

1 / The Ghosts of Organizations Past

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

—KARL MARX, “Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”

While scholars cite one another, organizations survive, grow, and prosper. They also die, wither, and starve.

—JAMES MARCH, *Handbook of Organizations*

Walk along any street in downtown New Haven, Connecticut, in 1995, and you see the ghosts of organizations past. Decals in second-story windows announce businesses long defunct. On high and out-of-reach expanses of brick, obscured from view until a recent demolition, you just barely discern the New England Cigar Company’s one-time tenure in the once handsome three-story structure. Along the roofline of some buildings, the names of the original organizational inhabitants are literally carved in stone. Many, like the “old Malley’s building,” are still called by the name of a long-departed commercial tenant, even by people born many years after its cash registers fell silent. Even the imposing neoclassical structure on the town green, whose frieze reads Post Office, has been converted to other uses. Like a coral reef that teems with life but whose structure is actually a skeleton, the life of the city takes place among the structural remains of dead organizations.

To be sure, a few buildings are still occupied by the organizations that erected them, but these are the exceptions, conspicuously left behind by their one-time organizational neighbors. On State Street, a few blocks from the green, the Elks lodge sits surrounded by empty lots on

both sides. A few steps farther on, St. Bonaventure Church, once a vibrant ethnic parish, is an architectural curiosity, stranded on an island in the middle of a city-owned parking lot. And two blocks beyond, the Pulaski Polish American club is nestled between St. Stanislaus Church (whose closed school was rented for a time to the board of education as a public school annex) and several tiny shops, including one where staff and customers still speak Polish. In daylight, the club looks abandoned, but at night its small, red neon window light welcomes people back to the old neighborhood.

All the elements of the cityscape encountered on this brief tour back in time are artifacts of organizations that have more or less disappeared. The buildings themselves, the lines separating one property from another, the location of streets and utilities, and the presence or absence of particular kinds of establishments are echoes of the activity of organizations from the past. But the built environment is just their most visible trace: patterns of ethnic and racial segregation; collective perceptions of public safety; the carving up of the city into precincts, districts, catchment areas, and even neighborhoods;¹ the presence and absence of economic opportunity; budgetary expectations; and shared understandings of who needs to be consulted about what are parts of the structure of places like New Haven that are largely the long-term accretion of organizational activity. When new organizations emerge in such an environment they do so subject to the constraints of and with access to the wealth of organizational resources represented by what I later call the social organizational debris and detritus left behind by their organizational predecessors.

The Setting

The story told in this book takes place in New Haven. It was, in 1989, one of fourteen American communities² to receive funding from the

¹ Officially, New Haven is broken up into about twenty named neighborhoods with boundaries aligned to census tracts, and most grants and programs that are neighborhood based use these definitions. The absence of neighborhood maps and detailed descriptions of each reflects the organizational focus of this book.

² The others were Little Rock, Arkansas; Santa Barbara, Vallejo, and Oakland, California; Charlotte, North Carolina; Columbia, South Carolina; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Worcester, Massachusetts; Newark, New Jersey; Kansas City, Missouri; San Antonio, Texas; Washington, DC; and northwest New Mexico. New Haven Fighting

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support efforts to build “community coalitions” against the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. The program was called Fighting Back, and from 1994 to 1999 I was a member of a multidisciplinary team of social scientists charged with evaluating the program nationally. This book is a chronicle of how Fighting Back played out in one site, New Haven, but the real story is about our often quixotic efforts to use organizations to fix urban communities.

That story is based in part on documentary evidence and interviews done by other researchers, but much of it derives from the first- and secondhand accounts that are the stuff of what social scientists call participant observation—from spring 1994 to winter 1998 I spent a considerable amount of time with the people and in the organizations that populate the narrative that follows. I sat in on their meetings, chatted with them in their offices, interviewed them, and attended the events they ran.³

Just before the research on this project started I had begun to work with faculty and students at Yale’s School of Architecture and School of Management on some of the university’s partnerships with organizations in neighborhoods adjacent to the Yale campus. Our Community Outreach Partnership Center grant proposal was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The experience

Back operated in the neighborhoods of Dixwell, West Rock, Hill, Dwight, Newhallville, and Fair Haven.

³ The data on which this book is based come from some forty formal interviews with participants conducted by me and others, examination of hundreds of documents archived by the Fighting Back site in New Haven and by the national program office, other data collected by Fighting Back staff and the evaluation team, about four and a half years of part-time participant observation by me, and reports written by colleagues who led the fieldwork in other sites. Tracy Fisher, *Little Rock Fighting Back* (New York: Graduate Center, City University of New York [CUNY], 1996); Matt Gladden et al., *Vallejo Fighting Back* (New York: Graduate Center, CUNY, 1996); Delmos Jones and Tracy Fisher, *Final Evaluation Report on Little Rock Fighting Back* (New York: Graduate Center, CUNY, 1997); Charles Price-Reavis, *Evaluation Report on Washington DC Fighting Back* (New York: Graduate Center Department of Sociology, CUNY, 1997); Belkis Suazo-Garcia, *Final Evaluation Report on Newark Fighting Back* (New York: Graduate Center, CUNY, 1997); Delmos Jones and Belkis Suazo-Garcia, *Final Evaluation Report on San Antonio Fighting Back* (New York: Graduate Center, CUNY, 1998); Mary Still et al., *Final Evaluation Report on Columbia Fighting Back* (New York: Graduate Center, CUNY, 1998); Matthew Lindholm, *Final Evaluation Report on Vallejo Fighting Back* (New York: Graduate Center, CUNY, 1997). A list of persons interviewed and documents cited in the text appears in the bibliography.

of pulling together data for that grant led me to found, with support from Yale's Institution for Social and Policy Studies, the City Room, which used the then new World Wide Web to build a community data warehouse and later to cofound the New Haven Regional Data Cooperative. This work took the form of collaborations with city agencies, community nonprofits, and neighborhood groups in data analysis and mapping.

New Haven is the kind of medium-sized city where efforts like these end up involving many of the same organizations and individuals. The meetings of one project could easily have been the meetings of another. Even when I was not formally doing my research fieldwork I was hanging out with the same people and organizations that are the characters of this book. Even though no formal data collection was happening, I let people know I was a part of the Fighting Back evaluation team any time I introduced myself, and these experiences too became a part of the observational ambience that informs this book.

My formal entrée to studying Fighting Back came through Charles Kadushin, a sociologist then at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. We had met when he spent a year teaching at Yale's School of Management, and he came to know of my immersion in New Haven and a fanciful project I had been working on called *Where Do Organizations Come From*. After he returned to CUNY, his friend and colleague the psychologist Leonard Saxe asked him in early 1994 to join a team that was talking to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation about taking over a social program evaluation project that had gone askew.

The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation held the contract for the evaluation of Fighting Back from 1990 to 1994. The new team assembled by Saxe took over the work in March of 1994.⁴ A truckload of file boxes full of newspaper clippings, field notes, hand-written interview booklets, meeting minutes, and printed documents were delivered to the psychology department at the CUNY Graduate Center. Throughout the spring a group of about a dozen graduate students and CUNY professors—in addition to Saxe and Kadushin, other members of the team included the sociologist Andrew Beveridge, anthropologist Delmos Jones, psychologist David Rindskopf, and sociologist Charles

⁴ Kay Sherwood's "Evaluation of the Fighting Back Initiative," *New Directions for Evaluation* 2005, no. 105 (March 2005): 15–38, is a case study that briefly describes the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation failure and the Saxe rescue.

Winick—met weekly under the gaze of a small portrait of Stanley Milgram in a conference room at the Graduate Center to strategize about how to carry out the evaluation rigorously but within the remaining budget. The new evaluation project would involve surveys in Fighting Back and matched comparison communities, a statistical analysis of government-collected social indicators (such as crime and traffic accidents), and an ethnographic fieldwork component in most of the Fighting Back sites. Those of us who would go out in the field divided up the research sites and started to read through the endless contents of the file boxes while we developed plans for what we expected would be systematic ethnographic community studies under the direction of Del Jones.

I had no special interest in either evaluation research or substance abuse; the work began as a marriage of convenience: I was well suited to the task since I was already in the field in New Haven, and it was well suited for me because I was looking for a project after my study of organizations that did not yet exist had stalled. But the idea of being at Yale and writing a book about New Haven seemed simultaneously cliché and intimidating. Having spent many hours immersed in canonical studies of the city written by the likes of Robert Dahl, Mitchell Sviridoff, Nelson Polsby, Raymond Wolfinger, and Douglas Yates, one could be forgiven for feeling that the task had already been done, and done well, by scholars in a different league than mine.⁵ Dahl was still around; Douglas Rae was an imposing figure in political science and the business school at Yale who had turned his attention to New Haven.⁶ I encountered other members of this group when the university brought them back for a seminar or lecture for a “twenty-five years

⁵ Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961); Mitchell Sviridoff, “The Seeds of Urban Revival,” *Public Interest* 114 (Winter 1994): 82–103; Nelson Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963); Raymond Wolfinger, *The Politics of Progress* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974); Douglas Yates, *Neighborhood Democracy: The Politics and Impacts of Decentralization* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1973).

⁶ Douglas Rae, jointly appointed in Political Science and the School of Management at Yale, became a friend and colleague over the next several years. He is an unusual academic who had taken leave from Yale to serve in the administration of New Haven mayor John Daniels. Around this time he was writing his magisterial *City: Urbanism and Its End* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); its account of New Haven at the end of the twentieth century provides a rich and complementary context for this book.

after X” event. Collectively, these folks had already written the book on New Haven—what would there be to add? Kadushin persuaded me to ignore this impediment, noting, in his characteristic Yogi Berra manner, that we would not know what the next New Haven book was about until after it was written.

And so, for the next several years, I lived and breathed Fighting Back alongside my work in the City Room at the Institution for Social and Policy Studies, the two roles often intersecting. I biked across town to neighborhood meetings; helped set up, serve food, and clean up at community events; interviewed agency heads; gave presentations to law enforcement officers; mapped data; taught staff members how to use their computers; traveled frequently to New York to meet with the rest of the evaluation team; went to national Fighting Back meetings run by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and did a month of fieldwork in San Antonio, Texas, Fighting Back.

In the 1990s, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was the largest health care philanthropy in the United States. The projects that it supported ranged from clinical research and professional education to outreach programs and community interventions. In the mid-1980s, partly in response to the crack epidemic, the foundation drew up plans for a public health approach to substance abuse. In 1989 they announced the new program, Fighting Back.⁷

Fighting Back would be different from previous programs: it would be community-wide, oriented toward the development of a comprehensive system of prevention, intervention, and treatment, and focused on demand, rather than supply, reduction. Communities would be chosen on the basis of their ability to document their problem with alcohol and other drugs and design a program that appeared both feasible and likely to have a significant impact on demand. Each grantee would receive \$3 million over five years, a large grant at the time.

Several hundred communities submitted applications in September of 1989 and awards were announced in early 1990. Fifteen sites, including New Haven, were selected for one- or two-year planning grants, with the understanding that they would be awarded five more

⁷ The foundational documents on the Fighting Back program are the 1989 request for proposals and a 1991 journal article describing the ideas behind the program by its creators Paul S. Jellinek and Ruby P. Hearn, “Fighting Drug Abuse at the Local Level,” *Issues in Science and Technology* 7 (1991): 78–84.

years of funding upon successful completion of a community plan. Fourteen were.⁸

New Haven is a relatively compact city, about seventeen square miles, and in 1990 its population was about 130,000, about a third of whom lived below the poverty level. The population of 54 percent white, 35 percent African American, and about 10 percent Hispanic⁹ was strongly segregated geographically, with neighborhoods casually characterized as being white, black, or Hispanic. The city's long history of antipoverty and urban renewal programs is well documented in the social science literature¹⁰ and well remembered in local myth and legend. Many individuals who played roles in those earlier programs were still active in the community.

Fighting Back was a part of the New Haven community for over a decade.¹¹ During that time its status vacillated between being a highly visible crisis of the month and barely noticed and mostly forgotten, just another program. At times, the funding seemed more trouble than it was worth, and on several occasions the grant was nearly lost. In the name of combating drugs and alcohol, dormant intracommunity battles were rejoined. In the name of community involvement, hopes

⁸ Irene M. Wielawski, "The Fighting Back Program," in *To Improve Health and Health Care*, vol. 7, ed. Stephen L. Isaacs and James R. Knickman. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Anthology (Princeton, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2004), chap. available at <http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/web-assets/2004/01/the-fighting-back-program>.

⁹ U.S. Census, "1990 Census of Population and Housing Public Law 94-171 Data (Official) Age by Race and Hispanic Origin," available at <http://censtats.census.gov/cgi-bin/pl94/pl94data.pl>. "Hispanic Origin" was the census category in 1990 and the term used in discussions of demographics in New Haven at the time Sherwood's "Evaluation of the Fighting Back Initiative" was published in 2005.

¹⁰ Examples include Dahl, *Who Governs?*; Susan S. Fainstein et al., *Restructuring the City: The Political Economy of Urban Redevelopment* (New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1986); Jeanne Lowe, *Cities in a Race with Time: Progress and Poverty in America's Renewing Cities* (New York: Random House, 1967); Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory*; Fred Powladge, *Model City: A Test of American Liberalism: One Town's Effort to Rebuild Itself* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970); Rae, *City*; Sviridoff, "The Seeds of Urban Revival"; Allan R. Talbot, *The Mayor's Game: Richard Lee of New Haven and the Politics of Change* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967); Wolfinger, *The Politics of Progress*.

¹¹ Although originally funded only through 1997, the foundation later extended the program through 2000. Sherwood, "Evaluation of the Fighting Back Initiative," offers some history of the grant extension.

were raised, and then dashed, in places that suffered the worst consequences of substance abuse. In the name of collaboration, partners¹² came to the table, only to be alienated by what happened there. Readers familiar with community initiatives will recognize in these descriptions a familiar tale.

Although the foundation announced the program in early 1989, the story of Fighting Back in New Haven begins several years earlier. The organizational terrain in which New Haven Fighting Back emerged and operated was generated during the legendary events of the Ford Foundation Gray Areas, War on Poverty, Model Cities, and Urban Renewal programs that shaped and reshaped New Haven from 1953 through the early 1970s.¹³ The legacies of these programs included an entrenched urban grants economy; a city carved into neighborhoods, each dominated by its own community development corporation and a pronounced skepticism in many circles about poverty research and pilot programs.

The project's history can be divided into five periods as shown in Figure 1.1. The pre-Fighting Back era (I) starts in the mid-1980s, when infant mortality, homelessness, and substance abuse dominated local news. The city had convened task forces on each of these prob-

¹² A note on terminology: Throughout the book I refer to “designers,” “partners,” “participants,” and “residents” to indicate general groups of actors involved with the project. “Designers” generally refers to program officers at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and members of the National Advisory Committee who conceived of the Fighting Back program to begin with. “Participants” refers to individuals and organizations that were involved in the implementation of the program in New Haven. “Partners” was used within the program to talk about organizational participants—either organizations or people who were at the table as organizational representatives. “Residents” refers generically to people who live in New Haven but specifically to those who were active in the Fighting Back project as neighborhood residents or as representatives of neighborhood groups that were not established nonprofit organizations. When these categories overlap I try to refer to the role an individual is playing at the time of the event being described.

¹³ Excellent accounts from a multitude of perspectives can be found in Peter Marris and Martin Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform: Poverty and Community Action in the United States* (New York: Atherton, 1967); Daniel P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1970); Powledge, *Model City*; Rae, *City*; Douglas Yates, *Neighborhood Democracy: The Politics and Impacts of Decentralization* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1973); among others.

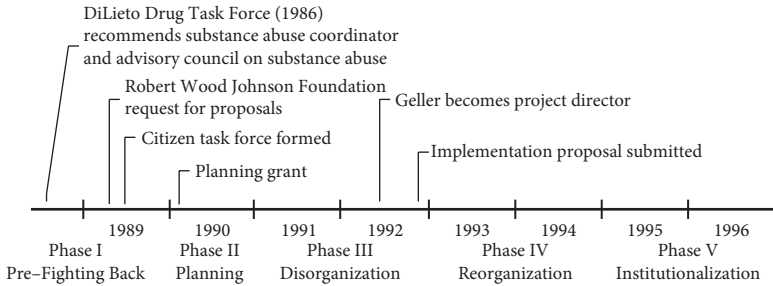


Figure 1.1 New Haven Fighting Back timeline.

lems. A drug task force was named by Mayor Ben DiLieto in 1986 in conjunction with the creation of a new position in his administration, substance abuse coordinator, responsible for the development of anti-substance-abuse programs.

The planning phase (II) runs from New Haven's first Fighting Back proposal in September 1989 through spring 1992, when the first outside project director was hired. The next phase (III), which I label "Disorganization," covers the remainder of the planning period, ending with a near meltdown of New Haven Fighting Back in early 1992. Then the reorganization phase (IV) begins with a new project director in summer 1992 and continues for almost five years. The next phase, institutionalization (V), sees the planned winding down of the foundation's resources in late 1996 and early 1997, but the unexpected extension of Fighting Back funding by the foundation in 1997 added a sixth phase, not shown in Figure 1.1, which I call "transition to Fighting Back II."¹⁴ The events described in this book cover the period between 1989 and 1996.

The Ideas behind Fighting Back

In the late 1980s, the board of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation had expressed a desire to make a meaningful contribution to substance

¹⁴ Fighting Back had all along been understood as a one-time, nonrenewable grant. This reflected its status as a program for testing an idea as well as the hope that the program would change the system rather than create another ongoing organization. In late 1996, however, the foundation decided to extend the funding for seven of the sites into 1997 and beyond.

abuse. “They were most interested in illegal drugs because of emergence of crack,” a program officer said retrospectively in 1996, “but they also encouraged us to look at alcohol. [They] wanted to go after the demand side. Existing efforts were too diffuse in communities. [They] were looking for the tipping point since the beginning, the turning point.”¹⁵ At the end of a decade that had seen renewed emphasis on supply reduction and interdiction under the Ronald Reagan administration, as well as an expansion of prevention programs in the form of Just Say No campaigns, the program’s designers at the foundation, Paul S. Jellinek and Ruby P. Hearn, wrote in a 1991 journal article that “the demand side has not been given a fair test. Despite the proliferation of local demand-reduction programs and activities, there has been little attempt to tie such endeavors together.” There was, they claimed, “no overall strategy for deploying the[ir] multiple resources in a focused, unified effort” in most communities.¹⁶

The program was seen by the foundation as an experiment, Jellinek and Hearn continued, that would “find out whether, by consolidating existing programs, activities, and other resources into a single community-wide system of prevention, early identification, treatment, and after-care services, a community can achieve substantial reductions in the use of illegal drugs and alcohol.”¹⁷ They were confident that if the foundation could help communities to focus and collaborate, then they would be able to turn the corner. Sites could choose their own strategies, but they would have to have community-wide representation of everyone who was affected by or who had a role in contributing to solving the problem.

Demand Reduction and the System

The key concept in the Fighting Back approach was demand reduction, a strategy in the war on drugs that was defined more, perhaps, by what it was not than by what it was. In the context of political enthusiasm for border patrols, drug busts, and sting operations targeting drug kingpins, demand reduction was, in one informant’s words, “anything other than

¹⁵ Field notes 1996.

¹⁶ “Fighting Drug Abuse at the Local Level,” 79.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the cops, soldiers, and drug-sniffing dogs.”¹⁸ Thus defined, its supporters were united in their efforts to lobby for a shift of antidrug resources from supply to demand reduction. But they were strange bedfellows; the diversity within the demand reduction camp is revealed when we look at what demand reduction is. It consists of prevention programs aimed at stopping nonusers from trying drugs in the first place, early intervention programs that seek to keep casual users from becoming abusers, treatment programs that aim to help abusers get clean and into recovery, aftercare services that assist people in recovery not to relapse, and those Just Say No programs. Each of these activities is carried out by different institutions, is funded from different sources, and is the bailiwick of different professions, each with its own professional ideology.

Prevention programs are carried out primarily by educators, social workers, and psychologists who run programs targeted at specific age groups and populations. Early intervention includes drug testing in various institutional settings (e.g., schools, jails, sports venues, workplaces). Under “treatment” we find everything from counseling to twelve-step programs to detoxification and pharmaceutical maintenance. Finally, aftercare services include drug-free housing, employment assistance, education, ongoing support groups, and other efforts to help persons in recovery stay on the wagon. In each realm there are debates among practitioners about effectiveness and claims that positive outcomes produced by one part of the system are undone by poor performance of others (e.g., “We do our job and then social services just lets them backslide into addiction again”).

Seven Years and No Effects: Explanations

If the Fighting Back idea were correct, program officials reasoned, there should be measurable differences in demand between communities that implemented the Fighting Back idea and those that did not. To test this demand reduction hypothesis, and to satisfy its board that the money was well spent, the foundation had allocated a significant sum for the program’s evaluation. The evaluation had four components: a multiple-wave survey of drug use in all Fighting Back communities and thirty comparison sites; a social indicator study (e.g., alcohol-related accidents or drug-related crimes) of the same communities; an on-site

¹⁸ Field notes 1995.

management information system for activity tracking; and a community studies component that would place ethnographers in the field in many of the sites.

But several years into the program and the evaluation, a problem emerged: analysis of the data showed almost no significant differences between Fighting Back sites and comparison communities.¹⁹ That did not mean Fighting Back was a failure; it was just that the science could not show that it was not—the effect of Fighting Back was not detectable. Several alternative interpretations could explain this confirmation of the null hypothesis—that is, the default assumption that there is no relationship between the variables in a study. First, it could very well be that the Fighting Back idea was simply wrong. Alternatively, Fighting Back might be the right idea, but the program as it was implemented was too small or of insufficient duration. A third possibility is that the idea was right but that similar things were going on all over the country, and so there really were no control communities against which the Fighting Back sites could be compared to detect the Fighting Back effect. Finally, it could be that the Fighting Back idea was just so unevenly implemented in the different sites that variation *within* the treatment communities overwhelmed any measurable differences *between* them and the controls. Each of these is briefly examined below.

Maybe Community-Wide Demand Reduction

Initiatives Just Do Not Work

Fighting Back was built around the idea that substance abuse was a community rather than individual problem and that a community could come together to solve its problem. To succeed, the project would need everyone in the community to be on board with prevention. The approach had much to recommend it, not least its populist underpinnings but also its resonance with health fads that have long been associated with temperance movements in American culture,²⁰ with the “take back your . . .” rhetoric that derived from the “take back the night” activism

¹⁹ See Saxe et al., *Fighting Back Evaluation Interim Report*.

²⁰ On the connections between drug and alcohol temperance movements and health fads, see David F. Musto's *American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

since the 1970s,²¹ and with the social sentiments such as those generated by the Mothers Against Drunk Driving movement in the 1980s.

Despite its ideological attractiveness, there were reasons to be skeptical of community-wide efforts to reduce substance abuse. Broad participation may involve parties whose participation is unnecessary or whose coparticipation gives rise to conflict. In Fighting Back in Newark, New Jersey, for example, progress was made only when organizers finally realized that to succeed they needed to mount a multilateral effort that kept certain feuding parties separated.²² If the costs of broad participation sometimes outweighed benefits, the other side of the equation fared no better: the long-term effectiveness of prevention as a public health strategy remained unproven. Substance abuse may simply not be enough like smoking or wearing seat belts, two public health problems that often served as models for prevention approaches. The Fighting Back idea relied naïvely on a concept of community norms that was not fully fleshed out; the science of changing norms was not well understood, and whether substance abuse behaviors are especially sensitive to community norms and values was an open question.

Time and Scale

Of course, even the right medicine, if not administered in the right dose or for a long enough period, can be ineffective. Fighting Back grants gave communities of 100,000 to 250,000 in population \$3 million to spend over five years. While this was both monetarily and temporally generous, Fighting Back might have been too small given the size of the problem or too short with respect to the time scale of the problem, or the problem might even have evolved or moved around in the community while the program remained the same and stayed in one place.

Diffusion: No Such Thing as Control Sites

Maybe Fighting Back made a difference but not one that could be measured. Numerous interventions and changes took place in American

²¹ Google's Ngram Viewer (<https://books.google.com/ngrams>) shows "take back the night" first appearing in the late 1970s and peaking around 1995. "Take back your neighborhood" emerges in the late 1980s and peaks after 2000.

²² Suazo-Garcia, *Final Evaluation Report on Newark Fighting Back*.

communities during the 1990s, many of which could have affected outcomes Fighting Back was expected to yield, and so it was difficult to isolate effects due to the program. In addition, the publicity surrounding Fighting Back meant that similar efforts were formally and informally undertaken in communities around the country. The U.S. Office of Substance Abuse Programs, for example, funded hundreds of similar, though smaller, efforts around the country during the same time period through its Center for Substance Abuse Prevention program. This broad diffusion of the ideas on which the Fighting Back idea was based might have meant that very few communities did not receive at least some dose of Fighting Back, making it impossible to measure the difference that the actual program made.

Random Dosages

Perhaps the most vexing alternative explanation of the null result is that it may be because the dose of Fighting Back differed, both in quantity and quality, from site to site (and even within communities). By design, sites were given wide latitude to build, around some basic ideas, “a highly visible public awareness campaign,” “a multi-faceted prevention effort,” “well-defined program policies for the early identification, assessment, and initial referral into treatment,” and “a broad range of accessible options for treatment and relapse prevention.”²³ In practice, though, systems that were tailored to unique circumstances and that incorporated existing institutions might have varied so much that comparing implementations across communities was all but impossible.

²³ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “Fighting Back against Substance Abuse: A Call for Proposals,” 1989.