

Reprint from:

URBAN AFFAIRS QUARTERLY

**"The Community Service Voucher
Program: An Experiment in Community
Access to University Resources"**

by James P. Pitts

SAGE Publications, Inc.
275 South Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90212



SAGE Publications Ltd
28 Banner Street
London EC1Y 8QE

This paper describes and evaluates the initial use of the community service voucher program, a program which used federal funds to empower four organizations in disadvantaged Chicago neighborhoods to contract for university resources. The analysis presents the concept behind the program and describes the circumstances of its implementation and various program outcomes. The analysis ends with an evaluation of program impact, recommendations for how to expand and replicate the program, and a discussion of its potential in different university-disadvantaged community settings.

THE COMMUNITY SERVICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

An Experiment in Community Access to University Resources

JAMES P. PITTS

Department of Sociology and
Center for Urban Affairs
Northwestern University

Colleges typically serve only their students, faculty, and formal agencies, governmental and private. In recognition of this insularity from social problems in their surrounding communities, the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Title I) uses federal money to encourage some of the intellectual resources in colleges to address the circumstances of poor and minority populations. This paper describes and evaluates the community service voucher program, a recent use of Title I money aimed at empowering community organizations to become consumers of skills based in higher education. The paper is organized to accomplish several things. First, there is a brief description of the concept behind the program, the objectives, and how the program design differs

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This report and the research it evaluates were supported by funds granted to the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare under Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-329). The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.*

from others funded through Title I. Second, there is a summary of the circumstances involved in implementing this pilot program and its actual operation. Third, the researcher clarifies performance criteria implicit in the conception of the program and uses them to evaluate how much was actually accomplished. Finally, the researcher makes a number of specific recommendations concerning how the community-service voucher might be replicated and evaluated on a larger scale, and then abstracts to the most general (essential) characteristics of school-community group situations and the differing potential each offers for successful use of the voucher.

THE CONCEPT:

RESOURCE DISPARITY AND MUTUALITY OF EXCHANGE

The belief that higher education can and should contribute to reducing inequality is not without its critics. There is a long-standing suspicion among laymen that academic work is so specialized and esoteric that academicians have little insight to offer in solving everyday problems. Since the political and ideological ferment of the late 1960s, a different and perhaps more challenging critique has been offered by some liberals and radicals who are themselves often associated with higher education. They charge that such institutions (especially universities) perpetuate inequality through the type of research and socialization offered. For example, some critics (e.g., Rossi, 1975) cite the fact that social scientists often study disadvantaged communities—but with no obvious benefit to those studied. Those benefits which do accrue, it is argued, serve the purposes of the investigator or a funding agency. The conditions and needs of the disadvantaged are analyzed from perspectives which legitimize the position of the advantaged.

The community service voucher program was established to create greater mutuality between the interests of higher education (especially university scholars) and community groups. Universities usually place much more emphasis on research than do colleges. Faculty rewards within universities chiefly reflect one's standing within his or her discipline and/or the ability to bring lucrative grants to the school. Ordinarily, the activities and

problems of a single community organization do not meet the research needs of the university scholar. Scholarly audiences prefer sampling strategies which allow for wider generalizations and systematic data-gathering which more approximates a formalized research design than the natural and often loosely structured activities of community groups. The few scholars who attempt to serve the strategic needs defined by community groups typically do so with little expectation of significant monetary return or professional advancement.

The community service voucher program provided each of four community organizations in Chicago with a \$10,000 credit from the Title I program of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) to be spent on research services available within Northwestern University. The four organizations are the Christian Action Ministry (CAM), the Illinois Congress of Ex-Offenders (ICE), the Midwest Community Council (MCC), and the Lawndale People's Planning and Action Council (LPPAC). The program is modeled after the voucher system recently suggested for use (Levin, 1975) in elementary-secondary education. Its originator, Northwestern's Center for Urban Affairs (CUA), believes that it represents the first time that a voucher system has been used in higher education to extend a university's service capacity.¹

Unlike proposals typically submitted to IBHE, the voucher proposal is more analytical than substantive. It outlines a process of interaction and assigns administrative responsibility to CUA, but does not specify a definite set of community groups, target neighborhoods or services. Instead, potential grantees are described in terms of three probable categories of service needed: (1) groups or organizations which need to improve the technical skills of existing staff and/or achieve a layman's interpretation of highly professionalized documents and reports; (2) groups which need help in learning how to negotiate complex governmental or other bureaucratic mazes; and (3) "groups whose primary need is to develop functional coalitions among similar groups in order to mitigate conflict, eliminate competition and enhance effectiveness" (Northwestern Univ., 1972: 4).

Data collection began several weeks before community groups became active participants and consisted of interviews with

designers of the program, university administrators, and direct observation of planning meetings at which the four organizations were chosen. The overall process of data collection was shaped by the several distinct patterns of community-university interaction which evolved rather than existed by a rigorous a priori design. Data consist of all written communications and products generated by the process, direct observation of meetings, and interviews with community and university participants throughout the program.²

A CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION OF THE VOUCHER PROCESS: FOUR EXAMPLES

Generally speaking, the four community organizations, regardless of size, sought to purchase university services which seemed (to them) to contribute to the strengthening of their organizations and the furthering of tactical objectives in specific and tangible ways, i.e., they focused on institution-building as opposed to services for discrete individuals. Ranking low were requests for academic commodities, e.g., research and/or teaching oriented to the important issues and findings among scholars. One indicator of this is the almost complete absence of voucher-grantee interest in faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences (psychology, sociology, history, economics, languages, and so forth). All but one of the faculty approached by the groups teach in the professional schools of education, management and journalism—parts of the university which claim technical skills with utility for consumers outside of the university setting.

A cursory review of all the proposals funded by the Illinois Board of Higher Education between 1970 and 1973 shows that educators usually design programs which have entirely different implications from those outlined in this paper. Programs designed by college and university faculty typically attempt to improve either the communication and job skills of *individuals* or modify their attitudes toward work, racial harmony or political participation. Programs generated by these educators

generally offer those services which best fit their academic roles—purveyors of information about and socialization into middle class institutions. Very few of the conventional programs attempt to determine the priorities of community groups and it is even rarer for such programs to pursue concrete objectives determined by community groups.

THE COMMUNITY GROUPS AND THE SERVICES

Community organizations representing disadvantaged populations manifest considerable variability in program emphasis as well as material and human resources. A brief description of the four voucher grantees and the range of services they purchased from Northwestern faculty and students indicates something of the flexibility built into the voucher process.

Christian Action Ministry (CAM).

The Christian Action Ministry is an atypical ghetto community organization. It is a rapidly growing and prosperous group grounded in 13 churches on the West Side of Chicago. CAM is located in and serves an impoverished black community, but it has shown remarkable facility in securing large grants from foundations and government agencies in order to finance its programs.³ The staff numbers approximately 100 people, most of whom are college graduates (CAM estimates that the percentage is well over 75%). CAM's ongoing programs include a job placement center, an alternative school, a grade school, more than 100 units of housing, an economic development corporation which owns three businesses, a federal credit union and eight day-care centers. It operates an outpatient clinic jointly with a local hospital and expects to begin construction of a nursing home-medical clinic.

The Christian Action Ministry chiefly used the services of Northwestern faculty and students to further program activities already in progress. Most of these activities related to development in their health trust (Christian Action Ministry, 1974), "an HMO [Health Maintenance Organization] approach, which

makes CAM the broker of health care for the subscribers." The health trust attempts to pool the buying power of persons in an impoverished area from which most doctors and hospitals have withdrawn. Establishing service contracts with hospitals in the nearby suburbs and the few which remain on the West Side, CAM expects to encourage competition in the quality of area service and thereby create alternatives for health trust members.

First of all, a Northwestern undergraduate was paid to analyze the health records at CAM's outpatient clinic with the intent of codifying neighborhood living conditions which are likely contributors to the disease symptoms which bring persons into contact with doctors. A professor from the Graduate School of Management collaborated with CAM personnel in writing a proposal to fund a so-called health action program, a small unit of community residents trained and paid to seek out and recognize preventable health hazards in the community (e.g., unsafe and/or abandoned housing or seriously neglected garbage collection). This health action team would deliberate about possible solutions to these problems, attempt to educate community residents about them, and generally strive to make health conditions into political and economic issues. An accounting professor provided a third service in the area of health maintenance. For less than \$500, he wrote a critique of CAM's cost estimate for the proposed health trust, indicating areas in which start-up and initial year operation costs might be underestimated by as much as \$500,000. A well-known private firm had charged CAM several thousand dollars for the cost study.

Of the seven distinct health trust-health action projects to which Northwestern personnel contributed, only one was new to the CAM agenda. Northwestern personnel wrote a proposal for a solar-energy roof garden, a prototype of which soon will be assembled on the roof of a West Side building. Argonne National Laboratories agreed both to supply the technical leadership in developing the prototype and to write a technical proposal to secure funds to study the feasibility of adapting old inner-city buildings to solar-energy collectors. If fresh vegetables and fruits can be made available to inner-city residents at lower prices than in the stores, a year-round supply of unadulterated food will have a positive influence on inner-city diet and health while

reducing the poor's extreme vulnerability to escalating prices for energy and food. Furthermore, the same device which collects and uses sunlight for roof-top gardens can probably be used to supply both heating and air conditioning for the same building. CAM is the official sponsor for this unique proposal, but it proposes to draw on the specialized skills of Argonne and two universities. The University of Illinois (Chicago campus), Department of Art and Architecture will provide architectural expertise, while the Center for Urban Affairs at Northwestern will provide sociological, economic, and policy analysis.

Finally, at the organization's request, graduate students and a faculty member in the Graduate School of Management reviewed CAM's accounting procedures, and found them seriously wanting. They spent several months straightening out fiscal procedures and training CAM's staff how to use such.

Lawndale People's Planning and Action Conference (LPPAC)

LPPAC is an organization with a staff of fewer than 15 that began on Chicago's West Side during the period of militant-black activism in the late 1960s. It has a base in several local churches but its board also has substantial representation from local block clubs and individuals who do not represent a church. It solicits financial contributions from foundations and businesses and a few churches, but its budget is meager. The organization is devoted to meeting the day-to-day maintenance of the impoverished in its community. For example, it has devoted considerable energy to coordinating a community food cooperative to provide local persons with the opportunity to purchase food as inexpensively as possible.

Lawndale People's Planning and Action Conference used its voucher credit for a single project: to purchase training abilities of the personnel from the Medill School of Journalism to increase the effectiveness of its newspaper, the *Lawndale Drum*. The *Drum*, formerly under the direction of a forceful editor, was declining in quality of production, issue-orientation, and readership. LPPAC hoped that an improved newspaper would strengthen the organization's capacity to promote community identity and purpose.

Several members of the journalism faculty met with LPPAC staff and agreed to recruit both graduate and undergraduate journalism students to work with and for the organization. Some student employees accompanied LPPAC staff into the community to gather information for feature stories and trained the latter in recognizing newsworthy issues and events. Other students developed detailed operating guides to instruct the newspaper staff in the production and circulation of the paper. One handbook developed for the project gives complete instructions for putting together an attractive paper. A deadline schedule spells out the daily priorities in maintaining an orderly progression to the scheduled publication data.

The most ambitious aspect of LPPAC's use of voucher money was the attempt to take a new staff member without previous journalism background and train him in all the essential editorial, writing, reporting, and photographic skills. The idea was to provide LPPAC with a versatile human resource capable of performing the crucial role of managing editor as well as developing journalistic talent among current and prospective staff members. The staff member assigned to the trainee role, a graduate of a small southern, traditionally black college, possessed weak writing skills. The Northwestern undergraduate journalism major (also black) who was employed as editorial consultant possessed very strong writing skills and was a highly demanding trainer. During the seven intensive months they worked together, one could see considerable progress in both the trainee and the quality of the newspaper. Nonetheless, recovery of the *Lawndale Drum* was only partial by the time the voucher process came to an end. Advertising revenue was still meager and the managing editor was painfully aware of the need for additional training. Most important of all, LPPAC was still so lacking in both money and proper communication skills among its other staff that they were unable to provide the new editor with full-time staff who could relieve him of his tremendous workload.

Midwest Community Council (MCC)

The Midwest Community Council formed in 1946 is the second oldest community organization in Chicago. Formerly

white, its composition and later its leadership changed during the 1950s and 1960s as blacks (often poor) replaced rapidly departing whites on Chicago's West Side. MCC serves East Garfield Park, one of the city's poorest and least residentially stable neighborhoods. The Council has a governing board composed of community persons, representatives of public agencies, and several major business firms. However, the primary force in the day-to-day operation of the organization is its executive director, a long-time resident of the West Side who has credibility with many community groups and residents as well as the heads of foundations and universities.

Midwest Community Council chose to purchase university services for five projects: (1) a marketing study of social needs and services in the East Garfield Park area and ways that MCC can promote its name and services to residents currently uninformed of the organization's activities, (2) the organization of workshops to instruct parents in the skills of classroom observation and promotion of cognitive development in their children, in order to make parents agents of social change in their local schools, (3) a guide to legal and administrative agencies, officials, processes, and services relevant to the situational needs of the community, (4) documentary research on laws, legal precedent, and Chicago public-school regulations impacting on the rights of parents and public vis-à-vis schools, and (5) a research report which reviews professional resources available and alternative models of development for MCC's proposed parents union. The parents union report is intended to promote the general rationale for parents and other proponents of parent power to have the right to share in educational decision-making power with teachers and the board of education.

Illinois Congress of Ex-Offenders (ICE)

The most challenging use of the voucher was by the Illinois Congress of Ex-Offenders, a confederation of former prisoners' organizations which actively advocates various programs for penal reform. The challenging aspect of the transaction stems from the obvious fact that ex-prisoners are stigmatized, usually excluded from legitimate access to substantial monetary resources.

Two characteristics of the ICE group are so pronounced as to make their interaction with university personnel qualitatively different from the transactions observed in the three previous examples. First of all, ICE is (at the time of this writing) far less of a functioning organization than the other three. Indeed, one of the chief reasons it was chosen by the CUA Community Advisory Board was its lack of money and its low level of organizational complexity. ICE was selected in order to provide the extreme test of the voucher program's capacity to facilitate a mutual exchange between disadvantaged community groups and the University. The second important characteristic of ICE is its representation by strong-willed and ideologically attuned personalities. On one level, this means that representatives of this group were more attuned than other voucher grantees to the possibility that they might be used by "fast-talking" professionals. On another level, however, ICE representatives were consistently a volatile combination who could abruptly change its leadership and mood.⁴

ICE chose to use its voucher credit as seed money to research and launch two projects. One project is an automotive repair shop which would employ and be managed by exprisoners who have been trained as automobile mechanics. The other project, also to be run by exprisoners, is a college referral and support program for exprisoners who want and qualify for college or vocational education. The former project is still in search of financial backing. The latter project is assured of funding for several years by the Chicago-Cook County Criminal Justice Commission.

Consumer Satisfaction

Voucher organizations generally expressed a high level of satisfaction with the results of their participation. Midwest Community Council feels that the voucher program gave them access to Northwestern's finest resources. The Council's executive director has expressed the opinion that the variety of services purchased by MCC are unlikely to be available outside of the university at such reasonable rates. LPPAC's single complaint is that the project was too short. They are anxious to get three

additional months of training for one or more of their newspaper personnel. CAM, the voucher grantee most familiar with consultants and university resources, gave the program a strong endorsement. ICE, the group which is generally most stingy in its praise, willingly concedes that "it was quite beneficial."

Despite an apparent uniformity of client endorsement, an appraisal of the program's effectiveness would be incomplete without looking at other data. In the following section of the paper data are provided germane to the program's performance. These data do not show up in clients' subjective and necessarily partial judgments.

HOW WELL DID THE VOUCHER PROGRAM WORK?

The use of the community service voucher proved to be a limited success. This judgment is made, of course, without benefit of comparison with other voucher programs or established conventions of how much success ought to be expected in this kind of social experiment. The purpose of this section is to outline the criteria and observations by which the researcher came to this overall judgment. Most of the criteria mentioned here are implicit in the voucher rationale, and thus were incorporated into the researcher's primary concerns at the very beginning of the program, several weeks before the community organizations were brought into participation. Four of the criteria are presented in Table 1 and are phrased as questions. Answers to each question are either (+) yes, (\pm) mixed, or (-) no, with the first affirming that a program object has been met. The data used to make these qualitative judgments are derived from my efforts throughout the program to observe (directly and indirectly) and record all client-consultant interactions relevant to each contractual relationship. While this naturally included a periodic sampling of the normative reactions of all participants, in the following remarks the less reactive or so-called behavioral indicators (Webb et al., 1966) are particularly stressed.

Community clients varied in the speed and boldness with which they began to contact university personnel and ask questions about available skills and departments, but once they began

TABLE 1
Community Service Voucher Objectives Expressed
as Criteria Questions

	CAN	LPPAC	MCC	ICE
1) Were community organization clients able to identify a match between their expressed needs and the kinds of services and personnel available with the University?	+	+	+	+
2) Did the agreed upon services largely reflect the original ideas of the community clients?	+	±	+	+
3) Were the clients able to exercise guidance (including veto power) over the direction of work activity during the course of the contractual relationship?	+	-	±	+
4) Were the final products incorporated into the active resources of the client? (Do the post Voucher activities of client groups indicate that their material and/or human resources have been expanded?)	+	±	±	+

this probing process none of the four had difficulty finding a university resource in the area of their need. Furthermore, the program was largely successful in producing consultant work on projects conceived (Table 1, number 2) by the community organizations. However, despite these notable initial achievements, evaluation of objectives 3 and 4 (Table 1), which address the issues of process and practical outcomes, indicates overall unevenness in voucher accomplishments. In what follows, a summary of both the extent and the limits of what this experiment actually accomplished will be offered.

As intended, community groups' control of voucher payments to university consultants was a substantial factor influencing the number and responsiveness of the faculty and student consultants. Even so, material incentives are insufficient to explain why these university people worked for community clients. Most of the students who worked for voucher groups had made an earlier curricular commitment to learning about urban inequality and social problems. Faculty who became involved also were not a random sample of faculty. All participating faculty were concerned with making the voucher concept work, and a majority had histories of earlier social involvement or support for liberal causes.

The populist priorities of the program left no lasting and observable impact on professional-administrative routines within the university. Designers of the community service voucher program never declared an intention to effect general changes in university priorities. Indeed, if such were intended, it seems unlikely that either university administrators or most governmental supporters of Title I programs would have been sympathetic to funding the objective. Accordingly, student and faculty consultants carried on their usual university responsibilities while working for voucher clients and received no symbolic or real rewards from the university for their community service.⁵ The voucher program did not offer or create the kind of incentives which would cause university administrators to promote its renewed funding or even incorporation into the university budget. For example, there is the possibility that incorporation of the program into the university might encourage activist professors and students to pressure the university to be more supportive of financially costly or politically controversial causes and groups. Perhaps even more apparent to administrators of a private school is the strong probability that bringing Title I money into the university would also bring greater federal and state intervention into established university auditing procedures. The university already receives large amounts of federal money for applied and pure research, but over the years has evolved a distinct facet of administration to comply with governmental guidelines. The voucher program, however, is fundamentally a social program (Berk and Rossi, 1976), that is to say, its purpose is social amelioration rather than furtherance of the careers of scholars. Federally supported social programs involve regulation by government agencies which are not organized to facilitate the priorities of research-oriented institutions. Even at the beginning of the program, university administrators expressed apprehension concerning the encouragement of a new set of restrictive-governmental fiscal regulations.

The most productive uses of the voucher mechanism also serve to highlight its principal limitation. In spite of the financial inducements and an overwhelmingly supportive group of university consultants and helpers, the voucher experiment

made tangible increments to a group's resources only where the community client had clearly outlined objectives and insisted on step-by-step accountability from consultants. CAM and ICE, the two extremes in organizational complexity, achieved the maximum in practical organization resources largely because they insisted on active monitoring and guidance of their academic consultants. Both organizations insisted on monthly and even weekly meetings at which they received progress reports. These reports were often in writing. At such meetings, the clients voiced their approval and criticism of consultants' efforts and often redirected those efforts when they (clients) wanted a different course of action or a change in emphasis. In contrast, LPPAC was remarkably passive in almost all of its dealings with School of Journalism personnel, even to the point where it initially looked to the latter for content of *Drum* editorial policy. LPPAC's passivity in incorporating university resources into its own organization later contributed to its inability to retain its fledgling managing editor. A few months after the end of the voucher program he resigned to go to work for another community organization with an established newspaper and supporting staff.

MCC best illustrates the voucher's limitation where the community client fails to outline a clear agenda and monitor the direction of the services purchased. The parents-union report is the only voucher product which reflects a continuous MCC input into the consultant's work. In all other transactions the university personnel initially were told what objectives MCC wanted to meet, but were allowed to carry out the services to completion without periodic monitoring to determine if in fact the final product would be congruent with MCC's intended use. Consequently, the documentary research on the rights of parents and the public vis-à-vis schools emphasized not how to use legal maneuvers to change the status quo, but how much legal relief might be expected within existing interpretations of the law. Workshops organized to instruct parents in the skills of classroom observation and how to promote pupil cognitive development were poorly attended because MCC often failed to coordinate meeting times and places. Furthermore, the organization failed to have any of its members study the

design of the workshops so that they could be replicated without the direct input of professionals.

In sum, the voucher program worked exceedingly well in two organizations, but in two others its accomplishments were superficial.

Probably all social amelioration programs imply that program benefits, if any, will carry beyond actual participants to positively affect other persons and groups in the surrounding disadvantaged neighborhoods. The community voucher program is no exception. Indeed, its focus on strengthening the capacities of groups may even heighten expectations for its spill-over effects. However, despite the program's implicit suggestion of potential community benefits, its actual impact seems small. Obviously, there are no grand scale accomplishments in the West Side area surrounding CAM, LPPAC, and MCC. Massive unemployment, lack of decent housing, urban school problems are beyond the resources of community organizations, most of which have far fewer resources than CAM. CAM's aspirations are feasible and are likely to achieve local impact, but it will be difficult to weigh the value of their voucher participation against their many other resources. The significance of impact is, of course, relative. Successful establishment of their various health care programs may still be overshadowed by the continuing general decline in most West Siders' access to quality health care.

On a smaller scale the question of community impact offers mixed evidence. ICE's proposed use of the Cook County Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) grant was undoubtedly facilitated by voucher services but challenges the very definition of how one will operationalize the term community. The money will not be used for a community defined by residence in a specific urban neighborhood. It will be used for a collection of people who share the stigma and disenfranchisement of prison. LPPAC and MCC, two organizations with territories, offer meager though somewhat ambiguous evidence of the voucher's community impact. Both organizations had difficulty incorporating university services into their ongoing programs and manpower, but both LPPAC's newly trained editor and MCC's proposal for a parents union appear to have prospects in other community organizations. Should

the community effects of the voucher transaction be measured only as the achievements and frustrations of the organization which contract with university personnel, or should the evaluation also include ripple effects, i.e., other community groups? The structure and ideology of the voucher program invites one to look for such effects, but it seems more realistic to restrict the search for beneficial effects to the organizations which contract for service.

HOW WELL CAN THE COMMUNITY SERVICE VOUCHER WORK ELSEWHERE?

The community service voucher program is an innovative but fragile enterprise. It is worthy of repeating in other communities for the grass roots creativity and activism that it encourages and also because of the limited generalizations that can be made from this case study. The concluding part of this paper makes recommendations about how replication might be attempted and the appropriate strategy of evaluation. Discussion begins with a general outline of a larger-scale community service voucher program and recommendations concerning overall program funding, evaluation, and administration. Second, the author makes recommendations about crucial elements of program administration in local sites. Third, the author makes recommendations concerning the range of schools and community organizations that ought to be included in the program. Finally, I return to a discussion of the essentials of the voucher program and distinguish three modes of variation which can be expected in actual program operation.

EVALUATION, SOURCES OF FUNDING, AND ADMINISTRATION

Widespread disillusionment with the effects and noneffects of social programs developed in the 1960s has contributed to an increasing interest in both fiscal accountability and rigorous evaluation of social programs. Both policy makers and social scientists want to know if program X had the intended effect.

Was the effect real or only apparent? Can the intended effect be reproduced in other settings? How much of what kind of investment is necessary to get the desired program effects? These are reasonable questions, but it is important to keep them from thoroughly shaping program objectives and operations. Vigorous attempts at fiscal accountability and strong research designs have in common the fact that they typically centralize program administration in order to reduce waste and ambiguity. Unfortunately, this can also stifle creative initiatives from below. The recommendations which follow suggest a compromise between these legitimate constraints and the equally legitimate priorities of the community service voucher. More specifically, the author recommends that the community service voucher concept be implemented:

- (a) as several simultaneously operating programs in different community/regional settings;
- (b) with each local program coordinated by a small (2-3 persons), relatively independent administrative office;
- (c) with a common source of funding for all programs—either a consortium of foundations or a federal agency;⁶
- (d) with a centrally designed and coordinated evaluation of program processes and effects by a team of social scientists;
- (e) with program costs underwritten for two years and evaluation costs underwritten for one year longer.

The important idea here is to implement the voucher program as a quasi-experiment in which voucher contracts and activity reflect variations in local community environments and the perceived needs of community groups. A common source of funding should help minimize the extraneous variation to be expected where different sponsoring agencies implement differing interpretations of the community service voucher concept. Furthermore, a common source of funding can ensure development of a coordinated evaluation effort, flexible, but rigorously adequate to measuring the various processes and outcomes of the overall program.

Local administrative offices can provide the knowledge of and communication with local community groups which are vital

to making the transactions flexible and responsive to the needs of participants. Such offices must be separate from college or university bureaucracies because the latter necessarily reflect the daily operation of the schools and therefore tend to interfere with the operation of a voucher mechanism. For example, students and faculty who worked in this pilot project received their consultant's pay only at the monthly pay intervals used by the university to pay its professional employees. Although client organizations theoretically had "power over the purse," in effect, that power was significantly abrogated by the dominance of university budgetary procedures. Most of the client organizations noted the irony that their money was actually controlled by the school. A final reason for independent local administrative offices is the need to ensure fiscal responsibility in the use of voucher money. The pace of voucher work ebbs and flows. Clerical and accounting records are necessary but insufficient indicators of work being done and how the money is being handled. It is desirable to supplement these with occasional site visits and telephone calls to all (local) program participants.

**LOCAL ADMINISTRATION:
PROCEDURE, COUNSELING AND FLEXIBILITY**

Local administrative offices need the flexibility to be active, yet their freedom to initiate and coordinate local activity must not override the program's need for reliable client-consultant transactions. Accordingly, I recommend the following:

- (a) a standard contractual procedure should be established and all of the local programs required to use it;
- (b) one of the personnel in each local program should serve as counselor for community clients;
- (c) local administrative offices should have discretion in variable time-scheduling for contracted services, particularly those requiring more than 9-12 months (but within the recommended 2-year program limit) for completion;
- (d) local administrative offices should have discretion in when it is advisable to pay limited stipends and/or amounts of tuition for community-organization personnel who plan to use facilities,

or persons in postsecondary institutions to learn a specific technical skill to be used in the organization.

A standard contractual procedure is necessary to bind participants into predictable and responsible voucher participation.⁷ Program counselors have two roles. First, they are needed to promote local awareness of the program and its objectives. Second, and perhaps most important of all, counselors will often have to push clients to clarify their program objectives and to strive for consultant accountability. Data from this pilot project show that community groups will vary considerably in initial preparation for exercising client control of the transactions.

The need for flexibility in local administration is reflected in the other two recommendations. Some services will require less than a year to complete, while others may require more than 12 months. Similarly, some contracts will have to be postponed if crucial consultant personnel are currently unavailable. One of the realities of academia is that teaching schedules are often scheduled a year in advance. In certain instances, some or all of the money that might be paid to consultants might be better invested in community organization personnel. LPPAC's attempt to incorporate journalism skills is a case in point. A community group can rarely afford to pay one of its personnel to devote 3-6 months to intensive skill learning unrelated to immediate productivity. An understaffed organization attempting to upgrade its human resources, therefore, can be expected to try to get their trainee to carry out mundane organizational tasks as well. Allowing organizations to decide whether to directly invest in one of their personnel should help clarify how much time and effort should be invested in the training, as well as give substance to the ideal that the program is designed for the benefit of the client groups. Restricting voucher payments to consultants belies this ideal.

RANGE OF VOUCHER PARTICIPANTS: SCHOOLS AND CLIENTS

Experimental/evaluative requisites as well as the democratic intent of the voucher concept argue for including variation in

the characteristics of community clients as well as in the options available to them. Therefore, the author recommends that:

- (a) local programs should seek to represent variation in client organizational complexity but should use some minimum indicator of organization stability (perhaps a year of continuous activity) to qualify an organization for voucher participation;
- (b) local programs should permit clients to approach consultant personnel from all types of postsecondary institutions of learning—universities, both 4 and 2-year colleges, and vocational schools (secretarial, community organizing institutes, and so forth).

A client selection procedure aimed primarily at minimizing risk would tend to eliminate groups like ICE, LPPAC or MCC. They often lack personnel who can readily develop resources made available through voucher contracts and also lack money to hire new personnel. Even when new personnel become available, such organizations face the challenge of rationalizing their internal procedures, making clear the relationship of new positions to old ones. But this is exactly the challenge addressed by the community service voucher, particularly now when we know so little of its potential: what kinds of community groups can benefit from skills housed in postsecondary schools, in what ways, and to what effect? Organizations like CAM have more potential for incorporating and using postsecondary resources, but are so atypical (for either middle-class or disadvantaged areas) that they do not constitute a representative test of voucher potential.

Data presented earlier shows that many of the services which may appeal to community groups are technical/vocational as opposed to liberal arts instruction. Clients who believe that their needs are of this specialized character are likely to approach professional schools (law, education, and so on) within universities and colleges as well as vocationally oriented departments in community colleges. This argues for allowing client organizations to contract with an unlimited range of postsecondary learning institutions. Although clients often show

little interest in the substance connoted by liberal arts, the variety of talents and interests involved in this part of higher education should not be automatically overlooked either. For example, the undergraduate who designed CAM's medical-reporting scheme and also outlined the design for rooftop-solar gardens drew on a background which includes training in computer programming, a recent job in the records department of Blue Cross-Blue Shield, and a predilection for organic gardening. Similarly, the political science professor who worked for ICE used management skills acquired in an earlier government career as well MBA training.

There are two other reasons for maximizing the institutional choices available to client groups: (1) the distribution of social-justice liberalism among faculty in higher education, and (2) differences between schools in emphasis on scholarly production. A recent survey (Ladd and Lipset, 1976) indicates that faculty in the social sciences (typically classified among the liberal arts disciplines) are most supportive of social-justice issues, while those in the natural sciences and professional schools are typically more conservative on these issues. Such data suggest that certain of the liberal arts disciplines offer a sizable pool of persons, faculty and students, likely to be sympathetic to voucher objectives and willing to provide services in accord with the contractual guidelines set by community groups. Finally, schools differ in the emphasis placed on research and publication. Quite apart from the political sympathies of individuals, those schools which place the most emphasis on scholarly production generally offer the least encouragement for faculty who want to invest substantial time in community service. Many other schools require little or no scholarship. In these situations, departments and administrators either ignore college personnel's involvement in community activities or, if it promises to bring good favor to the school, encourage it. In any case, the heart of the voucher program is the set of material and ideological incentives it offers potential consultants and the resources it makes available to community organizations. Schools per se profit little or not at all from the community service voucher and cannot be expected to be regular supporters of the program.

The foregoing remarks speak to the particulars of attempting to extend and more completely evaluate the community service voucher program. The concluding part of this section returns to a more conceptual perspective, outlining three general situations in which the voucher might be tried and the differing potential afforded by each for realizing the preferred contractual relationship.

The character of success and failure in this case study of the community service voucher suggests the vital importance of anticipating and/or fashioning situations which facilitate the practical intent of the voucher mechanism. Most policies aimed at ameliorating or eradicating inequality address this problem by merely delimiting some target population, neighborhood or region through the use of threshold indicators of personal and family disadvantage (low levels of income, literacy, minority status, and the like). Such focus on only objective indicators of inequality is insufficient for making the community service voucher work. The fact that an institution of higher education is located in proximity to disadvantaged populations does not, in itself, maximize the probability that this kind of program will produce the practical resources desired by clients.

The community service voucher is intended to be, and is at best, a relationship between two parties (school-based people and community groups) committed to the same objective: serving the practical needs identified by the community client. Thus, observers who are interested in using the program in the communities surrounding their college *should first look for potential or existing dyads* between school-based people and community groups, both of whom already support the principle of furthering community group defined objectives. The absence of obvious matches between like-minded school-based and community group persons is a less ideal, but not necessarily unworkable situation addressed below.

A second, and still promising, situation for the community service voucher program is where one or more community groups already has a commitment to accomplishing a short or medium-range objective (less than a year) but lacks access to

strategic resources which are within local postsecondary schools. What distinguishes this situation from the more ideal one described above is the initial absence of a nucleus of school-based people who are oriented to working in contractual relationships under the guidance of community clients. Here the organization's problem is to locate such persons who are willing to provide the desired service at a price the organization chooses (and can afford) to pay. Sole reliance on the market incentive aspect of the program can still produce the desired consulting relationship and end result, but is highly unlikely to do so where the client is lax in guiding and checking the work to be done. There is no mechanical formula for ensuring that voucher transactions will succeed. It should be anticipated that in some situations a voucher organization will be unable to acquire the service desired.

The least promising school-community situation is where either the strong-willed (self-determination oriented) community group does not exist or if it does, it lacks programmatic objectives which require school-based resources. Some community groups show little inclination to assert contractual authority over professionals or the ability to make critical judgments about whether and how to use the latter's skills in circumstances which confront the organization. School-based persons, even if they are sophisticated in the practice and intent of the voucher, cannot make up for weak leadership among community groups or lack of organizational agendas which can incorporate school-based skills. Unilateral direction by school-based persons is nothing more than the traditional model of contact between professionals and disadvantaged communities.

CONCLUSION

The community service voucher program represents an innovative concept of how to relate postsecondary skills to the resource needs of community groups. Judged by its primary objective, that of generating a different and more equitable

mode of exchange between community groups and school-based persons, the program produced a rather limited but distinctive form of productivity. This case study not only documents the performance of the voucher in its initial small scale implementation, but it concludes with a number of recommendations concerning the format for a more definitive test of voucher utility. This report also demonstrates the necessity for putting qualitative anthropological data-collection strategies at the heart of voucher program evaluation efforts.

Social action programs typically achieve less reform and amelioration than that envisioned by their advocates. This attests to the strength of inequality structures as well as conservative limitations typically built into the programs. From this broad perspective, the community service voucher program promises no major urban impact or even a revolutionary challenge to establish ways of operating such programs. Revolutions, whether in societal inequality or in the scope and purpose of programs addressed to such, are outcomes of potent social/political forces that manage to exceed limits intended by agents of stability and planned change. Acknowledging these limitations, the community service voucher program nonetheless offers a combination of idealism and practicality that is unusual in Title I programs. Community groups, funding agencies (public and private), and populist-oriented academicians and politicians will want to give it serious consideration.

NOTES

1. A number of CUA staff members (Epperson, 1971; Gordon, 1973) have developed a strong interest in the ideas of the radical social critic, Ivan Illich, who argues (1971; also see Freire, 1971) that schools and other social welfare institutions cultivate dependence in already disadvantaged groups and individuals, and largely benefit professional practitioners.

2. The selection of participating organizations began with the Center's creation of a community advisory board. This group was assembled to assist in the selection of three or more voucher participants from among the numerous community organizations operating in low-income Chicago neighborhoods. Board members consisted of two staff members of Chicago foundations, a corporate executive, and an administrative

official of a Chicago religious organization. All were selected on the basis of their familiarity with Chicago-area community groups. Voucher organizations were allowed to "shop around" only if the educational service they wanted was not available at North-western but available at some other Chicago area college or university. No grantees made use of this option.

3. Every study of the inequality in the Chicago metropolitan area shows the West Side areas of North Lawndale, East Garfield Park, West Garfield Park, and Southeast Austin to be among the poorest neighborhoods. Pierre DeVise's *Chicago's Widening Color Gap* (1967) and *Slum Medicine: Chicago's Apartheid Health System* (1969) shows that these communities also have very poor medical resources.

4. Two university people contracted with ICE, a graduate student in the School of Management and a political science professor. On more than one occasion, one of the consultants was tempted to quit because of ICE's abrasive manner and tendency to question his integrity.

5. The School of Management was represented by two full professors. However, both admitted that their voucher activities would bring stigma from their colleagues if they were not also productive in conventional scholarly activities.

6. The consortium idea may be attractive to foundations which are attracted to the community service voucher concept but are strapped for cash and, therefore, wary of sinking too much of their annual disbursement into one ambitious scheme. I have avoided recommending how much this expanded voucher program and evaluation ought to cost, but think that the amount of money available for clients' use in a local program should not be less than that used in this pilot project. Overhead and evaluation costs made the total cost more than \$80,000.

7. The Center for Urban Affairs developed a contract form during the earliest stages of the program. Community clients were often lax in adhering to the procedure and Center personnel were constantly reminding them. The transactions would have been completely unmanageable without the contractual procedure.

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James P. Pitts is Associate Professor of Sociology and Research Associate for the Center for Urban Affairs, Northwestern University. He is engaged in a follow-up study of white and black recent alumni of that institution. His research on the community service voucher initiates a new professional interest.

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