Bureaucrats and Entrepreneurs:
Institutional Responses to Deviant Children
in the United States, 1890–1920s

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Child welfare was a central item on the Progressive reform agenda. But contrary to the professed goals of leading reformers, institutions for delinquent and dependent children expanded rapidly around the turn of the century. Nationwide, private agencies grew faster than those in the public sector. This article attempts to account both for the general rise in juvenile incarceration and for the trend toward privatization. It begins by exploring potential accounts of institutional expansion based on socioeconomic resource flows and social movement influence. The main concern, however, is to develop a political model that focuses, first, on the internecine politics of the national charity organization movement and, second, on variation in patterns of state building among the American states. Dynamic quantitative methods are used to test these approaches. Results suggest strongly that the relative growth of public and private institutions was determined largely by political issues, including previous social policy commitments and patronage.

INTRODUCTION: THE IRONY OF PROGRESSIVE REFORM

Almost by definition, the construction of modern welfare states implies the expansion of state authority at the expense of both the market and the voluntary private sectors. Among modern Western nations, the United States is typically cited as recalcitrant in this regard, and the Progressive movement has come to be identified as a decisive watershed—a classically failed attempt at state building. Toward the end of the 19th century, self-styled Progressive reformers agreed on the need to build permanent administrative structures that would enhance the ability of government to

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regulate society. Their strategy was not, however, to build a strong, centralized bureaucratic state on the European model, but rather to expand the state by diffusing its authority into a variety of boards, commissions, and agencies that were only loosely coupled to centers of political authority and by incorporating and co-opting organized private interests. The ideology of Progressivism rejected purely statist solutions and instead encouraged the participation of private interests in order to mobilize the discipline of the market, the expertise of the professions, and the superior morality of the organized citizenry. The ironic result is that reforms led to a tremendous expansion of administrative activity without a concomitant achievement of reform goals.

This pattern is conspicuous in the regulatory reform of local and national governments (Schiefl 1977; Skowronek 1982; Hamilton and Sutton 1989), but it is nowhere more apparent than in reforms aimed at the “defective, dependent, and delinquent classes” in American society, and particularly those directed at children. Child welfare dominated the Progressive social control agenda and was the linchpin for programs in education, labor, health, and the environment (Wiebe 1967, p. 169; Tiffin 1982; Katz 1986, chap. 5). Advanced “child-saving” reformers pursued two major policy goals, one administrative and the other technical. First, they sought to replace the traditional practice of voluntary charity with a modern system of child welfare that was funded and regulated by the state. Under the ideological flag of “charitable cooperation,” they attempted to co-opt private charities and to knit fragmented agencies into coordinated networks of diagnosis, referral, and treatment. Second, they sought to reduce the number of children that were unthinkingly confined in institutions. They increasingly argued that punitive responses to delinquency and dependence should be replaced by preventive techniques, such as family casework and foster care, designed to preserve the family and prevent undue incarceration. But true to the ironic trend of Progressivism generally, these reforms contributed to the expansion of custodial institutions without much altering their traditional methods or patchwork organization.2

Some empirical sense of the unanticipated consequences of reform is given by data on the expansion of specialized institutions for children, shown graphically in figures 1 and 2. These graphs, based on published reports of a series of special institutional censuses,3 show the number of children held in public and private reformatories and “benevolent” in-

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3 References for all data sources are given in the Appendix.
Fig. 1.—Inmates of institutions for children, United States, 1890–1923

Institutions for juveniles in the United States between 1890 and 1923. These counts are taken from enumerations of inmates on a single day; as such they provide good estimates of inmate populations independent of variation in admission rates or length of stay. The data are expressed in absolute numbers in figure 1 and as a ratio to the population ages 10–20 in figure 2. Two noteworthy conclusions arise from these figures. First, contrary to the professed goals of the reform community, incarceration increased rapidly during this period. Institutional capacity expanded 112% in absolute numbers, and 44% as a ratio to the juvenile population, in 33 years. Some sense of the magnitude of this increase is given by the fact that between 1890 and 1920, school enrollment levels grew only 70% nationwide, with a ratio increase of 18%. Second, private institutions were not driven to the margins of the child-caring system; rather, throughout this period they grew much larger and faster than public institutions. Close scrutiny of the original data gives some sense of how this unplanned growth occurred. Over 90% of all private institutions were classified in census publications as "benevolent" in purpose; as such they claimed to be less coercive and more therapeutic, and in fact they tended to hold mainly dependent, neglected, and merely "wayward" children, as opposed to juvenile lawbreakers. By contrast, over 60% of
public institutions were classified as reformatories, and the minority as benevolent. In short, the private sector expanded mainly by confining the very types of problem children for whom leading reformers sought less coercive methods of treatment.

This article analyzes the expansion of public and private institutions for children in the American states and territories during this entire period of reform. In the first section, I review established arguments about the growth of social control institutions and generate hypotheses about the effect of social structural conditions, interethnic conflict, and status politics. I build on these arguments in the second section of the article by exploring in some detail the historical and political contingencies faced by child-saving reformers. I will argue that the differential expansion of public and private institutions was the outcome of a deep-seated conflict between mainstream reformers, who sought to build an administratively rational and comprehensive system of child welfare, and private entrepreneurs, who sought to maintain their institutional autonomy and their access to a youthful clientele. This conflict in turn exemplified a broader set of divisions in Progressive America: between native-born and immigrant interests and between bureaucratic state building and patronage
politics. In the end, I will argue, patterns of public- and private-sector expansion were determined by the success of broader Progressive state-building efforts. The third section presents empirical tests of these arguments, using longitudinal state-level data on institutional expansion.

TOWARD A BASELINE MODEL OF INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION

This section outlines a preliminary account of institutional expansion that it pitched simultaneously at two levels of analysis—incorporating what Humphries and Greenberg (1981) refer to as "systems" and "agency" models. In the social control literature, systems models, which trace their lineage back to Durkheim, treat institutional growth as a response to structural needs and opportunities. Agency models argue that deviance and hence social control are social constructions that are sustained by interethnic conflict and the strength of supportive social movements. As Humphries and Greenberg emphasize, these models are not mutually exclusive; I will treat them as at least potentially complementary. The following discussion offers some modification of these arguments and motivates specific hypotheses in both formal and historical terms.

Broad social systemic models of historical change have lately been subject to severe criticisms, mainly for their tendency toward ahistorical functionalism; modernization, they suggest, provides both necessary and sufficient conditions for effective social regulation. Critics argue that such strong-form arguments do not account well for variation in either penal practices (e.g., Ignatieff 1981; Mennel 1983) or social welfare policies (e.g., Skocpol and Amenta 1986). The argument proposed here requires only the simple assumption that institution building is constrained by the availability of resources. In strict economic terms, the observed growth of children's institutions around the turn of the century signifies an enormous organizational undertaking requiring significant investments of funds, time, and learning. At a more subjective level, child-saving reformers saw delinquency and dependency as pathological by-products of urban-industrial society and portrayed their own efforts as a distinctively modern, scientific response.

I will focus on urbanization and intersectoral competition as constraints on the availability of socioeconomic resources. As Stinchcombe (1965) suggests, urbanization is a useful proxy for a number of factors—such as wealth, the density of exchange networks, and collective learning—that are important for constructing organizations. In these data, urban concentration is highly and positively correlated with the value of manufacturing output and adult literacy. But perhaps more important, such an effect is likely on historical grounds. Conventional Whig histories of criminal and juvenile justice (e.g., Pierce 1869; Wines 1919) and many
revisionist interpretations as well (e.g., Rothman 1971, 1980; Boyer 1978) emphasize the dual role of urbanization: on the one hand, city life erodes traditional community supports for family discipline and provides new opportunities for youthful deviance; on the other, cities also provide a concentrated pool of talent and funds that are likely to encourage reform.

The broader organizational ecology literature suggests, however, that analysis of resource availability should also factor in the effect of competition—in this case, between public- and private-sector institutions. The formal justification for competition effects is that, where resource scarcity constrains institutional expansion, one sector is likely to predominate (Brittain and Freeman 1980; Carroll 1985). But there is also historical evidence that Progressive child-welfare reforms were decisively influenced by growing competitive antagonism between public system builders and private charity agencies (see, e.g., Fox 1970). A straightforward hypothesis is that, within each state, the expansion of each sector is inversely related to the size of the other.

At the level of historical agency, hypotheses focus more narrowly on social conflict as the driving force behind institutional expansion. This approach is informed by the “status politics” argument laid out by Hofstadter (1955) and applied to the analysis of social movements by Gusfield (1963), Becker (1963), and Platt (1969, 1974). According to this argument, Progressive reform movements were means by which threatened native white elites sought to regain control over the social order. These “moral entrepreneurs” sought to define deviance in terms of the civil ethos of rural Protestantism, and they focused on immigrant culture as the target of their campaigns against vice, drunkenness, and crime. More specifically, they saw immigrant children as most in need of supervision and socialization; indeed, Platt has argued that child savers “invented” the concept of delinquency to gain control over immigrant families. This suggests a hypothesis: If child saving was an expression of conflict between native and immigrant interests, we would expect that states with large immigrant populations expanded their children’s institutions faster than states where immigrants were scarce.

The remaining hypotheses are directly concerned with the power of the child-saving movement to transform the economic and legal status of children. One major area of concern was child labor. As Zelizer (1985, chap. 3) reports, Progressive reformers sought to redefine the child as an economically “useless” creature, more in need of education and nurturance than remunerative work. This impulse often ran contrary to the wishes of rural and immigrant parents, who tended to view children’s wages as necessary to the family’s income. And while reformers were ambivalent about the harm done to the child by many forms of work—such as agricultural labor—they universally disapproved of industrial
labor and pressed hard for age limits on the employment of children (Zelizer 1985, p. 76). Data on the number of children employed in manufacturing firms provide a measure of dependence on child labor. The expectation is that the growth of child-saving institutions was greatest where children were least involved in industrial production.

Finally, I will be concerned with the effect of juvenile court reform on rates of incarceration. Juvenile courts were adopted by almost all American states between 1899 and the 1920s, and Platt (1969) has argued that juvenile court reform was an elite-directed strategy to broaden the official definition of deviance and expand control over poor and immigrant children. More recent research has tended to undercut this interpretation by emphasizing the symbolic role of juvenile justice policy (e.g., Hagan and Leon 1977; Sutton 1988, chap. 5). Nonetheless, the vast increase in incarceration during this period offers at least prima facie support for Platt’s argument. Thus the final hypothesis is that juvenile court legislation operated to encourage the expansion of juvenile institutions. The measure used here is a five-point index that reflects whether each state had (1) established a juvenile court, (2) mandated separate preadjudicatory detention for adults and children, (3) required separate trials for children, (4) established a separate juvenile probation service, or (5) required separate institutions for dependent and delinquent children.4

Systems and agency arguments deserve to be joined because they have complementary weaknesses: one treats the social order as a system without actors, and the other emphasizes the role of activist movements independent of structure. But even this joint model is weak because it offers no a priori hypotheses about the differential growth of public and private institutions. In the systems hypotheses, resources are undifferentiated, and the status-politics argument tends to treat the child-saving movement as a homogeneous expression of native Protestant interests. The best strategy is to approach the analysis inductively, looking for differential effects on expansion across sectors. In the next section, I outline a model that addresses the issue of sectoral variation directly.

THE POLITICS OF INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION

My task in this section is to supplement the foregoing hypotheses by exploring linkages between the micro-level activities of reformers and the macrostructure of national politics. By way of theoretical background, I

4 I have chosen these innovations because they were typically treated by reformers as part of a comprehensive juvenile court program, and because they all could have either made children more accessible to court control or encouraged the differentiation of the institutional system. Details on the sources of reform data may be found in Sutton (1988, chap. 5).
draw on the body of "neoinstitutional" theory that has become influential in political sociology, organizational theory, and political science. An institutional approach supplements a purely socioeconomic argument by suggesting that social policies—such as those directed at delinquent and dependent children—are determined less by instrumental concerns than by their political legitimacy. Institutionalism adds to a pure status-politics argument the notion that reformers are constrained to legitimize their programs in terms of a wider scheme of canonical norms, particularly rationalized ideologies of professional expertise and bureaucratic authority. This approach allows us to recast the competition between public and private reformers in more specific terms. Conflict over alternative policies is a symbolic conflict, and to understand their relative success, we should expect a close fit between their ideological claims and the political contours of the states within which they prospered.

In what follows, I will look closely at the political strategies used by reformers to advance their professional ambitions and redefine the problems of childhood. Within the child-saving movement, bureaucratic system builders and private entrepreneurs differed sharply, not only in their technical solutions to dependence and delinquency but also in their wider visions of state building and social order. My argument is that within the charity organization movement, neither side could completely subdue the other, and partisans downplayed their most profound differences in favor of a mutually beneficial ideology emphasizing professional discretion and institutional autonomy. Their attempts to monopolize the child-welfare field created a policy vacuum that encouraged the uncontrolled growth of institutions.

The Internecine Politics of Child Saving

American child-saving reformers had attempted since the 1820s to remove children from adult institutions and to provide more specialized alternatives for the treatment of dependents and delinquents. Their efforts in the first half of the century focused mainly on children in prisons, but in the Progressive Era they turned their attention also to local jails and especially to the plight of destitute children in almshouses, which served as catchall repositories for a variety of deviants—the indigent, the aged, the insane, minor criminals, and homeless juveniles. The National Conference of Charities and Correction (NCCC) passed a resolution favoring the removal of children from almshouses in 1876, and by 1900

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states had adopted such legislation. The most advanced reformers hoped that the closing of almshouses would lead to further, more sweeping child-saving reforms. Often, however, almshouse laws were not fully enforced; in most states legislators failed to establish alternative placement schemes, and most children removed from almshouses were merely transferred to other institutions (Folks 1900, p. 51; Tiffin 1982, pp. 64–66). The result was a proliferation of ad hoc policies that greatly troubled mainstream reformers. To observers like Homer Folks (1900), it appeared that the precipitous removal of children from almshouses had the undesirable consequence of encouraging the uncontrolled growth of private child-caring institutions (see also O'Grady [1931] 1971, pp. 95–96).

This ironic outcome of the child savers' campaign against almshouses added new fuel to a long-standing feud between mainstream bureaucratic reformers and private institutional entrepreneurs. On the surface this conflict was over method: mainstream reformers argued in favor of foster care and centralized administration; private interests defended the merits of their institutions and fought for local control (Tiffin 1982, pp. 72–83). But this methodological dispute masked a more profound conflict between the native Protestant culture and the Catholic immigrant community. American Catholics perceived child-saving reforms as ill-disguised attempts to proselytize Catholic children. They were particularly—and justifiably—suspicious of the early placing-out programs, such as Charles Loring Brace's Children's Aid Society, which took children from urban slums and placed them in rural foster homes (Leiby 1978, p. 84; Tiffin 1982, p. 91). In the 1860s and 1870s, the Catholic press portrayed the placing-out system as a slave trade in which Irish youth were auctioned to the highest bidder in midwestern town squares (O'Grady 1971, pp. 106–7). By the end of the century mainstream child savers claimed to be thoroughly secular and professional, and they vigorously eschewed any proselytizing motives. Catholic hostility to foster-care schemes persisted nevertheless.

Catholic immigrants protected their problem children in two ways. Their first response was to build their own network of institutions to keep Catholic children out of Protestant hands (O'Grady 1971, pp. 150–56). The Irish led the first wave of institution building, and further growth was encouraged in part by antagonism within Catholic ranks, as later German, Polish, and Italian immigrants sought to keep their children from the Irish (O'Grady 1971, chap. 9). A second strategy was for the

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6 Michigan adopted an exemplary law in 1874, and by 1900 other states began restricting almshouse placements, in the following order: New York (1875), Wisconsin (1878), Massachusetts (1879), Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut (1883), Maryland (1890), Rhode Island (1892), New Hampshire (1895), Indiana (1897), and New Jersey (1899) (Folks 1900, chap. 4).
immigrant community to use its growing political leverage to control the flow of children to institutions. Again the ascendant Irish played a crucial role. In New York and other states, they secured legislation requiring that a child could be housed only in an “institution or organization of its own faith,” and enforcement of such laws depended directly on Irish voting strength (O'Grady 1971, p. 148). Members of Catholic lay organizations such as the Catholic Union and the St. Vincent de Paul Society kept watch over local magistrates to ensure that these laws were enforced, and after the establishment of juvenile courts they served as volunteer probation officers (O'Grady 1971, pp. 423–24; Jacoby [1941] 1974, p. 135).

Given these broad cultural and political ramifications, the overlapping conflicts between public system builders and entrepreneurs, and between advocates of the placing-out system and advocates of institutions, could have had a destructive effect on the larger child-saving movement. But the two sides needed each other to hold together the larger, but increasingly precarious, enterprise of scientific charity. As Katz (1986, pp. 147–50) reports, disasters such as the depression of 1893 showed the inadequacy of established charity networks and led to an increased concern for the structural, rather than purely moral and individual, causes of poverty (see also Tiffin 1982, pp. 112–15). At the same time, widespread disenchantment with institutions and a growing emphasis on family preservation led directly to agitation for mothers’ pensions. Any form of direct relief threatened to make the heavily moralistic approach of “scientific” casework obsolete, and charity organizers of all stripes opposed it vigorously (Tiffin 1982, pp. 121–29). The threat of obsolescence provided an incentive for compromise.

Thus while factional debates among child savers became increasingly rancorous through the 1880s and 1890s, at the turn of the century a new spirit of détente emerged. This détente was encouraged in part by the plastic ideology of “charitable cooperation” promoted by the National Conference of Charities and Correction. In practical terms, cooperation implied the formation of loose interagency networks at the local level. But, more important, charitable cooperation signified the feudalization of administrative authority in the emergent welfare state. To system builders, charity networks suggested a means to standardize policies, drive out fraud, and monitor participating agencies. From the point of view of independent entrepreneurs, the cooperative ideology offered a secure charter over an established domain of activity under the legitimizing umbrella of scientific charity. In short, bureaucratic reformers sought to co-opt private interests into a professional monopoly.

But the most important steps toward convergence were taken by actors in the private sector, especially Catholic charity officials. By the 1890s,
Catholic activists began to seek more stable, formal organizational ties with public agencies (O'Grady 1971, p. 152). At the same time, lay Catholic activists began to argue for the development of foster-care programs as a supplement to custodial institutions. The St. Vincent de Paul Society had first considered such a policy shift in 1876, but it was repeatedly rejected because of the abiding Catholic distrust of all placing-out programs. When Thomas Mulry, a prominent Irish charity reformer, became president of the society, he argued for a placement program as a means to legitimize Catholic child-saving efforts in the eyes of public officials and the professional community. Thus in 1899 the society established the Catholic Home Bureau to administer the placement of Catholic children in homes and institutions in New York. The Home Bureau was granted a charter as an official agency of the New York Department of Public Charities, which guaranteed access to funds and clients. The society subsequently set up home bureaus in Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Detroit, and a similar agency was established in New Jersey under other auspices (O'Grady 1971, p. 252; Helmes 1938; pp. 43–47, 79). More generally, the success of the policies promoted by the St. Vincent de Paul Society had important and lasting consequences for both the structure of Catholic charity efforts and relations between the private and public sectors. The society provided an organizational vehicle for the increased unification and professionalization of Catholic charity efforts, leading directly to the founding of the National Conference of Catholic Charities in 1910. In turn, the appearance of a new and more cosmopolitan leadership stimulated increased interaction with the mainstream reform community and enhanced the legitimacy of Catholic charities nationwide.

Thomas Mulry became the unofficial Catholic ambassador to the charity organization movement, and his presentations to the NCCC mark a watershed in relations between advocates of the placing-out system and institutions, and between the public and private sectors of the reform movement (Tiffin 1982, pp. 101–3). In the 1898 meetings of the NCCC, Mulry (1898) delivered a paper that argued for a peaceful division of labor between institutions and placement agencies. He suggested that both approaches had a role to play in a complete child-care system; he acknowledged that while institutions are never ideal, they are necessary for some sorts of problem children, especially since suitable foster homes are hard to find. Mulry also articulated the long-standing Catholic position that children should, whenever possible, be reunited with their natural parents and argued that locally based private agencies were best suited to this task. This was a strategic move; private institutions were often criticized for encouraging irresponsible parents to unload their problem children. Mulry turned this criticism around by suggesting that temporary placement in private institutions helped preserve families. Thus he
used the growing animus against institutions to legitimize the role of private agencies. This ironic appeal must have gone over well. At the next NCCC meetings in 1899, Mulry served as chair of the Committee on Dependent and Neglected Children and delivered the official committee report (Mulry 1899). This report was later called "epoch-making" by Helmes (1938, p. 79) and was credited by Hastings Hart (1909, p. 111) with putting an end to the ruinous debate between advocates of institutions and of placing out within the NCCC.

Mulry's report did not in fact put an end to controversy, but it outlined an ideological program that prevented partisan conflicts from becoming mutually destructive. As the charity organization movement made room to include Catholics as well as Protestants, advocates of placing out as well as institutional managers, and private entrepreneurs as well as bureaucratic state builders, its ability to project an image of professional harmony was enhanced, but its ability to promote decisive policy initiatives was correspondingly weakened. In the remainder of this section, I will discuss three policy debates—over public subsidies to private charities, state regulation of children's institutions, and the official classification of problem children—that were ongoing sources of friction within the NCCC. Through these issues bureaucratic reformers attempted, if not to drive out private entrepreneurs, at least to tame them and bring them under the authority of the state. The point of this discussion is to suggest that the outcome of these efforts depended in large part on the nature of the wider political environment.

Subsidies.—By far the most important and persistent debates within the NCCC were over the use of public funds to support private charity agencies. The subsidy system began as a stopgap to deal with the large number of children being turned out of almshouses and to ensure that they were placed instead in institutions where their religious faiths would be respected. The intent was that subsidies would become superfluous as private charities became self-supporting, but instead they encouraged increasing dependency. In the last decades of the 19th century, as private agencies multiplied, the number of dependent clients and the proportion of taxpayer support both grew uncontrollably (Fetter 1901; Folks 1900, p. 73). 7 The result was an unseemly rivalry among sectarian interests for

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7 According to an NCCC survey in 1901, subsidies—mainly for children's institutions—could be found in all states but were most entrenched in New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Maryland, California, and the District of Columbia (PNCCC 1902, pp. 119–31). National data collected by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1904 (USBC 1905, pp. 29–30) give much the same picture of interstate variation. For more detailed accounts of the growth of subsidies in New York, see Coler (1901), Helmes (1938), and Jacoby (1974); on Chicago, see Johnson (1931); Dripps (1915) presents some data on Pennsylvania.
clients and public funds. Protestant interests initially favored subsidies, but, as Leiby reports (1978, p. 85), they had second thoughts when the better-organized Catholic agencies began to receive the lion's share of funding. Most state constitutions forbade the use of public funds for sectarian projects; Protestant interests frequently sought to evade these laws by organizing under nominally nonsectarian auspices while pushing for strict enforcement against Catholic institutions (see, e.g., O'Grady 1971, pp. 101–3; Jacoby 1974, p. 137; Fetter 1901, p. 369, n. 1). Catholic agencies, typically run by religious orders, could not easily adopt a nonsectarian disguise, but they nonetheless resorted to various "disingenuous subterfuges" (Warner 1919, p. 418) to maintain access to subsidies.  

Mainstream reformers were generally opposed to subsidies, and their arguments remained remarkably consistent over more than 50 years. They agreed that subsidies had played a valuable role in stimulating the start-up of new agencies. They also grudgingly acknowledged that private agencies funded by per capita subsidies could be both more efficient and more homelike than public institutions, at least for some classes of children. Finally, and most important for my purposes, reformers conceded that public institutions were often badly run because they were treated as spoils in the system of patronage politics. But, they maintained, the abuses inherent in the subsidy system clearly outweighed its potential advantages. They argued that subsidies encouraged the unnecessary incarceration of children, that they discouraged private philanthropy—which private agencies needed to become self-supporting—and bled off funds that could be used to improve public facilities, and that in general subsidies were inimical to the goal of a rationalized system of diagnosis and treatment. And finally, in response to the charge that public institutions were dominated by patronage politics, reformers argued that subsidy policies spawned powerful special interest lobbies and drove legislators to blatant forms of logrolling and influence peddling.  

When the NCCC announced an official position on subsidies in 1901, delegates were realistic enough not to recommend outright abolition.

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8 Warner (1919, pp. 418–19) reports, e.g., that Illinois Catholics formed the Chicago Industrial School for Girls to qualify for a state-chartered subsidy program that was exempted from the constitutional prohibition on aid to sectarian institutions. The Industrial School was in fact a holding company for two preexisting Catholic orphanages; a court found that 73 orphan girls were recommitted to the school to qualify for per capita subsidy payments. Subsidies to the school were invalidated but later reinstated by a higher court.  

9 Versions of these arguments can be found in a number of sources. Prendergast (1886) is the only spokesperson within the NCCC to support subsidies categorically. More generally, see Folks (1900, pp. 86–87), Fetter (1901), the NCCC committee report on subsidies (PNCCC 1901, pp. 127–31), Dripps (1915), Warner (1919, pp. 419–25), and Johnson (1931, chap. 9).
They recognized that subsidies were too entrenched, and the private sectarian interests too politically powerful, especially at the local level, where most subsidies originated. Instead they recommended three steps to limit the damage of subsidy policies: "First, legal acceptance of the dependent as a public charge; second, regular and close examination and inspection by some regularly constituted public agent; third, specific payment for specific services instead of general appropriations" (PNCCC 1901, p. 130). These recommendations signify that the NCCC gave up a frontal attack on subsidies in favor of attempts to rein in private interests through increased state regulation and tighter classification of problem children. It is to these issues that I now turn.

Regulation.—The issue of state regulation of charitable institutions raised some of the same issues brought up in the subsidy debate—about the separation between church and state and the relation between state and local authorities—but in a different and more troublesome form. Here the onus was on bureaucratic reformers to justify the centralization of traditionally local and private functions. Thus, while there was a general consensus among leading reformers in favor of increased regulation, there was a range of opinions about how far the state's authority should reach.

Reformers confronted a bewildering array of administrative strategies across the states. In an influential study, Homer Folks (1900) described four dominant patterns for the regulation of children's institutions. The first was a system that combined institutions and placing-out services under the direct administration of state charity boards. This system prevailed in Michigan, where it originated, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Montana, Nevada, and Texas. The second, dominant in Ohio, Indiana, and Connecticut, was a decentralized system of county homes, with little or no state supervision. Third, New York, California, the District of Columbia, and Maryland relied primarily on subsidies to private institutions, and a number of other states used subsidies to a lesser degree. Finally, Massachusetts developed a unique system, which emphasized temporary boarding homes and foster care rather than institutions. In a residual group of states, Folks found no system worthy of the name.

Within the NCCC, reformers agreed on the need for some institutional accountability but disagreed on administrative strategy. Folks and other aggressive bureaucratic reformers favored strong state boards that would run public institutions and closely supervise private agencies through strict licensing and inspection laws (see also Fox 1899; Hart 1902; Warner 1919, p. 394). A more moderate position, advocated by Oklahoma reformer Kate Barrett (1908, p. 30), was that the state should supervise only private institutions that received public funds. Other reformers felt
that state boards should have only advisory powers over any kind of institution. Private entrepreneurs, especially Catholics, understandably resisted supervision. They repeatedly argued that the private institution should be seen as an extension of the natural family and that regulation was a form of incipient socialism. But their most powerful strategic argument was that centralization undermined professional autonomy. Speaking before the NCCC in 1902, D. J. McMahon, the general supervisor of Catholic Charities in New York City, acknowledged that some form of weak supervision might be necessary for publicly subsidized private agencies, but that regular inspection was nowhere appropriate: "It is said that dependents are wards of the state, and, therefore, the state should see how these wards are taken care of. But, if they are wards of the state, they are, first, wards of the foster family or institution; and the state has no more care of them than of other children" (1902, p. 139). Seven years later, Catholic spokesmen made virtually identical arguments at the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children (CCDC 1909, pp. 41, 62–63, 155), and McMahon refused to sign an NCCC committee report recommending universal inspection (Fetter 1909, p. 413).

The NCCC's official position was a typically ambivalent compromise. At their 1907 meetings, NCCC delegates reached a consensus that strong boards of control were appropriate only in small states, while larger and more heterogeneous states required a higher degree of institutional autonomy (PNCCC 1907, pp. 45–51). Their position carefully balanced the priorities of centralization and professional discretion, and even this weak policy fared poorly in the legislative arena. A variety of sectarian interests—including Protestant and Jewish charities, as well as Catholic—lobbied against the creation of any kind of supervisory boards (Fetter 1901, p. 372; Warner 1919, pp. 424–25). By 1911, 16 states still had made no provision for state supervision of institutions, 20 states had only advisory boards of charities, two states had supervision by a single commissioner of charities, and only nine states reported centralized boards that directly controlled institutions (PNCCC 1911, pp. 10–11). Actual regulatory activity was even weaker than this survey suggests. Warner (1919, p. 394) reported that, as of 1919, "only seven states make any general requirements for a charitable license or charter; ten states regulate to some extent the institutions for children."10 Once again, patronage politics was a key issue in both the adoption and implementation of child-care policy. A 1909 report by the NCCC committee on state supervision admitted that centralized control of institutions offered a more tempting target for political spoilsmen (Fetter 1909, p. 409). Leiby (1978, p. 100)

10 For a later survey of state regulatory policies, see Johnson (1931, chap. 2).
reports that efforts to centralize charity administration were most successful in rural western states, which were relatively free of machine politics. In patronage states where regulatory boards were eventually established, such as Illinois, those boards were notoriously weak and corrupt (Graves 1909; Warner 1919, p. 369; Johnson 1931, pp. 77–79).

Classification.—Bureaucratically inclined reformers viewed the proper classification of problem children as a prerequisite to effective placement and treatment. But classification was more than a technical issue; it had political implications that linked it closely to debates over subsidies and state regulation. Subsidies, they argued, encouraged private institutions to adopt indiscriminate admissions policies and to be lax in investigating the needs of individual children (Warner 1919, pp. 260–61). Further, the combination of subsidies and “elastic” state laws, which provided only vague and unenforceable definitions of juvenile offenses, encouraged the commingling of dependent and merely “wayward” children in institutions with hardened delinquents (Folks 1900, p. 88; Warner 1919, p. 263). Indeed there is evidence that, at least for the New York Catholic Protectory—then the largest private institution in the country—sectarian agencies deliberately sought a charter that would give them access to the broadest possible range of problem youth (Jacoby 1974, chap. 5).

Thus Catholic interests, joined by aggressive child-protection groups such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, opposed binding classifications in any form. This conflict appeared at the NCCC meetings in 1902, when James Allison, manager of the Cincinnati House of Refuge—a public agency—proposed that delinquents and dependents should be distinguished by state law and should not be confined in the same institutions. George Robinson, manager of the New York Catholic Protectory, disagreed, making the familiar claims that the source of all juvenile deviance was in the family and that the institution was the proper place for classification and treatment distinctions to be made: “The distinction which may properly be made between the destitute and delinquent and the destitute and homeless is based on the individual character of the children. The separation into classes as indicated can be done only by the teachers of the reformatory. They are all amenable to the same kind of attention and instruction” (PNCCC 1902, p. 442). Robinson sought thus to defend the discretion of his institution, as well as to maintain the breadth of its potential clientele, by asserting a claim of professional autonomy. This claim appealed to charity workers of all stripes, and Robinson’s position appears to have become official NCCC policy. At the 1906 meetings, separate committees on delinquent children, dependent children, and the juvenile court were all combined into a single Committee on Children. Judge Hastings Hart’s (1906) remarks on that occasion clearly show that this reorganization symbolized the NCCC’s
commitment to institutional discretion at the expense of increased bureaucratic control. Patterns of state legislation tended to follow this ambivalent lead. As I have shown earlier (Sutton 1988, chap. 5), after the turn of the century state juvenile codes increasingly made nominal distinctions between delinquent and dependent children but made no binding treatment distinctions. Thus, on this issue as well, the most ambitious reform goals were undercut by compromises within the child-saving movement.

A Political Model of Institutional Expansion

The foregoing historical discussion suggests that the rapid growth of children's institutions after 1890, and the growing dominance of private institutions in particular, was encouraged by two factors, both of which were political in nature. First, the rapid decline of almshouse populations created a perceived need for alternative facilities for children, and second, the deeply divided community of child savers was unable to agree on a definitive policy of reform, and private entrepreneurs rushed to fill the void. But the role of the organized child-saving movement was neither passive nor trivial. Like any other ambitious professional association, the NCCC mitigated head-to-head competition by absorbing partisan interests and projecting an aura of legitimacy over their efforts.

But this argument is still too general; it leaves unexplained the enormous variation among states in rates of institutional expansion and in their mixes of public and private responsibility. Contemporary observers tended to agree that a key factor operating here—indeed of demographic or economic differences—was the pattern of inherited state child-saving policies (Folks 1900, pp. 103–4; Warner 1919, p. 250). What these commentators have described is the inertial effect of political learning (Hecklo 1974; Orloff and Skocpol 1984). States had made fundamental choices about their child-saving policies well before the crisis occasioned by the closing of almshouses, and, as we have seen, the professional reform community, united mainly by their opposition to outdoor relief, offered only weak and equivocal policy initiatives. These enduring state policies created normative and economic sunk costs; they generated a constituency of patrons, employees, and clients and served to reify an ideology of deviance that canalized legislative thinking and drove out insurgent critiques. This argument suggests an empirical prediction: If child-saving policies continued along paths established in the 19th century, we would expect to find no evidence of intrastate competition, as predicted earlier; instead we would expect that after 1890 public and private institutions expanded, independently of each other, into more-or-less distinct niches that are defined primarily in political terms.

The remaining hypotheses all concern the effects of such exogenous

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political factors on rates of expansion. The most obvious of these is the decline of juvenile almshouse populations. Contemporary accounts suggest that the demand for new institutions was greatest in states where large numbers of children were maintained in almshouses and where they were removed most rapidly. This argument can be tested directly with a variable that measures the change over time in the number of children in almshouses. Observers suggest further that where almshouses were depopulated the fastest, private agencies were the main beneficiaries. Thus, empirical tests of this variable should show a relatively stronger effect on expansion in the private sector.

Clearly, a second influence on policy choices was patronage. The specter of patronage politics was a significant obstacle to comprehensive reform in many areas of government during the Progressive Era because citizens were reluctant to endorse reform programs if they thought that funds would go mainly for spoils, and legislators were wary of disturbing established patronage (Schiesl 1977; Skowronek 1982). We have already seen that the patronage issue was troublesome for bureaucratic reformers; private entrepreneurs used it to criticize public institutions in general, and state regulatory agencies in particular. They defended themselves in a number of ways: by lending conspicuous support to civil service reform; by pitching their reform proposals largely at state government rather than at municipal governments, where corruption was perceived to be endemic (Warner 1919, pp. 367–68); and by scaling back some of their most ambitious reform efforts, especially in state supervision of charities. Thus, empirically, we would expect that private institutions expanded fastest in states with strong patronage systems and that public institutions flourished only where patronage was weak. Here I will follow Shefter (1983) in using interparty competition—measured by the degree of parity between Republican and Democratic presidential votes—as an indicator of the salience of patronage politics across states.

The last hypothesis concerns the effects of a broader set of policies directed at children. My own past research (Sutton 1988) has shown that across states, the adoption of key delinquency and child welfare reforms—such as reformatories and juvenile courts—was influenced by the previous expansion of public education systems. It seems reasonable to go one step farther and suggest that the expansion of education encouraged the growth of institutions for deviant children. The linkage proposed here is primarily ideological, since my research shows few direct connections between educational reformers and the child-saving movement. The substantive argument is that mass schooling provided a highly rationalized and broadly legitimate model for the extension of public authority over the socialization of children. The salient features of that model—the
emphasized on local control, professional administration, and individual morality—were echoed in the programs of child-saving reformers and very likely encouraged their success. In the analysis to follow, I will use enrollments in public primary and secondary schools as an indicator of educational expansion. The influences of this variable should be opposite to those expected for patronage; we should anticipate a positive effect on the growth of public institutions and a weaker or perhaps negative effect on the private sector.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Estimation
In this analysis, I use a linear partial adjustment model to study the expansion of juvenile institutions over three decades. Models of this sort have been applied fruitfully to analogous problems, such as the growth and decline of schools (Freeman and Hannan 1975) and change in correctional expenditures (Berk, Rauma, and Messinger 1982). In this case, the logic of partial adjustment works in the following way. First, it is fundamental to assume that in every state, existing social constraints set a ceiling on institutional growth. These constraints may be of any sort, including fiscal resources and political legitimacy, and they may change over time. Second, the earlier qualitative discussion of the child-saving movement suggests that institutional leaders were attempting to maximize the growth of their institutions to the limits of existing constraints. Third, however, it is unrealistic to suggest that the gap between actual and potential capacities is ever completely closed. In practical terms, resistance may arise from political opposition, bureaucratic inertia, and competition across public and private sectors.

These assumptions can be described more formally. If $C^*$ represents potential institutional capacity and $\textbf{X}$ is a vector of independent variables, their relationship can be expressed in simple linear terms:

$$C^* = b\textbf{X}. \quad (1)$$

Change in capacities between time periods can be understood in terms of the proportion of the gap between actual and potential capacities:

$$\left(C_t - C_{t-k}\right) = a(C^* - C_{t-k}). \quad (2)$$

This suggests that when the gap between $C^*$ and $C_{t-k}$ is large, expansion will be more rapid than when the gap is small. For example, in states that have very few institutions for children at $t - k$ (relative to available
resources), official decision makers are more likely to support aggressive institution-building programs than in states where capacities are already well developed.

The full partial adjustment model can be derived by substituting equation (1) into equation (2):

\[(C_t - C_{t-k}) = abX - aC_{t-k}.\]  

(3)

Three observations should be made about equation (3), all having to do with the \(a\) coefficient. First, in the far-right term, \(a\) is expected to be negative—this reflects simple negative feedback, the anticipation that growth is likely to decelerate with previous increases in institutional capacity. Second, and more interesting, the coefficient \(a\) can be interpreted as an indicator of the institutional system’s response rate or speed of adjustment; the higher the absolute value of \(a\), the more rapidly the system closes the gap between \(C_{t-k}\) and \(C^*\).\(^{11}\) A third and related point is that the coefficient for \(X\) is in fact a compound term, \(ab\), in which the direct effects of the exogenous variables are contingent on the system’s speed of adjustment (as well as on elapsed time).

Models in the form of equation (3) can be estimated by pooling a minimum of three cross-sectional observations into a set of time series. Available data offer four observations of institutional capacity for 48 states and territories between 1890 and 1923. One potentially troublesome restriction is that pooled models require evenly spaced observations, and here two of the enumerations—in 1904 and 1923—fell on nondecennial years. To deal with this problem, I have interpolated estimated values for 1900 and 1920 from adjacent observations. In most cases, independent variables are lagged by 10 years to reflect the long delays involved in planning, building, and filling institutions. There are three exceptions: the juvenile-almshouse measure is a change term reflecting (typically) declines in capacity between decades; presidential vote parity is a summary measure, averaged across elections in each decade; and total population, which appears in all equations, is measured contemporaneously to control for short-term fluctuations in demand for institutional space.\(^{12}\)

The analyses to follow are generated by a weighted generalized least-squares (WGLS) regression technique designed to deal with three likely

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\(^{11}\) See Tuma and Hannan (1984, chap. 11) and Nielsen and Rosenfeld (1981) for more thorough discussions of negative feedback and speed-of-adjustment interpretations.

\(^{12}\) The literature on prisons, mental hospitals, and juvenile institutions makes it clear that significant variations from rated capacities occur through under- or overcrowding. One alternative would have been to use a measure of the youthful population rather than total population. Parallel models were estimated substituting the population ages 10–20 as a control; there were no notable differences in the results.
estimation problems. First, standard OLS regression techniques are inappropriate for pooled time-series cross-sectional models. Because OLS fails to correct for autocorrelated disturbances, it yields inconsistent estimates; in models with lagged dependent variables, parameter estimates also tend to be biased. Here I use a variant of a generalized least-squares approach described by Kmenta (1986, pp. 616–25), which assumes that the data are first-order autoregressive. Estimation is a three-step process: individual-specific autocorrelation coefficients are calculated from residuals generated by first-round OLS estimates, these coefficients are then used to transform the original observations and remove any autoregressive tendencies, and, last, OLS is applied to the transformed data. The second estimation problem arises from the enormous size differences among the states in the sample, which tend to produce heteroscedastic residuals. I address this problem by including population size as a control in all the models and using this variable as a scale factor to weight every term in equation (3)—including, by implication, the constant and error terms (see Johnston 1963, pp. 207–11; Firebaugh and Gibbs 1985). Visual examination of scatter plots shows that this weighting strategy effectively tames the residuals. The third potential problem is contemporaneous correlation of residuals. In temporal data on units that are part of a larger political entity, such as American states, transitory events such as wars or depressions are likely to influence outcomes across the entire sample, thus leading to biased estimates. To control for these effects, I include dummy variables for each time period in all the models estimated here—a variant of the well-known "least-squares with constants" procedure (Tuma and Hannan 1984, pp. 434–38; Kmenta 1986, pp. 630–35). I omit time-period parameters from the tables below for simplicity.

Results

Parameter estimates of the effects of exogenous variables on the expansion of public institutions are shown in table 1. Model 1 includes all potential effects; in model 2, nonsignificant variables have been dropped.

Most of the variables show effects that were expected. The parameter for the lag term is negative and significant, thus confirming that large institutional systems grew more slowly than small ones. The effect of private institutional capacity is also significantly negative, lending support to the intersectoral competition hypothesis. The presence of large numbers of immigrants appears to have accelerated the growth of public institutions. The remaining significant variables show the effects of intra-state policy-making and politics on institutional capacities. The negative parameter for the juvenile court index suggests that more reformist states significantly slowed their rates of institutional expansion; the negative
### TABLE 1

**WGLS Estimates of Partial Adjustment Models of the Expansion of Public Juvenile Institutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lag dependent</td>
<td>$-0.135^{***} (0.029)$</td>
<td>$-0.129^{***} (0.024)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private institutions</td>
<td>$-0.023^* (0.012)$</td>
<td>$-0.023^* (0.010)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>$-1.45 (7.32)$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant population</td>
<td>$21.9^* (9.8)$</td>
<td>$21.6^* (9.31)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child labor</td>
<td>$56.6 (463.0)$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile court index</td>
<td>$-1.82^{***} (0.49)$</td>
<td>$-1.77^{***} (0.44)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in juvenile almshouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
<td>$-0.649^{**} (0.206)$</td>
<td>$-0.727^{***} (0.188)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential vote parity</td>
<td>$-0.00349^{*} (0.00154)$</td>
<td>$-0.00352^* (0.00159)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school enrollments</td>
<td>$0.0256 (1.665)$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>$6.54^* (3.15)$</td>
<td>$7.11^{***} (1.12)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>$15.0^{**} (5.24)$</td>
<td>$13.4^{**} (5.29)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buse $R^2$</td>
<td>$0.37$</td>
<td>$0.37$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.**—SEs in parentheses, $N = 144$.

* $P < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

*** $P < .001$.

The parameter for the almshouse variable shows that as almshouses were closed to children, more specialized public institutions took up some of the slack; and the negative effect of presidential vote parity suggests, as anticipated, that fear of patronage inhibited investment in public agencies.

Nonsignificant variables also deserve some attention. Most surprising, given the traditional picture of delinquency reform, urban states were no more eager than rural states to expand their public institutions for children. Nor, apparently, was institutional growth a response to the problem of child labor. Finally, the parameter for public school enrollments indicates that the spread of mass schooling was unrelated to the expansion of more specialized institutions for problem children. Parameters in the second column show that results are stable when these redundant variables are dropped from the model.

By way of a tentative summary, I observe that variables from all three levels of analysis seem important in accounting for the growth of public sector children's institutions. Patterns of past growth and competition from private agencies set broad structural constraints on the social control "market"; high immigration rates encouraged growth, probably by stimulating the felt need for official control mechanisms; and political
TABLE 2

WGLS Estimates of Partial Adjustment Models of the Expansion of Private Juvenile Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter Estimates</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lag dependent</td>
<td>-.0241 (.0304)</td>
<td>-.0211 (.0242)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public institutions</td>
<td>.0472 (.0680)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>1.78 (16.83)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant population</td>
<td>32.91 (20.11)</td>
<td>46.2** (14.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child labor</td>
<td>1,215.5* (555.3)</td>
<td>1,237.4* (546.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile court index</td>
<td>-1.67** (.60)</td>
<td>-1.45** (.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in juvenile almshouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
<td>-2.59*** (.30)</td>
<td>-2.21*** (.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential vote parity</td>
<td>.0160*** (.0033)</td>
<td>.0168*** (.0033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school enrollments</td>
<td>-1.20*** (.20)</td>
<td>-1.16*** (.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>41.5*** (4.4)</td>
<td>40.7*** (3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-52.9*** (10.3)</td>
<td>-56.0*** (9.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buse $R^2$</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.—SEs in parentheses; $N = 144$.
* $P < .05$.
** $P < .01$.
*** $P < .001$.

Factors seem to have influenced government capacities to build new institutions and to control the flow of children among agencies. Neither general socioeconomic complexity, as measured by urbanization, nor the development of the labor market, as measured by dependence on child labor, had any discernible effects.

Table 2 shows the effects of the same set of variables on the expansion of private children’s institutions. Again, model 1 combines all variables into a single equation, and model 2 excludes nonsignificant effects. As I hoped, results here are somewhat different from those that appear in table 1.

The first and most surprising finding from this table is that the effect of the lag term, while negative, is not significantly different from zero. This means simply that systems of private institutions expanded at about the same rate regardless of previous size; in partial adjustment terms, the private institutions had an infinitely slow rate of adjustment to their potential capacity. This would make intuitive sense only if the private sector were not growing at all, but, as figures 1 and 2 show, this obviously did not happen. A more reasonable interpretation is that these data capture only the early stages of a potentially long-term growth trend, stages
in which actual capacity was still far below its potential. In due course, I will have more to say about this result. A second important negative finding is the insignificant parameter for public institutional capacities. While competition from the private sector slowed growth in public institutions, it appears here that there was no competition in the other direction. Private agencies moved readily into states where public agencies were already well developed. Again, urbanization shows no effect on institutional expansion.

With these three exceptions, all the remaining variables in the equation are significant, and their effects are mainly in the expected direction. The immigration effect appears positive (but insignificant in the first model), and the effect of child labor is positive and significant as well. The development of juvenile courts is associated with slower growth rates among private institutions, and the reform of almshouses seems to have accelerated growth. The parameter for presidential vote parity is again significant and in this case positive. Finally, public school enrollments are inversely related to private-sector expansion.

One feature of table 2 deserves special attention. Note that the immigration variable, while showing a nonsignificant effect in model 1, is included in the more parsimonious model 2; here its effect is significant. Exploratory analyses showed that the immigration effect became significant when the measures of public inmate capacities and urbanization were both excluded from the model. This points to some subtle form of collinearity among the three variables, but no danger signals emerged from collinearity diagnostics (Belsley, Kuh, and Welsch 1980), and no such problems were apparent in the public sector models. The decision to retain immigration in the second equation reflects a preference for substantive interpretability over adherence to formal modeling strategy. On the basis of the earlier qualitative analysis of the politics of the child-saving movement, it seemed implausible that the presence of immigrant communities was unrelated to the expansion of private institutions. These results tend to confirm that expectation, at the cost only of excluding statistically irrelevant variables.

One of the goals of this analysis has been to uncover differences in the growth patterns of public and private institutions, and several of the hypotheses described earlier explicitly predict differential effects. Thus, the most appropriate way to draw these findings together is to compare

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13 This interpretation is supported by data from an institutional census in 1933 (USBC 1935), which shows a further sharp jump in inmate capacities, doubtless as a result of the Depression. I have not included the 1933 panel in this analysis because the data were published in a somewhat different format, making exact comparisons difficult, and because it seems likely that the causal processes operating in the Depression would be different from those operating before.
### TABLE 3

**Summary of Hypotheses and Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>-/0</td>
<td>-/0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanization</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child labor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(b_{pub} &lt; b_{pvt})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile court index</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in almshouses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential vote parity</td>
<td>- (b_{pub} &lt; b_{pvt})</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>- (b_{pub} &lt; b_{pvt})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school enrollments</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note** — $b_{pub}$ is the parameter estimate for public-sector models, and $b_{pvt}$ is the parameter estimate for private-sector models.

Parameters directly across sectors.\(^{14}\) Table 3 is a summary of initial hypotheses and observed outcomes, by sector. Plus and minus signs signify the direction of predicted and observed effects; zeros indicate no significant effects. For the competition effect, mixed signs in the first two columns mean that alternative hypotheses were offered. Where the relative magnitudes of the effects are important, notes in parentheses indicate the direction of the disparity.

Table 3 shows that patterns of growth were very different between public and private institutions; of the variables tested, only immigration and juvenile court reform showed consistent effects across sectors. Moreover, in revealing those patterns, empirical analysis partially or completely contradicted many of the initial hypotheses. We see this at the most fundamental level in the varied effects of systemic responsiveness and competition. While public institutions, as anticipated, were disadvantaged both by their own earlier size and by the development of the private sector, private institutions grew independently of size and competition. Clearly, efforts by the child-saving movement to contain competi-

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\(^{14}\) Tuma and Hannan (1984, pp. 341–42) caution against making substantive comparisons of parameters from different estimates of eq. (2). Instead they recommend deriving parameters of the underlying dynamic differential equation, $dC_{t}/dt = AX - BC_{t-1}$. Nielsen and Rosenfeld (1981) are more approving of direct comparisons. Such comparisons seem appropriate in this case because they are simpler to understand and because the time periods and data are consistent across models; moreover, substantive results are exactly the same. Skeptical readers may obtain a table showing these results from the author.
tion worked mainly to the benefit of private entrepreneurs. We can understand how this occurred by thinking about the ways in which resources were appropriated in the two sectors. Public institutions by their very nature relied on legislative approval. It seems likely that, however great their initial commitment to the problems of children, legislators would have eventually grown skeptical of repeated demands for increased funding and would have taken into account the availability of policy alternatives such as those offered by private agencies. By contrast, private entrepreneurs could move more opportunistically; they encountered few legislative or bureaucratic obstacles to establishing new institutions, and they relied for operating expenses on a combination of voluntary contributions (including labor) and long-term, open-ended public subsidies. One key difference, then, appears to be the relative centralization of decision making in the two sectors.

This essentially political interpretation is consistent with results on the child-labor, immigration, and juvenile court variables. First, the child-labor hypothesis predicted that institutions would grow fastest where child labor was superfluous. Findings reveal a more complicated picture: private institutions flourished where child labor was most common, and the public ones were indifferent. This points not to economic development but rather to the development of state authority as a key factor; private institutions moved easily into states where child-labor laws were absent or unenforced. Second, while the effects of immigration were in the predicted positive direction, its effect on the private sector was about twice as strong as on the public sector. This reflects the undeniable fact that both kinds of institutions were aimed primarily at immigrant children but also points to different organizing processes in the two sectors. As we have seen, private institutions were often built by immigrant communities to protect their children from the perceived Protestant biases of public agencies. With this in mind, it is hard to credit Platt’s (1969) account of child-saving reform as an undifferentiated strategy of elite oppression. Third, this critique is carried further by the unexpected negative effects of juvenile court reform. These effects are nearly identical across sectors, and they sharply contradict Platt’s argument that juvenile courts functioned to increase the incarceration of children. Historical literature shows that the juvenile court movement was fueled by anti-institutional rhetoric and that many judges were often skeptical of the value of institutional treatment (see, e.g., Sutton 1988, chaps. 4–5). From these results, it appears that juvenile courts operated as partially autonomous agencies, capable at least of decelerating—if not reversing—the growth of incarceration.

I framed hypotheses about almshouse policy, interparty competition, and public schooling in explicitly political terms, and results generally
confirmed these expectations. As predicted, private institutions benefited much more than public ones from the closing down of almshouses. High levels of partisan competition tended to undercut support for public institutions and encouraged the efforts of private entrepreneurs. Finally, investment in public schools did not translate into support for more specialized public institutions for children (nor did it impede it), but private institutions expanded fastest where public schools were least developed.

Together, these comparisons suggest that patterns of government authority shaped institutional development. In summarizing these results, I wish to keep in mind that public and private institutions focused their efforts on somewhat different constituencies of problem children. The private sector grew explosively after 1890, mainly by absorbing large numbers of "dependent" and "wayward" children that were previously beyond the reach of institutions. The contours of private entrepreneurism are fairly clear. Private institutions found fertile ground in immigrant communities, in states that conspicuously lacked the official capacities to deal with child labor, economic dependency, and education, and where political party organization—hence patronage—was likely to be most vigorous. The pattern of public institutional growth remains somewhat fuzzy. Public institutions had almost exclusive responsibility for juvenile criminals; they grew much less than private ones, no doubt owing, in part, to the fact that most public sector activists were ambivalent about institutions generally. They competed successfully with private agencies only in states where partisan competition was notably low; in other respects, their growth was residual. Public institutions failed to expand in states with large private systems, they responded more slowly to immigration and almshouse reform than the private ones, and they benefited not at all from the expansion of state control over child labor and education.

DISCUSSION

This article has attempted to account for the remarkable expansion in institutional control over delinquent and dependent children that occurred in the Progressive Era United States. Not the least remarkable feature of that expansion was the predominant role of private agencies in carrying out social control functions on behalf of the state. Thus the central analytic task has been to explain the differential expansion of public and private institutions. The inquiry focused on three levels of analysis. First, the effects of social structure in the broadest sense were addressed by treating the environment as a set of potential socioeconomic resources that set an upper limit on the capacity for institution building. Second, drawing on the social movements literature, I explored the ways
in which status politics, interethnic conflict, and the economic exploitation of children may have affected reformers' attempts to expand their influence. Third, on the foundation of these more conventional arguments, the analysis focused also on the political strategies of reformers as they struggled to lay claim to resources and clients.

I have argued that these strategies operated on two levels. First, the child-saving movement itself provided an arena within which advocates of public and private reform strategies could negotiate their differences, agree on a compromise professional ideology, and thereby contain direct competition. Reformers were persuasive enough to create a perception of crisis in the child-saving system but not sufficiently united or powerful to mobilize support for comprehensive reform. Thus, second, legislators responded to these halfhearted initiatives in an understandably ambivalent fashion. No states were able to slow the growth of children's institutions, and few enacted effective licensing or regulatory legislation. Across states, the relative emphasis on public or private institutions was influenced by competition between rival models of state building.

We may conclude that child-welfare policy after 1890 developed along paths laid out earlier in the 19th century, paths that became more rutted under the heavy ideological traffic of the Progressive Era. In general, public institutions persisted where statist solutions to social problems were the norm, and private agencies grew fastest where state authority was weakest and least legitimate. But beneath this simple finding lies the deeper paradox with which we began. All children's institutions grew sharply at a time when professional and public opinion was uniting against them; their growth, moreover, signified the renewed vitality of a moralistic approach to deviance and dependency, even as the charity organization societies—the chief avatars of moral individualism—were being ushered from the social policy stage. In this sense, the movement's greatest strength was its weakness. Unable to project a convincing policy alternative, child savers added a transparent professional gloss to traditional American myths of social order. In the antistatist atmosphere of the late 20th century, these myths are still persuasive and national child welfare policy is again directionless. Thus, as Lerman (1982) and Scull (1984) have documented, institutions remain a treatment of choice, and the role of the private sector is again ascendant.
APPENDIX

TABLE A1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Inmates of public and private institutions for children | Counts of inmates present on date of census (recovered from census enumeration of juvenile reformatories and children’s benevolent institutions) | USBC 1907, p. 252  
USBC 1913a, p. 31  
USBC 1918, pp. 162, 163, 198  
USBC 1927, pp. 19, 291, 346  
USCO 1888, p. 551  
USCO 1895, pp. 519, 882 |
| Urbanization | Number of persons living in cities over 25,000 population | USBC 1904, p. 100,  
USBC 1933, p. 26 |
| Child labor | Number of workers under age 16 in manufacturing industries | USBC 1904, p. 338  
USBC 1913b, p. 457  
USBC 1923, p. 1258 |
| Immigration | Number of foreign-born residents | USCO 1892, p. lxxxix  
USBC 1913b, p. 86  
USBC 1923, p. 100 |
### TABLE A1 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile court index</td>
<td>Five-point index of the adoption of juvenile court legislation</td>
<td>Sutton 1988, chap. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in juvenile almshouse population</td>
<td>Differences across decades in the number of children under age 15 confined in almshouses</td>
<td>USCO 1888, p. 449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USCO 1895, p. 782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USBC 1906, p. 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USBC 1915, p. 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USBC 1925, p. 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential vote parity</td>
<td>Mean, within decades, of the absolute difference between Republican and Democratic presidential votes at each election; values inverted</td>
<td>Congressional Quarterly 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school enrollments</td>
<td>Total enrollments in public primary and secondary schools</td>
<td>U.S. Office of Education 1911, p. 670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Education 1923, pp. 52-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Total state population</td>
<td>USBC 1918, p. 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USBC 1923, p. 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.**—All variables except inmate counts and juvenile court reform coded in units of 100,000.
REFERENCES


Hagan, John, and Jeffrey Leon. 1977. “Rediscovering Delinquency: Social History,
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1398
Responses to Deviant Children


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