawal not only of federal funds, but also of supplemental state and local funding, and of business

subsidies sparked a wave of local protests and congressional lobbying. Testifying before Senate hearings on the 1946 Maternal and Child Welfare Bill, Mrs. Eleanor Vaughan, vice-chair of the Congress of American Women, argued that the lack of child care would force "war widows and other mothers, self-respecting and able to work … to stay at home, [and] to accept the ignominy of public assistance or private charity" (Michel 1999: 151). Speaking on the continuing need for child care, Eleanor Roosevelt argued that while "many thought they [the centers] were purely a war emergency measure, a few of us had an inkling that perhaps they were a need which was constantly with us, but one that we had neglected to face in the past" (Goodwin 1995: 622).

Those "self-respecting" mothers and "war widows" now found themselves stigmatized on multiple fronts. Their motivations for working became suspect as child care was no longer understood to be part of the infrastructure of the war effort. Instead, child care subsidies were soon folded into welfare bureaus as anti-poverty programs – their status for most of the previous forty years.

Those women who had joined the labor force during the war had had to fight to prove their economic worth alongside men. With the war's end, working women found themselves in the position of having to prove their moral worth. Protesting post-war child care cuts, one mother underscored the sudden about-face in the perception of child care from national need to private indulgence: "When my husband was asked to give his life," she reported, "he was not asked to wait for a later date" (*NYT* 13 September 1945).

The first image that opens this paper highlights the paradox: This mother and child marched in protest of child care cuts in New York City in 1948. The marchers' picket sign reads: "Prices are going up but [the] Department of Welfare says income must come down [to remain eligible for child care]." As the image suggests, the post-war vision of child care quickly reverted to its earlier framing as a poverty program, in which child care was seen as an antipoverty program, to be overseen by the Department of Welfare. In short, child care – once key to the war effort – was rapidly re-stigmatized after the war as being a poverty program for indigent families.

Perhaps this was inevitable. Crèches and day nurseries had allowed abandoned mothers to work in the stead of absent and indolent fathers, and were preferred to less savory child care strategies, like allowing children play around their mothers skirts at work, or locking them in tenements for long days, or turning them out to play in the street. The Children's Bureau's 1919 study of shrimp and oyster canning communities on the Gulf Coast underscored this reality. Working women in those communities, the study noted:

…made a practice of taking their small children and babies with them to the wet and drafty picking and shucking sheds… Sometimes the mothers, being obliged to work and having no one at home with whom to leave the children, had no alternative but to take them to the canneries… [A mother who] took her 6-month-old baby with her … said there was a 'clean cement place' for babies" (Viola Paradise 1922, quoted in Michel 1999: 98-99).

During the war, in spite of the rising number of working mothers who were forced to leave "eight hour orphans" at home (*Saturday Evening Post* 1942@), politicians were still deeply suspicious of calls for a government role in child care. In 1943, New York's Mayor LaGuardia argued that "the worst mother is better than the best institution" (*New York Times* Jan. 26. 1943: 16). And as soon as the legitimating influenced of the war was withdrawn, women who needed child care were stigmatized as selfishly choosing work over their family responsibilities. Representative Noah Mason of Illinois voiced skepticism over the need for child care in congressional hearings in 1953:

> …thousands, if not millions, of women … are married … have families … have responsibilities but … prefer to neglect those obligations and responsibilities in order to go to work and earn money which they can spend upon themselves in spite of the fact that their husbands are earning enough for a pretty fair living (quoted in Hayes 1982: 218).

The framing of child care as an anti-poverty program with the invidious capacity to undermine women's "rightful place" in the home would continue to influence government decision making for years to come in spite of the very real demographic changes that the war precipitated and that only have escalated since. By 2002, nearly 3 out of 4 mothers with children under 18 were in the labor force (78% of women with children ages 6 to 17, 64% of women with children under age 6, and 56% of women with infants less than a year old) (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2003, cited in National Women's Law Center 2004).

To be sure, the post-war withdrawal of child care support sparked instances of mobilization as mothers and families attempted to protect the child care programs. In 1945, one hundred mothers stormed a Manhattan city council meeting in protest of the cuts. They framed their appeals in terms of solid American values such as fairness, self-reliance and justice. Picket signs in various protests read: "We have a right to work. Help us keep our nurseries open[1]," "84 percent of working mothers work because they have to[2]," "While we work our children must be safe," and "American Standards for American Children".[3] And in 1947, a crowd of 350 parents and children converged in Albany, New York, walking "nearly 2 miles over rough terrain," to the Governor's mansion to protest another round of child care cuts. The Governor's refusal even to meet with the protestors drew sharp words from his political rivals. But this failed to translate into much tangible support for child care funding in the general assembly.[4]

Ellen Reese (1996) traces one of the most successful post-war Child Care battles. The heavy concentration of defense funded child care centers in California provided movement leaders with a mobilization ready network of childcare workers and the working mothers who depended on the program. When the anticipated federal cuts were announced, mass mobilization efforts started in Los Angeles and spread rapidly across the state. Reese suggests that notable "movement entrepreneurs" (particularly Lawrence "Mr. Child Care" Arnstein, Executive Director of the California Social Hygiene Association) spanning the fields of early childhood development and social reform – alongside working-class organizations and unions – gave credibility to what was essentially a grassroots movement benefiting working-class women, ultimately forcing the California legislature to shoulder the burden of continued funding for the program (Reese 1996).

Reese argues that the California child care movement was successful because it successfully reframed the debate to stress that mothers worked out of need – rather than desire. (Though, as the New York case demonstrates, the California protesters were certainly not alone in trying to frame the debate in that direction). California's mothers argued that their distance from relatives forced them to find alternative sources of child care; and they stressed the skills of center-based child development professionals. Reese argues that the transformation of the maternalist frame was a key to the movement's success because it

undermined opponents' efforts to discredit the child care campaign as corrupting the 'natural' role of mothers.

These street-level protesters were joined at the national level by the powerful Child Welfare League of America, which called upon President Truman to extend the federal child care initiatives into the post-war years (*NYT* 26 September 1945). But despite the isolated successes of the child care campaign, by March of 1947 defense child care centers were closed in all but nine cities – with predictable results. By 1951 the Child Welfare League of America reported that "for every child in a day-care center, there is one or more on a waiting list" (Michel 1999: 151).

What can we learn from this story?

The story of post-war child care cuts – and the short-lived public outcry they provoked – is a useful introduction to several dimensions of the movement for child well-being in this country. The protests that met the end of the Lanham Act offer a number of insights into the ways in which public outcry and political protest develops around children's policy, and when it is likely to influence public policy.

- First, this campaign suggests public outcry is most likely to occur when a program on which the public has come to depend is withdrawn. In other words, the public is more likely to mobilize in *reaction* to program cuts rather than to rally around *prospective* initiatives. This story is consistent with the development of Georgia's universal pre-kindergarten initiative, which was largely designed and implemented by the Governor and the state legislature, but then garnered strong public and political support as Georgians rapidly came to depend on it (Radin 1999).

- Second, a key dimension of policy debates concerning children takes place at the level of framing, and is entangled with competing visions of children's best interests and mother's rightful place (Skocpol 1992). Supporters of the Lanham Act emphasized emergency needs and the national war effort. The complexity of how best to frame the policy interests of mothers and children is reflected in the relative silence of both the Children's Bureau and the Women's Bureau over the need for child care. Rather, it was the Works Progress Administration and the National

Manpower Council who drew attention to child care as a critical defense issue (Michel 1999: 127-128).

- Third, lost in the rancor over how best to understand child care was the shifting demography of American families, cities and the workforce. Half of American mothers worked outside the home during World War Two, and our national reliance on child care has only continued to grow. Demographic shifts, particularly when they are rapid and lasting, may lay the groundwork for a social movement to emerge (Grubb and Lazerson 1988:4). But demographic shifts by themselves do not inevitably lead to the formation of social movements (Costain 1996: 41-41). This is certainly the case for child care policy in the U.S. (Cohen 2001: 279). As Piven and Cloward observed, "For a protest movement to arise out of these traumas of daily life, people have to perceive the deprivation and disorganization they experience as both wrong and subject to redress" (1979: 12).

- Fourth, the public response to child care cuts was scattered, local, and quickly diffused. In spite of the sporadic outcry, defense-related centers were rapidly boarded-up in most cities. Those few places where subsidies for child care survived the longest were also the sites of the most vocal resistance to their closing. In this sense, this is a story both of ragged and uneven political opposition, and also of differences in cultures of political voice across the country. These differences are reinforced by both institutional structures (c.f.: Berry and Arons 2003) and by cultural differences. Vicki Lens attributes the markedly different rates at which administrative hearing complaints are filed on behalf of welfare recipients in different cities and states to distinct cultures of political voice (Lens and Vorsanger 2005).

The history of mobilizing for children is particularly relevant and interesting today. For much of the last century, Americans have been disturbed by the influence of poverty, crime, urban decay, poor schools and failing health on their children, families, and communities (c.f.: Minow and Weissbourd 1993: 6-7; Sidel 1998: xxii). Further, advocates in earlier eras launched many of the tactics that continue to define the movement: including protest campaigns (such as mothers' marches to protest child care closures), data collection and dissemination (e.g.: the reports prepared in the 1910s and 20s by the National Child Labor Committee, and the post-war work of the Child Welfare League of America), nationwide

efforts to raise public consciousness through the mass media (including, the *Delineator* magazine's "Child-Savers" campaign) (Skocpol 1992), alongside institutional lobbying (including the rounds of testimony delivered before congressional committees investigating national child care needs in the 1940s and 1950s). Even more tantalizing for advocates today, activists in earlier eras appear to have had relatively greater success at mobilizing key public and elite groups into a potent political force that was able to gain key political concessions.

Before we grow too confident about our ability to extrapolate general lessons from the mothers' protests in the 1940s to the project of building a more general understanding of patterns of mobilization for children, consider the related set of events captured in the second image introducing this paper. Two decades after the first photograph was taken, this unnamed protester joined Betty Friedan, Kate Millett and some 300 other marchers on a bitterly cold New York City day in the name of women's rights. Notably, the marchers called for free 24 hour child care and for free abortions. The event brought together long-established groups like the Young Women's Christian Association and organizations that would have been unfamiliar to the marchers in the 1940s, such as the Radical Lesbians. Several weeks later, 24 protesters were arrested when they attempted to block the eviction of a community group – the East Fifth Street Women's Action Committee – from an abandoned city-owned building. The group intended to establish "a health clinic, child-care center, art workshop, feminist school and Lesbian center" in the building.[5]

In many ways, these events constitute a second round in the post-war campaign for child care. Certainly, they owed much to the world war two generation of women who had fought to secure a place for women in the workforce and, in so doing, had tipped the balance of the women's agenda from the protection of mothers to equal protection in the workplace (Costain 1992). But these protests in the 1970s also suggest a number of striking differences from the immediate post-war efforts. These differences are most obvious in the framing of movement's concerns, but they are also obvious in the organizational infrastructure, and in the arsenal of tactics employed. If we were to try to build a vision of child care mobilization efforts from the efforts of feminists in the 1970s, our vision of efforts to influence the direct of public policy for children would suggest:

- That children's interests will be advanced as they are taken up and articulated by other social movements (see also Steiner 1976). Whereas in the 1940s, the campaign for child care was couched in terms of the legacy of the war and the needs of veterans and their families, in the 1970s, the child care cause was articulated as a feminist issue (c.f.: Costain 1992).

- In this way, child care was framed alongside reproductive freedom, as a facet of women's liberation. In other words, child care was framed in terms of the rights and needs of mothers rather than in terms of children's interests (Michel 1999).

- In consequence, the framing of children's best interests, the groups championing the children's cause, and the tactical repertoires employed on behalf of children, will closely reflect the organizational identities, frames, and tactical repertoires of the host movement. The actions in the 1970s invoked the language of rights, were launched by feminist organizations, placed child care within a range of feminist concerns, and embraced the repertoire of civil disobedience – including building occupations – that characterized the movements of the 1970s, including the student, anti-war and Civil Rights Movements (Tarrow 1998).

Taken together, these examples from the 1940s and 1970s provide key insights into the history of mobilization on behalf of children in this country. At the same time, they also highlight the difficulty of generalizing from any small set of headline-grabbing contentious events when characterizing a social movement, as well as the difficulty of exporting lessons from mobilization in one era to other eras, or even from one locale, such as the post-war California experience, to other – seemingly parallel – locales.

Toward a More General Understanding of Policy Development and Social Mobilization for Children

But this is precisely what we try to do. The literature on movements for children is built largely upon investigations of individual mobilization campaigns, whether concerned with child labor, mother's pensions, compulsory public education, the nursery school and kindergarten movements, or with child care campaigns. Taken together, this literature offers up an array of factors that have influenced the emergence and political activity of

movements for children. These include the *actors, organizations and networks* fighting for children, the *repertoires of strategic action* that have been employed in that fight, the ways that children's issues are *framed*, as well as the *social and political context* within which activists work and to which they respond.

One strand of this literature traces the importance of the organizations and networks that constitute the *mobilization structures* for social movements for children, arguing that it takes a particular configuration of groups and voices to successfully advance a children's agenda. This insight is central to the story told by Theda Skocpol and her collaborators in their examinations of the role of women's clubs in the early part of the last century, suggesting that the national infrastructure linking these clubs was instrumental in securing mother's pensions (c.f.: Skocpol 1992; 1997; Skocpol and Dickert 2001). Other instances of mobilization are explained in terms of the successful efforts of particular individuals, such as Grace and Julia Abbott, who are credited with initiating the effort to form the Children's Bureau, Senator Hubert Humphrey, who championed the Women, Infant and Children Supplemental Feeding Program (WIC), or Senator Walter Mondale, who was a key backer of national Child Abuse legislation (Nelson 1982). But these stories offer little insight when it comes to understanding which voices or messages will be particularly effective in a given historical context. In practice, this insight encourages a treasure hunt of sorts for effective children's allies among business leaders, state houses, city halls, among seniors or minority group advocates.

A second set of insights concerns movement tactics and strategic action. *Repertoires of Contention* refers to the forms of strategic engagement challengers employ, ranging from institutional lobbying and educational campaigns to more contentious political events like demonstrations, sit-ins and boycotts. In other words, repertoires concern the ways that social movements actually move. As the child care case suggests, children's advocates have focused on building public awareness, governmental lobbying, nationwide media campaigns and protest campaigns. Despite the ongoing quest to better represent children's needs, advocacy efforts today reflect deep historical roots. This is evident across a range of current advocacy activities, including media campaigns and efforts to heighten public awareness (e.g.: the work of the Ad Council, the Benton Foundation, I Am Your Child, and Stand for Children);

governmental lobbying and education (e.g.: efforts of the Children's Defense Fund or the Center on Budget and Policy Priority), and in efforts to collect and disseminate compelling data (e.g.: the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Kids Count* project, or the data gathering efforts of the American Academy of Pediatrics).

The third line of analysis concentrates on *contextual factors* within the social and political environment in which movements emerge. These factors include both large scale shocks to the general equilibrium of American politics (such as wars, economic depressions, and significant reconfigurations of the American electorate) as well as more incremental developments, including gradual social, economic and demographic shifts. Collectively, these factors comprise a set of p*olitical opportunity structures* that raise or lower barriers to political mobilization and policy access. For example, opportunities to mobilize are affected by highly contested elections, by the degree to which governmental administrations are sympathetic or antagonistic, and by the alliances that movements are able to build (Tarrow 1998). Research on social movement mobilization suggests that challengers are likely to gain higher levels of access to – and concessions from – government when there is instability within dominant political coalitions. Highly contested elections and fragile political alliances cause uncertainty, leading parties and candidates to pay more careful attention to marginalized constituencies, as elites attempt to reconfigure a winning, and stable, support base (Hansen 1991: 16-17; Piven and Cloward 1979: 28). Periods of political uncertainty offer children's advocates opportunities to amplify their political voice. For example, the uncertainty inherent in extending the vote to women threatened national political alignments. As the political parties were forced to strategize around the "woman's vote," they gave serious consideration for the first time to such issues as child labor, and infant and maternal health policy (Hawes 1991: 50; Sutton 1996: 210). In the same way, the massive dislocations caused by the Great Depression contributed to increasing political support for child labor regulation, in part as an effort to placate unemployed, adult voters (Hawes 1991: 53). Likewise, the Depression increased public support for expanding federal aid programs for families, children and widows (Skocpol 1992).

Building a Longitudinal Picture of Patterns of Mobilization for Children

Working from a single case such as the post-war campaigns to preserve child care, or even from a series of cases of movement mobilization, it is difficult to understand either the ebb and flow of social movements for children over time, the complex links between public and elite discussions of children's well-being, the role of advocates in that process, and the influence of structures of political opportunity on patterns of mobilization; or even the comparative weight of these factors across different movement campaigns or historical eras.

This research project represents an effort to respond to these theoretical and methodological concerns. Specifically, this project is designed to follow the ebb and flow of the children's movement over time, across periods of emergence and decline, and to register the shifting influence of various voices, frames, and tactics that define the movement across different historical moments.

To that end, consider a more general overview of the public and political development of public policy for children over the last century (from 1901 through 1995) across five dimensions of children's policy: child health, child nutrition, child care, child labor, and child abuse and abandonment. Concentrating on these five issue areas allows us to build a compelling picture of movements for children in several ways:

- They tap into key aspects of the children's movement in different guises and during different historical eras.

- They have been subject to a range of scholarly investigations, providing theoretical suppositions and a rich source of primary analysis with which to elaborate, test, confirm, and compare our findings.

- The development of social policy in these issue areas has prompted strikingly different explanations.

  - Public policy concerning child abuse and abandonment, for example, has been explained in terms of the media coverage of particular instances of child mistreatment, combined with a growing awareness of research findings, which – in turn – have driven patterns of public concern (Nelson 1984).

  - Child care policy, meanwhile, is generally explained in terms of the importance of "external shocks" such as World War Two to the system. By the same token, the

importance of external shocks helps to explain the seeming policy irrelevance of demographic trends during less cataclysmic times, (e.g.: when demographic trends would incline us to think that the need for safe, affordable and available child care would become a national policy priority).

- The implementation and rapid expansion of the Women, Infant and Children Supplemental Feeding Program (WIC), one of the key successes of the child nutrition movement, meanwhile, is attributed to the combined influence of the discovery of hunger in America alongside the advocacy of key institutional allies, particularly Senator Herbert Humphrey (Hardman 1973; Hayes 1982)

- The combination of these five issue areas allows us to follow and assess the ebb and flow of the children's movement in two key and compatible ways. In the aggregate, these facets of the agenda offer an overview of the movement. Comparing policy development of different issue areas will also allow us to look at the trade offs between various aspects of a children's agenda, as well as allowing us to follow the dynamic by which public and political concern with various facets of that agenda has shifted over time. This capacity allows us to evaluate, for example, the evolving influence of actors, master frames, repertoires of action, and key dimensions of political opportunity.

- By following the continuing interaction of activists, institutions, and political contexts over an extended period of time we avoid the tendency to examine either particularly evocative – headline-grabbing – instances of mobilization or following only movements that have achieved some threshold of success. In this sense, our method is an effort to construct an examination of the ebb and flow of a policy area without narrowing our investigation to particular actors and organizations, or particular events and movement campaigns.

Tracking trends and inflections in a multi-faceted movement involving a wide range of both institutional and non-institutional actors across a range of issue areas and spanning a hundred years is a tall order. Doing so required that we develop a research strategy that would allow us to follow myriad actors, issues, frames, and repertoires of action over time. A key to this set of puzzles is offered by the methods of event data analysis (c.f.: Costain 1992; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1989), which offer a means to construct a record of activism and advocacy from historical data on both institutional and non-institutional movement events.[6]

For this examination of children's policy development, we drew heavily from two sources of historical information. We built our record of the national public conversation on children's public policy from the electronic article archives of the *New York Times* newspaper (NYT). To follow elite political discourse on the same topic, we referred to the electronic records of congressional hearings maintained by the *Congressional Information Service.*

Data Development

Specifically, we collected and coded the titles and abstracts (usually the first 100 words) of all *New York Times* articles filed between 1901 and 1995 covering one of our five issue areas. We first downloaded approximately 50,000 articles from the *New York Times Article Archives* that were returned by key word searches. We then hand cleaned and coded these articles to arrive at a set of roughly 10,000 articles that form the analytic core of the project and which inform the analysis.[7] (The analysis of child care policy reported below, for example, is built on a sample of 2,393 articles filed over the century.)

We coded the media data following the model established by key earlier longitudinal studies of American social movements (c.f.: McAdam 1982; Costain 1992). Our project, however, diverges from these earlier investigations in a number of ways that we believe take advantage of recent developments in computerized datasets.

- One key divergence between this project and earlier investigations concerns our events data source material. We relied on the electronic archives of the *NYT* rather than the print index. The electronic archives allow us to search full text data bases, to avoid relying on the categorizations used by the human compilers of the *Index*, and to avoid the complication of "see also" references found in print indexes (c.f.: Baumgartner and Jones 1993: 260). We experimented with different sets of key-words, and conducted extensive reliability checks – particularly with the *Index* – in order to test both the inclusiveness and selectivity of our search terms.

- A second point of divergence concerns our decision to code both news articles and editorial content. Events data projects generally code 'hard' news articles only, and treat these as the daily record of interaction events. We collected and coded not only

news articles, but also built a parallel record of all editorial and opinion pieces concerning public policy for children. We believe that doing so will allow us to follow the role of the media not simply as a reporter of the news, but also as a key voice in the policy discussion concerning children. (And to follow the interaction between news pieces and opinion pieces on policy issues as well). (One small example of this role is found in the *New York Times'* assumption of the leadership of the Fresh Air Fund, which had long provided summer outdoor experiences to urban children, and which has grown and prospered with the advocacy of the *Times* (c.f.: Romanofsky 1978: 324).

In choosing keywords, we cast an extremely wide net, included language relevant to different historical eras, as well as subject headings from the *New York Times* print *Index*, and relevant subject headings from the *Encyclopedia of Associations (EoA)*. Unfortunately, this cautiousness returned an exceptionally large set of false-positives (articles and editorials that were not relevant to our study).[8] This was particularly true for child care, where our search terms originally returned 20,965 articles for the period between 1901 and 1995. After discarding false positives, we arrived at our final set of 2,666 articles (approximately 14% of the set of articles initially retrieved).

Table 1: Count of Retrieved & Coded *NYT* Child Care Articles, By Decade

	1901-1910	1911-1920	1921-1930	1931-1940	1941-1950	1951-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1995	TOTALS
Raw Articles/ Eds Retrieved	1181	1090	1657	2653	2619	1784	1277	1788	4521	2332	**20965**
After Hand Cleaning: ARTICLES	36	84	128	338	644	313	194	232	474	223	**2666**
EDITORIALS	4	7	3	2	24	8	9	15	140	39	**251**
TOTALS BY DECADE	40	91	131	340	668	321	203	247	614	262	**2917**
% OF RETRIEVED	3.38	8.34	7.91	12.81	25.51	18.00	15.89	13.81	13.58	11.23	**13.91%**

The expected payoff of this labor is an overview that theoretically includes all actors, tactics, frames and targets that are uncovered in the media record. (As a result, the study is not limited to a particular bandwidth of advocacy activity – e.g.: contentious politics – nor is it built from a predetermined list of advocacy organizations – such as the listings in the *EoA*. In other words, our method should allow us to discuss a full range of voices heard in the

public discussion of children's policy, the full range of tactics that have been invoked to influence – and contribute to – that policy, as well as the targets of that activity, as recorded in the historical media record.

We believe the result is a broadly inclusive overview of the voices that have participated in both public and political discussions of children's policy over the last century, allowing us to speak about periods of organizational emergence and decline, emerging and receding policy issues, advocacy frames, and the targets identified by the movement.

At the same time, we wanted to know how the public conversation about children's well-being intersected with the on-going political discussion of the same issues. To address this question, we also collected and coded all congressional hearings on the same five issue areas for an overlapping time period (1901 – 2000).

Congressional hearings are one of the most important institutional venues for advocates engaged in national politics. Delivering congressional testimony allows advocates to make their case directly to Congress, and also establishes their institutional credibility to speak on behalf of their cause. While delivering testimony is not equally important to all groups, and is too costly for many organizations, it is ranked as an extremely important tactic by a wide range of advocates in Washington D.C. (Schlozman and Tierney 1986). Working from the Congressional Information Service's abstracts of the complete set of congressional hearings – also available in electronic format – we have identified the frequency and placement of relevant hearings, and the issues they covered. We have also coded the groups and individuals that have delivered testimony, the issues those individuals and groups addressed, and how they framed their appeals during different eras (c.f.: Hansen 1991; Imig 1996). In this way, we are able to build a proxy measure of the historical pattern of national legislative interest in children's well-being. Over the century, congressional hearings on these five aspects of child care policy were distributed in the following pattern:

Table 2: Distribution of Congressional Hearings on Children's Policy

Issue	Count of Congressional Hearings on Children Each Decade, by Issue										
	1901-1910	1911-1920	1921-1930	1931-1940	1941-1950	1951-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000	Totals
Child Care	0	0	0	0	33	6	51	69	103	67	329
					(25)	(5)	(19)	(19)	(13)	(14)	(14)
Child Health	2	5	14	15	48	57	118	63	353	216	891
	(12)	(15)	(39)	(35)	(36)	(48)	(45)	(17)	(45)	(44)	(39)
Child Labor	11	20	11	23	42	36	50	64	70	39	366
	(65)	(61)	(30)	(54)	(32)	(30)	(19)	(18)	(9)	(8)	(16)
Child Nutrition	4	8	9	4	3	2	40	129	173	106	478
	(23)	(24)	(25)	(9)	(2)	(2)	(15)	(36)	(22)	(21)	(21)
Child Abuse/ Aband	0	0	2	1	6	18	4	33	79	65	208
			(5)	(2)	(4)	(15)	(1)	(9)	(10)	(13)	(9)
Totals	17	33	36	43	132	119	263	358	778	493	2272

- Source: *The Congressional Information Service.*
- Column Percentages reported in parentheses.

The picture of institutional consideration of children's policy suggested by even this cursory overview of congressional hearings shows a striking growth in federal attention to children over the last century. The total number of relevant hearings doubled between 1910 and 1930, increasing another four-fold by 1950, doubled again by 1970, and tripled yet again by 1990. Clearly, the total level of federal attention directed to children has escalated dramatically over the century.

Our hearing data also indicates a great deal of variation between issue sectors, and describes different issue trajectories. Child labor dominated the national agenda through the 1930s, for example, championed by progressives aided by the exposés of the National Child Labor Committee and the Children's Bureau (c.f.: Michel 1999). Concern with child labor receded in the wake of passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act, and the policy dominance of labor was supplanted by concerns with children's health, which continued to dominate the national policy agenda through the 1960s. At that point, the largest share of hearings was devoted to child nutrition, corresponding with the more general rise in national concern with hunger in America (Hayes 1982). Child abuse, meanwhile, experienced two peaks in federal

attention, first in the 1950s – corresponding with the discovery of pediatric fractures through x-ray – and again in the 1980s, corresponding with the rising national concern with child sexual abuse (Davis 2005; Nelson 1982). The hearing data also confirms the earlier assertion that our national concern with child care had its birth during the Second World War, all but disappeared during the 1950s, only to re-emerge and rise in prominence steadily since.

By looking at both the media and congressional data on these aspects of children's policy, our objective is to build an understanding of the historical development of a public voice for children, and the translation of that voice into political arenas. Lawrence Mead (2005) offers us a useful lens for analyzing the shifting make-up of congressional hearings. Mead and his colleagues have coded testimony delivered before Congress between 1962 and 1996 on welfare policies. Mead's coding scheme records the organizations represented, the issues discussed by these witnesses, and an approximation of their issue positions (2005: 9). Employing a similar methodology, we characterize the organizational affiliations and issue positions of all witnesses who appeared before Congress in each of these 2,272 hearings.[9] In subsequent stages of the investigation, we hope to be able to track the voices that have dominated this discussion in different eras; the ways in which configurations of advocates have changed over time; and the significance of particular voices and frames in the policy debate concerning child well-being over time. Have public and elite conversations developed in sync, does children's policy development require grassroots mobilization and organization, does it emanate from the top-down, or – as some observers might suggest – have public and elite discussions largely remained orthogonal?

Some Preliminary Findings: The History of Mobilizing for Child Care

Turning specifically to the issue of child care, what does our data suggest about the pattern of public and political attention to this key component of children's policy over the last century? Figure Two presents the count of *New York Times* articles discussing child care alongside the count of congressional hearings on child care, aggregated by decade, for the last century.

Figure 2: NYT and Congressional Attention to Child Care, 1901-1995
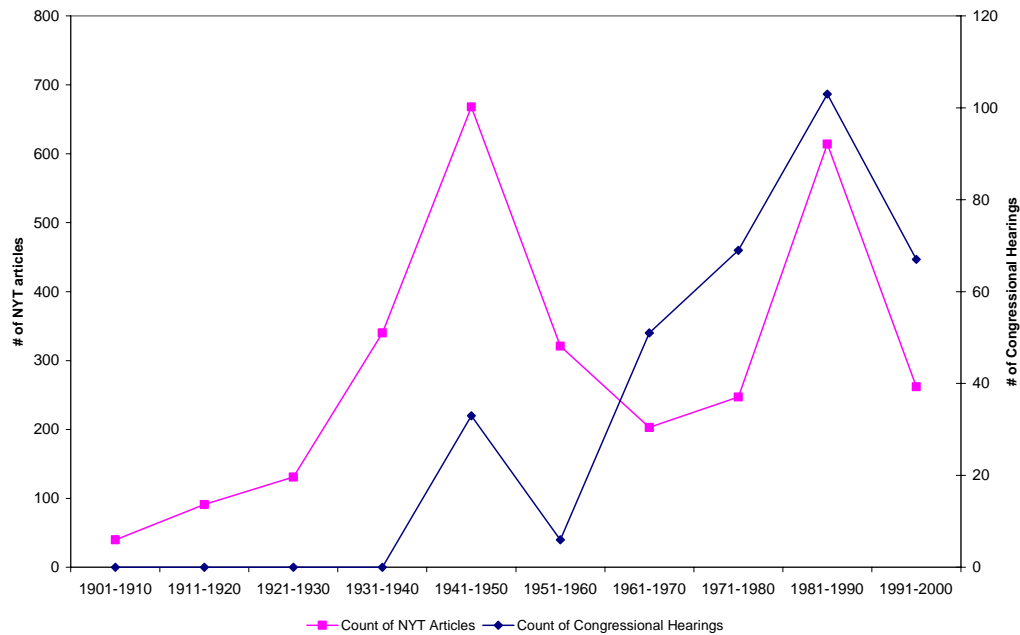
Even in this rough cut, the data suggests a number of interesting aspects of the emergence of a public and political child care policy agenda in this country. First, the data suggests that public issue salience and concern led – rather than followed – political attentiveness through the 1930s. As the case study literature suggests, it was only with the Second World War that child care made it onto the national political agenda. Also consistent with our suspicions, concern with child care rapidly receded from the national agenda in the decade following the war. The 1950s and 1960s present an interesting case, with the data suggesting a period in which the public and political records trended in opposite directions. During that era, congressional attention rose while the public salience of the issue actually declined. It is too early in our analysis to tell if this represents a shift from a grassroots to a top-down pattern of policy making in this policy arena, or if it represents the policy implications of the anomalous nature of the 1950s in terms of both family structures and patterns of workforce participation in this country, as Daphne Spain and Suzanne Bianchi contend (1996). Finally, we see a second and sustained peak in both public issue salience and congressional attention to the issue between the 1960s and the 1980s, corresponding with the War on Poverty, with the general expansion of the federal government's social policy agenda, as well as with the shifting demographics of American families and the labor force.

Over the past century, how have we as a nation defined the child care agenda? How have we framed child care policy across time? Do the topics and frames differ between public and elite policy discussions? One way to address these questions is by looking at the topics covered in our media and hearing data on child care.

Turning first to the elite discussion, Table Three offers a breakdown of the substantive topics covered in congressional hearings on child care over the century.

Table 3: Topics of Congressional Child Care Hearings, 1901-1995

	1901-1910	1911-1920	1921-1930	1931-1940	1941-1950	1951-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000	Total
Availability - Employer Sponsored Day Care	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 (33)	0	9 (8)	1 (1)	14 (5)
Availability - General	0	0	0	0	4 (17)	0	0	13 (22)	20 (18)	3 (4)	40 (15)
Availability - Public - Private Cooperation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (3)	3 (3)	4 (6)	9 (3)
Availability - Tax Deductions for Parents	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (8)	2 (3)	4 (4)	2 (3)	9 (3)
Funding	0	0	0	0	19 (83)	0	5 (42)	14 (23)	30 (28)	24 (36)	92 (34)
Headstart	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6 (10)	7 (6)	2 (3)	15 (5)
Mental/Emotional Development	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (17)	9 (15)	9 (8)	8 (12)	28 (10)
Oversight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (3)	5 (5)	8 (12)	15 (5)
Quality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12 (20)	21 (19)	15 (22)	48 (18)
Total	0	0	0	0	23 (100)	0	12 (100)	60 (99)	108 (99)	67 (99)	270 (98)

- Column Percentages in Parentheses

Table three offers a rough categorization of the topics discussed in the subset of congressional hearings that were principally devoted to child care over the last century. Even this first pass through the data suggests both that the elite discussion of child care has historically focused on the broad areas of availability, and affordability, and also suggests that the policy agenda has become more complex over the last thirty years. Whereas hearings in the 1940s addressed child care either in terms of general availability and need, or in terms of the leadership or funding needed from government, more recent discussions have parsed the topic much more finely. The policy discussion of availability and affordability increasingly has become imbedded within authorization and allocation reviews of a range of specific

programs and policies. Concerns with the quality of child care have also come to the fore in this discussion, with the issues of mental and emotional development, program oversight, and general program quality not accounting for close to half of the all elite political attention to the issue. Alternatively, the underlying need for child care – in policy terms – is much less a subject of governmental debate than in the past.

How does this picture compare with the pattern of public issue salience of child care? To address this question, we consider the coverage of these same issues in the *New York Times*. Table Four presents NYT coverage of child care over the last century, grouped by the issue focus of each article.

Table Four: Topics of Media Coverage of Child Care, 1901-1995

	1901-1910	1911-1920	1921-1930	1931-1940	1941-1950	1951-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1995	Total
Government Action	0	5	3	6	186	39	43	89	114	35	520
		(6)	(2)	(2)	(30)	(13)	(22)	(40)	(33)	(23)	
Private Group Action	28	59	119	242	148	142	73	23	3	1	838
	(78)	(72)	(80)	(82)	(24)	(47)	(38)	(10)	(1)	(1)	
Movement Dynamics	2	7	17	20	78	50	25	35	15	4	253
	(5)	(9)	(11)	(7)	(13)	(16)	(13)	(16)	(4)	(2)	
Organized Pressure	4	10	8	25	187	72	47	67	205	115	740
	(12)	(12)	(6)	(8)	(30)	(24)	(25)	(30)	(60)	(74)	
Contentious Political Events	2	0	0	0	16	0	2	6	0	0	26
	(5)				(2)		(1)	(3)			
State Control	0	1	1	1	3	0	0	1	5	0	12
		(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)			(1)	(1)		
Totals	36	82	148	294	618	303	190	221	342	155	2389
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	

- Column Percentages in Parentheses
- Source: *The New York Times*

One of the most striking findings suggested by this data on public issue salience parallels the early silence of Congress on the issue: child care largely was understood as a private concern through the first half of the century. Through the 1930s, media attention to child care concentrated on human interest stories (e.g.: poor children left alone at home while their mothers worked, or mothers using movie theaters as day care centers), or else these articles focused on the charity work of the well-to-do. Child care was largely represented as a

concern solely of low-income women and children, and media attention during this period often was devoted to society fundraisers for crèches and day nurseries.

Only subsequently has the framing of child care as a private charity concern been supplanted by a growing role for government (first in the 1940s, paralleling – and reporting on – the dawn of the federal child care agenda), and then more consistently from the 1960s forward. With the rise in attention to a public, governmental role in the provision and funding of child care, came a broadening of our national conception of the economic classes that child care serves. Concurrent with the growing awareness of an expanding public need child care, we see a rise in the salience of the quality of child care programs – evident, for example, in an emerging framing of child care in terms of early childhood development and school readiness. We also see a striking rise in the role of organized pressure in child care policy making over the century. The presence of organized pressure in this policy arena both preceding the rise of government involvement, and has continued to grow alongside the growing role of government. In fact, over the last two decades, our data suggests that organized groups have dominated the public discussion of this issue. Who these groups are, and whether they are the same groups appearing before Congress is the question we address in the next stage of our investigation.

Preliminary Findings, and Directions for Further Investigation

This paper contributes to a larger project designed to identify key factors that helped to translate public concern with children in earlier eras into political movements, as well as the factors that contributed to the power of those movements in the policy-making process. Ideally, the findings from this project will contribute to our understanding of how political will develops and how – in turn – it leads to collective political action benefiting children.

This paper has introduced our investigation of the public and political development of public policy for children over the last century, working with the electronic archives of both the *New York Times* newspaper (NYT), and the *Congressional Information Service*.

This first pass through our data affirms the striking growth in federal attention to children's issues over the last century, and suggests that public concern led – rather than followed –

political attentiveness through the first decades of the century. We also find a growing complexity in both the public and elite discussions of child care, particularly over the last thirty years. The issue of quality is a relative newcomer to this conversation, but accounts for close to half of the attention Congress devotes to this issue today. Conversely, the general need for child care – so much a part of the public discussion in the past – is largely accepted as fact today. Our data also suggests a striking rise in the role of organized pressure in this policy arena over the century. The specifics of that organized pressure will be discussed in a subsequent paper.

As both the practitioner and academic communities focus their attention on efforts to build political will in order to demand systemic political changes for children, the time is right to subject the role of children's movement mobilization to a rigorous and systematic analysis. This research project will contribute to our understanding of the role of social movements and mass political action in achieving policy changes for children.

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Notes

[1] "Dewey Scored In Parade: Caricature Used in Second Avenue Protest on Child-Care Centers," *The New York Times,* 9 March 1947, p. 53.

[2] "Mothers Protest Child Care Change: Motorcade Demonstration Held to Oppose Placing Centers Under Delinquency Programs," *The New York Times,* 7 September 1947, p. 50

[3] "Protest Caravan to Dewey is In Vain: 350 Parents, Children Drive to Pawling to Urge Keeping Child Care Set Up Here: Governor Is Unavailable," *The New York Times*, 22 September 1947, p. 22.

[4] Protest Caravan to Dewey is In Vain: 350 Parents, Children Drive to Pawling to Urge Keeping Child Care Set Up Here: Governor Is Unavailable," *The New York Times*, 22 September 1947, p. 22.

[5] All of these accounts are based on media reports in *The New York Times* from December 1970 and January 1971.

[6] This project draws upon the method employed by earlier events-data projects. In designing this project, we drew heavily, for example, from Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (1993); Anne N. Costain, *Inviting Women's Rebellion* (1992); Doug Imig and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Europeans* (2001); and Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (1982). Employing developing technologies, this project draws extensively from electronic data archives, offering an extension of the events-data methods and print archives traditionally employed in social science research.

[7] Following McAdam (1982), for each article we coded:

A. **Date of Event** (2 digit codes for month, day, and year). The period covered by the project runs from January 1, 1901 (01.01.01) through December 31, 1995 (12.31.95).

B. **Location** (Where did the event take place?) (Coding choices include the 50 states, plus the four additional location codes below. This information is collected from the Dateline).

Use the two digit USPS code for each of the 50 states (e.g.: CO for Colorado).

Additional location codes include:

01   NYC Metropolitan area

02   District of Columbia

03   Non-U.S. location

04   No specific location identified

C.   **Source Actor** (The party initiating the action). The source actor, or initiating actor, is the "who" of the story; that is, the person, place or thing that takes the action discussed in the article. Actors are coded in terms of the following categories:

Type of Organization

PARTIES
Democratic
Republican
Other Named Political Party

GOVERNMENT
White House/President/Presidential Administration
Senate/Senator
House of Representatives/Representative
Supreme Court/Federal Courts
Federal Agency/Program
The Children's Bureau
Governor/Governor's Office
State Legislature/Legislator
State Courts
State Agency/Program
City/Local Government
Local Agency/Program

CITIZEN/ADVOCACY GROUPS
Anti-Poverty Groups
Children's Advocacy/Protection
Civil Rights Groups
Native Americans
Women Groups
Trade/ Labor Unions
Parent-Teacher Associations/Organizations
Other

RELIGIOUS GROUPS
Protestant Organization
Catholic Organization
Jewish Organization
Other Religious Organization

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS
Physicians
Legal Professionals/Law Associations

Nurses
Social Workers
Educational Assocations/Education Unions
Other Professional Association

CHARITIES/PHILANTHROPIES/FOUNDATIONS

PRIVATE (Non-Governmental) SERVICE PROVIDERS

MEDIA

EDUCATION and RESEARCH GROUPS
Colleges and Universities
Faculty/Administrators/Students
Research Centers/Institutes Within Colleges and Universities
Think Tanks/Policy Centers (not affiliated with a university)
K-12 Teachers/Administrators
Other

GROUPS OF INDIVIDUALS/CITIZENS
Children
Youth
Parents and Families
Women
Others

PRIVATE BUSINESS and INDUSTRY
Theater
Agriculture
Textiles/Manufacturing
Mining
Food Service/Restaurant
Retail/Merchants

FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

AMBIGUOUS/MISSING

D. Nature of the Event (What happened)

event
event

GOVERNMENT ACTION
01 Hold a meeting, conference, or hearing
02 Issue a statement/research report/news release
03 Positive budget action (extend funding)
04 Negative Budget action (cut funding)
05 Court action
06 Legislative action (propose, consider, pass or defeat a bill)

07 Agency/department/bureau action (e.g. issue regulations)
08 Other

PRIVATE GROUP ACTION
09 Private Group (e.g. and individual, founding, or club makes a financial grant to the movement)
10 Private group extends non-financial support to the movement

MOVEMENT DYNAMICS
11 A new group forms
12 Disagreement within the movement/Leadership change
13 Mergers/Coalitions between existing groups
14 Organizational activity (e.g. fundraising)

ORGANIZED PRESSURE
15 Issue statement/press release
16 campaign to support legislation
17 Campaign supporting the election of a public official
18 Education campaign
19 Voter registration
20 Publish/issue report
21 Petition campaign
22 Contact public officials (write letters, make phone calls, visit congressional offices)
23 File complaints or lawsuits
24 Call for changes in business practices
25 Hold conferences, workshops

CONTENTIOUS POLITICAL EVENTS
26 Threaten to take action (e.g. Mother Jones threatens to march)
27 Strike or labor protest (e.g a work slow down)
28 Boycott
29 Sit-in or occupation (seize property)
30 Blockade
31 Mass action (protest march, demonstration, rally, etc.)
32 Attacks on property (arson, vandalism, bombings [without human targets])
33 Attacks on people
34 Attacks on movement supports by anti-movement forces (e.g. marchers beaten)

35 State Control (Arrests, Jailings, Convictions, Indictments, Fines, etc)
  E. **Target Actor** (The party that is the object of the action). The target actor, or subject actor, is the recipient of the action; that is, the person, place or thing against which the actors move move in the article. Target Actors are coded in terms of the same categories as Source Actors.

[8] This experience has taught us to use even more parsimonious search terms (e.g.: next time we would use the term "child care" rather than "child w/3 care." This decision alone would have returned almost all true positives and would have saved us *months* of labor).

[9] Specifically, for each congressional hearing, we coded the following information:

  A. **CIS #**: This is the discrete identifying number assigned to each hearing by the Congressional Information Service.

B. **Date of Hearing** (2 digit codes for month and year). The period covered by the project runs from January 1, 1901 (0.01) through December 31, 2000 (12.00). Note: 00 refers to the year 2000. Note 2: Many hearings span more than one day, so we will code them by month and year only. If they extend into a second month, code by first month only.

C. **Committee/subcommittee:** (What committee or subcommittee convened the hearing?) (These committees will allow us to eventually create aggregate categories based on the central focus on the committees, e.g.: health, education, labor, etc.)

D. **Focus**: This dimension includes the intended beneficiaries of the hearing. There is a disproportionate number of hearings addressing the specific needs of distinctive groups of people. We have chosen to include information on the focus of each hearing in order to get an accurate perception of national salience for children's policy. The areas of focus included the District of Columbia, Native Americans, Government Employees (including military personnel), Immigrants, and the nation at large. Impoverished people have not been included as an area of focus because a) poverty crosses over all areas of focus clouding our distinction and b) unlike other areas of focus (except of course National), poverty is considered a national issue whereas the concerns of DC residents, immigrants, etc. do not typically garner the same degree of national attention.

E. **General Topic:** Refers to the general focus of the hearing, which may or may not include the child topic under investigation. Different hearings have varying degrees of specificity. Some are very broad and discuss larger societal issues, addressing children's policy, but in the context of other policies that collectively are meant to curb juvenile delinquency, poverty, sex discrimination, etc. Other hearings may be highly specific, focusing solely on the children's policy area, and often times, a narrow cross-section of the policy area, such as making exceptions in child labor laws for certain agricultural sectors. Coding for General Topic, allows for an understanding of a) which larger discussions have become relevant to children's policy and b) the weight of the children's policy within a particular hearing. Often policies and programs overlap issue areas, so that this category represents Congress' framing of the hearing. Consult Appendix 2 for a list of General Topics used for each policy area.

F. **Specific Topic**: Refers to the topics specific to the child policy area. This is distinctive from the General Topic code as it refers to the specific way that children's policy is framed within a hearing. In short, General Topic captures the essence of the hearing and Primary/Secondary Topic captures the framing of child policy issues within the hearing. We coded up to 2 specific topics for each hearing. In situations where more than topics are addressed within a single hearing, coders chose the two predominant related frames. See Appendix 3 for a list of Specific Topics used for each policy area.

G. **Organizations Testifying**: This column refers to the groups that appeared before the committee/subcommittee and presented testimony during the hearing. Organizations represented are usually indicated under the section entitled "Testimony Descriptors". We coded the organizations participating in the legislative discussion of children's policy from this record of congressional hearings.