

GROUP HOMES FOR DELINQUENT GIRLS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF GIRLS' AND BOYS' PROGRAMS IN MASSACHUSETTS

by

Beth L. Karpf

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Signature of Author _____
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Certified by _____
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____
Chairperson, Departmental Committee on Theses

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In order to make an exploratory investigation into the feasibility of group homes for delinquent girls, extensive interviews were conducted at three girls' and three boys' group homes. The study focused on issues of attitudes of the staff and youths, program structure, interactions between staff and youngsters, and interactions among the youngsters. The study uncovered very few differences which divided the homes on the basis of the sex of the kids served. Most of the differences which did exist among the homes were related differences in staff attitudes as to the causes of delinquency. On the basis of the factors examined, it appears that group homes can be as appropriate a strategy for girls as for boys.

Chapter One briefly discusses the origin of female corrections in general and girls' programs in particular. The chapter also discusses recent theories of delinquency in girls, briefly discussing how those theories relate to theories on boys and what implications the theories have for programs for delinquent girls.

Chapter Two discusses the development of group homes, the ways in which group homes typically differ from each other and what implications those differences in structures would have for differences in staff attitudes.

Chapter Three discusses the setting of the study, the method and various methodological problems encountered in the study. The representativeness of the sample is examined in terms of data on the flow of boys and girls through the juvenile justice system and other, informal information obtained from people who work with delinquent youth in Massachusetts.

Chapter Four reports the information gathered in the six case studies.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the study and their implications for planning and further research.

Thesis Supervisor: Suzanne Thomas Buckle, Assistant Professor,
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Chapter I: Theories of Female Delinquency and Corrections

Women's and girls' corrections have long been a secondary concern of corrections officials. Most of the progress which has been made in this area has been as a result of pressure from outside movements which were concerned with females generally (as opposed to lawbreakers or prisoners), activities which were directed at some public concern unrelated to the rehabilitation of women and girls, or were offshoots of reforms made in male rehabilitation programs.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, there were no separate prisons for men and women. Males and females (and, at that time, adults and children) were housed together in prisons which were run exclusively by male guards and administrators.

Though they were incarcerated in the same prisons, male and female offenders were viewed quite differently by criminal justice system officials and by the society at large.¹ First, there appeared to be greater contempt for women who had transgressed than for men. This feeling stemmed in large part from the commonly held belief that women were naturally more "morally pure" than men and that therefore, a "fallen woman" had fallen further than her male counterpart. Essentially, criminal behavior was more expected from men than women, since "boys will be boys". Female criminals were also viewed as more threatening to society, because it was felt that through a woman's role as wife and mother, she would naturally contaminate others (particularly men). Additionally, it was strongly felt that though male criminals might sometimes be redeemable, female criminals certainly were not. This belief stemmed, in part, from the

idea that women "fell further" and, in part, from the idea that a life of sin was entirely the fault of the woman, that it was a choice on her part and an irrevocable one. Once purity and innocence were lost, they were not thought to be retrievable.

Though conditions in nineteenth century prisons were generally deplorable, these attitudes generally resulted in even more degrading and inhumane conditions in prison for women than for men. In addition to being sexually abused by the male guards (and prisoners), due to the absence of female guards, they were deprived of even the slightest link with outside female society, as well as the understanding that they might have received from guards of their own sex.

The movement for separate women's prisons started during the first half of the nineteenth century, but did not pick up momentum until the latter half of the century. It was primarily a movement by middle-class women to help their less fortunate sisters. These women brought with them a number of new ideas.² First, they contradicted current views of the causes of female criminality by concluding that women did not usually have a choice as to leading a life of crime, but had been corrupted by circumstances (particularly poverty and the unavailability of any means of support other than prostitution and petty theft) and by evil male influences which, they felt, had caused the fall of many innocent young girls. Second, unlike corrections officials, they believed that women were reformable.

They also brought a vision of how correctional reform should happen. First, they said that women were best suited to reform other wo-

men, because they could set an example of "true womanhood" and could be more understanding of a woman's problems. This idea--that women could be guards and run prisons--was considered by the criminal justice establishment to be very radical. Men argued that women weren't physically strong enough to be guards, even of other women and they felt threatened by the claim that women could be superior to them, even if it were just in reforming other women.

A final reform suggested by this movement was that women offenders should be removed from the brutalizing and demoralizing influences of male guards and prisoners. Within these new separate prisons, they felt that rehabilitation efforts should lead women to a life of "true womanhood"--i.e., domestic roles. This last idea is very interesting in light of the fact that women involved in promoting separate prisons were attempting, against significant opposition, to carve out professional roles for themselves as guards, prison administrators and even prison physicians. However, the idea that fallen women should be trained for a life of domesticity served as a balancing element in an otherwise radical movement.

The first institution in this country for delinquent girls was begun at Lancaster, Massachusetts in 1857, many years after the first institution for delinquent boys had opened. It was very similar in concept to the new separate women's prisons. The Lancaster School taught the girls homemaking skills and measured its success with a girl by whether or not she got married and settled into a "normal homelife".³ Thus, the "homemaker model" gained roots in girls' rehabilitation programs.

In concept, this model has dominated female corrections until recent years, when two situations produced pressure for changes. First, the movement away from training schools for boys was begun and spread to youngsters generally. The process of setting up alternative facilities forced the corrections system to question the kinds of rehabilitative programs that are most appropriate to girls. Second, the women's movement, which has changed role expectations for women, resulted in pressure on girls' institutions to update their goals. Even now, however, there are institutions for girls which are based on the "homemaker model".⁴

Recent delinquency theorists tend to think of female delinquency in terms of sexual delinquency. It is interesting that many of the early women's and girls' institutions were established primarily to deal with sexual delinquency. During the First World War, after the idea of sex-segregated prisons had become firmly entrenched but not totally implemented, the federal government spent a substantial amount of money to establish a number of adult and juvenile institutions for female offenders. The basic motivation behind this outpour of federal money was to protect soldiers from "disease" (venereal disease).⁵

Recent Theories Regarding Delinquency Among Girls

In looking at the very small amount of literature in the last ten or fifteen years which has dealt with juvenile delinquency among girls, it is clear that there are still differing attitudes as to the nature and causes of male and female delinquency which undoubtedly result in differing attitudes as to the methods for dealing with delinquent boys and

girls. Some of these differences are justifiable, based on the fact that girls and boys are raised in different ways and have different experiences. Some assumptions seem to be based on prejudices of the theorists concerning proper roles for females. First, it appears that there is more of a tendency to blame "society" or "circumstances" for delinquency in boys, while blaming the individual girl for her transgressions. Second, it is thought that boys commit crimes against others, including property crimes and person crimes, while girls commit less serious "crimes", such as running away, being sexually promiscuous, or, sometimes, shoplifting. In the past several years, however, the arrest rate of girls and women for more serious and violent crimes has skyrocketed, the increase usually being attributed to increased equality in lifestyle options for males and females with the attendant increase of the pressures of life on females.⁶ (Unfortunately, most of the literature which addresses the issue of delinquency in girls is greater than five years old, so this particular issue is not frequently discussed).

Goodman and Ohlin are two examples of theorists who say that delinquency in boys is just a reaction to a badly structured society or unfair circumstances, but in some way imply that delinquency in girls is related to the individual girl's maladjustment. Goodman, in Growing Up Absurd, points to the lack of meaningful, "manly" work as the root of male delinquency. Of course, he says, this doesn't apply to girls because they can fulfill themselves through marriage and children. His implication is that society is not to blame for delinquency in girls and therefore, there must be something wrong with the girl herself.

Ohlin⁷ linked delinquency to a lack of opportunities for lower-income males to attain middle-class goals of a good education and a good job. He added that female delinquency (i.e., illegitimate pregnancy) results from a lack of opportunity for lower-income girls to get married, which occurs because lower-income boys won't marry them because they can't get jobs to support families. In other words, the girl can't have marriage and pregnancy, so she settles for just pregnancy. It seemed that though Ohlin viewed circumstances caused by society as the impetus for both male and female delinquency, there was a greater implication of social maladjustment in the girls than in the boys.

In 101 Delinquent Girls, Trese states that delinquency in girls is "the result of an inadequately developed personality". He felt that elements such as poverty, gang influence and delinquency contaminated neighborhoods were only contributive and not causative, the implication being that the real cause lay within the girl herself.

This dichotomy in theories of male and female juvenile delinquency has some implications for different treatment of delinquent boys and girls. Since people may feel that circumstances have largely contributed to the problems of the boy, they may be more likely to try to change these circumstances (e.g., by setting up a job-training program) or to help the boy in a non-blaming, non-moralistic fashion to learn to deal with these circumstances. In dealing with the girls, however, they might be more likely to communicate the message to her that there is something wrong with her as a person, and they might treat her with less respect. They also might tend to be moralistic toward the girl than the

boy. These attitudes, if they existed, would probably be very detrimental to a girl whose self-image is already very low.

Konopka⁸ has somewhat different views about delinquency in girls. In her 1966 study of institutionalized "delinquent" girls, she made a very sensitive inquiry into the causes of conflict among adolescent girls. She spent several months getting to know a number of institutionalized girls through overnight, informal visits to delinquency institutions. She attributed the cause of delinquency in girls to five factors, three of which are common to all adolescent girls and two of which are typically found in the background of girls who develop delinquent behavior patterns.

The first factor which Konopka cites is the onset of puberty and menstruation, which resembles injury and can be a very frightening experience if a girl has not been properly informed of the meaning of it. This event also makes a reality of the possibility of becoming pregnant. It is this relation of pregnancy to the sex act which means that sex, for a girl, is an experience which necessarily touches upon her entire personality. Because of this fact, Konopka says, sexual experiences can potentially produce a great deal of conflict for any girl.

The second factor is that the psychological identification process for girls is a very complex one. Girls, unlike boys, must return for identification to the parent who nurtured them as infants. This fact makes for a more difficult identification process for girls than for boys. Frequently, conflict with the girl's mother results. The situation is workable if parents are "giving, protecting and nurturing human

beings", but otherwise, problems can result.

The third factor cited is the changing cultural position of females in the society. According to Konopka, this change has resulted in several problems for adolescent girls: blocked ambitions, inadequate opportunities, insufficient outlet for aggressive drives, increased awareness and resentment of a double standard for males and females. She adds that while middle-class women may see a career as an opportunity for fulfillment, lower-class girls resent work because the work available to them is usually drudgery and rarely offers opportunity for fulfillment. Thus, lower-class girls frequently want to escape work through dependence on a man.

Konopka says that for girls who have come into conflict with society, adults have, in their experience, represented faceless, uncaring, and sometimes brutal, authority figures who give no praise or support. This situation results in loneliness and low self-image in the girl. The loneliness causes the girl to seek companionship of other outcasts who are usually engaging in behavior which is unacceptable to society. When the girls do this, society condemns them, which lowers their self-image and increases their loneliness. This only causes the cycle to repeat itself.

The final point which Konopka makes about factors contributing to delinquency in girls is that as children they did not have enough supportiveness and thus, as teenagers, they cling to childhood. While being childish and dependent, they fear dependency and try to act as if they don't care about what people think of them.

Based on her theories about delinquent girls, Konopka makes several recommendations as to the nature of programs for delinquent girls. First, the program should help build the girl's self-confidence. Second, adults on the staff should be supportive and consistent. Third, there should be both men and women on the staff so that the girls can develop favorable relationships with male adults. This is very important for girls who have been abused by men in the past. And, the staff should come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds so that all the girls will have someone to whom they can relate. Fourth, the staff should be trained to handle hostility and sexual problems in the girls. The staff should have insight into their feelings about sex so that they can relate to the girls on these matters. Fifth, the the program should recognize the need of adolescent girls to come to terms with their sexuality and should encourage the girls to learn to relate to boys in a healthy way. Finally, the program should help to restore the capacity for healthy relationships among peers.

Footnotes

(Chapter 1)

1. Estelle B. Friedman. "Their Sisters' Keepers: An Historical Perspective on Female Correctional Institutions in the U.S., 1870-1900", Feminist Studies, 2 (1): 78-83.
2. Ibid., 83-84.
3. "Female Juvenile Delinquency: A Nineteenth Century Follow-Up", Crime and Delinquency, 19: 1972.
4. For an excellent case study of a training school for girls based on the "homemaker model", see: "For Her Own Protection... : Conditions of Incarceration for Female Juvenile Offenders in the State of Connecticut. Law and Society Review, Winter, 1972.
5. Margaret Reeves. Training Schools for Delinquent Girls, New York, Russell Sage Fund, 1929, 44.
The federal government granted \$427,000 for forty-three institutions for women and girls, including ten girls' training schools.
6. "The Woman's Touch". Newsweek, 85 (1), 1972: 35.
7. Lloyd Ohlin and Richard Cloward, Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs, New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.
8. Gisela Konopka. The Adolescent Girl in Conflict, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1966, 119-123.

Chapter II: Group Homes: Their Development and Characteristics

The Development of Group Homes

In recent years there has been a growing movement from the use of training school institutions to the use of group homes for dealing with delinquent youngsters. This movement is the result of two major changes in ideology regarding delinquent youths. The first was a change in the conception of the goal of the juvenile justice system from punishment to treatment. The second was a concern for the negative effects of institutionalization on youngsters.

The early models for adolescent group homes came from three sources. One of these was adult half-way houses, which first came into significant use late in the last century. The second was group foster homes for youngsters which were an outgrowth of the single foster home concept. Finally, there were several "experiments" in smaller institutions for delinquent youth in the 1950's which tried to minimize those qualities of institutions which were thought to be a negative influence.

Ideological Changes

Ever since the movement began in the last century to separate juvenile offenders from adults, corrections officials and the general public have become increasingly more willing to take an attitude of "helping" or "treating" rather than "punishing" children who get into trouble with the law. These attitudes were particularly advanced by the "child-saving movement" at the turn of this century. The rationale for this movement was that children, much more so than adults, were "salvageable" and therefore, corrections for children should be supportive and directed at helping the youth make a better adjustment to

society.¹ Thus, less institutional, more "home-like" and more community-oriented forms of corrections have more easily gained acceptance in the juvenile than in the adult field.

In recent years many delinquency theorists have come to believe that the institutions of the juvenile justice system themselves are contributing significantly to the problems of "delinquent children".² It was felt that training schools had a stigmatizing affect on children, and that the depersonalizing atmosphere had a negative effect on the youngsters' self-esteem. Therefore, there was a drive to design programs for juveniles which would deal with the youngster on a more individualized, personal level.

These two changes in ideology made the times ripe for the move away from training schools, but to make the move, a new model was needed.

Early Models for the Group Home

Group homes are, in part, derived from adult half-way houses. Half-way houses (as residential facilities in the community for adult ex-convicts) had a few scattered starts in this century and began to grow slightly in number around the turn of the century. These houses were run by private charitable organizations and served ex-convicts only. They were not a part of the formal correctional system and were frequently opposed by corrections authorities on the grounds that ex-convicts should not be associating with each other.³ It was not until after World War II that half-way houses came under consideration by corrections officials in this country as a viable means of re-integrat-

ing the offender into the community.⁴ Even today, however, half-way houses for adults are generally of the "half-way-out" type--they are used after prison, not as an alternative to it.

The group home also has roots in the foster home idea. The first "group foster homes" or small group homes (no more than six to eight youths) were used for youths on parole or probation. This practice started in Wisconsin, in the mid-fifties, in recognition of the need for long-term placement for many delinquent children who essentially had no homes to which to return. This practice then spread to several states in the sixties.⁵

There were some basic differences between these group foster homes and the group homes which are used for "delinquent" youths today. First, they were not primarily geared towards treatment, they were geared towards providing a supportive home with whatever counseling was naturally available from the foster parents--there were very few formal program goals. Second, they were used either for youths who had been released from institutions or for youths on probation who were thought to be less seriously delinquent and therefore, not in need of institutional placement. In contrast, group homes are sometimes used for children who have never been institutionalized and who may be more seriously delinquent (though usually not violent or drug dependent).

Experiments in group care for juveniles further developed the group home concept. One of the earliest moves towards alternatives to training schools, for example, was Highfields, which opened in

1950. This was a small institution for carefully selected non-seriously delinquent boys of working age (16-18 years) who had not been previously institutionalized. There were several significant departures which Highfields made from traditional institutions for delinquents. One of the most important of these was that it relied heavily on peer interactions as a means of accomplishing rehabilitation. It did this through formalized therapeutic group sessions and through the encouragement of informal discussions. A second important difference was that significant efforts were made to keep each boy in contact with the normal community and thus avoid the problems of re-integration into the community inherent in the institutionalization of kids. This was done through having the boys leave the grounds of Highfields (390 wooded acres) to work at a local state hospital, Saturday evening trips into the community and weekend visits home. The third major departure was that the staff was not professionally trained and was of the houseparent variety, as opposed to the guard or custodian variety. This was done to encourage informal counseling and discussion between staff and kids.⁶

In the years that followed, many more of this type of new treatment facility were established and, after acquiring some of the characteristics of foster homes and half-way houses, eventually evolved into group homes where the basic concepts of peer inter-action, community involvement and informal staff-resident inter-action play a major role. Group homes today usually strive for a home-like atmosphere with a treatment orientation and are generally small (six to twelve youngsters).

Characteristics and Treatment Methods of Group Homes

Despite the common history of group homes, they have come to take many different forms and to differ critically in policies and procedures. Before discussing the variables which characterize group homes, it should be emphasized that the literature on girls' group homes or on the differences between girls' and boys' group homes is virtually non-existent. A few articles⁷ do exist but these are basically descriptive and do not offer any significant insight into possible widespread differences in the operation of boys' and girls' group homes. Therefore, this discussion will be limited to differences in group homes, generally.

The distinctions among group homes tend to fall into the following categories:⁸ the emphasis placed on formalized counseling or therapy and the type used; the extent to which decisions concerning the house and members of it are shared by staff and kids; the type of disciplinary structure; the extent to which responsibilities are placed with the kids, including responsibilities for themselves, for the house as a whole, and for the other kids as individuals, and the extent to which the house tries to involve significant others, particularly the family, in helping the youngster.

Formal and Informal Therapy

There are wide differences in the types of "therapy" which group homes use and the extent to which they try to generate a therapeutic environment. These differences are along several dimensions: use of professional or non-professional staff; extent of reliance on

"formal therapy"; and degree to which the staff use "pressure", including peer pressure, to induce change in the kids.

Some homes prefer to use professionally trained staff, such as social workers or psychologists, while others use non-professional staff. The reason for the use of professional staff is a feeling that only "trained" people are qualified to deal with kids. The reasons that some homes use non-professional staff are that they: feel that formal training may have little to do with ability to deal with kids; think that the kids might relate to non-professionals better; or want to use a non-professional couple as "substitute parents".

Some homes prefer to use formal, structured "therapy" such as numerous group or individual counseling sessions, while others prefer to rely on less formal "therapy". In those houses with less formal therapy, the staff usually strive to develop a good rapport with the kids so that they can counsel them on an informal basis.

Some homes try to generate a very high-pressured environment for the kids, while others feel that a low-pressured environment will be more helpful to the kids. Those homes with high-pressured environments usually feel that kids will not change unless they are constantly pushed toward self-examination and in some way made to feel uncomfortable about their present behavior. The low-pressured homes feel that it is important to provide a supportive atmosphere where the kids can deal with problems "on their own time", and that too much forced introspection might create anxieties which the kids could not handle.

All group homes try to generate some degree of peer pressure.

Those homes which rely heavily on it, try to foster an environment where the kids feel a sense of unity as a group and support the staff (in fact, they see their own goals and those of the staff as being the same). In these houses, when a kid is not moving in the right direction, he/she will be pressured by his or her peers to do so.

Decision Sharing

A critical difference in group homes concerns the locus of decision-making--whether all decisions are made by the staff, or most decisions are made by the kids with some decisions shared by the staff. Again, there is a large middle-ground. The reasons that a house would tend toward encouraging all decisions to be made by staff, might be fear of undermining the staff's authority or a feeling that the kids could not handle that much responsibility, either because they might make poor judgments or would not be firm enough or would intentionally abuse the power. On the other hand, the reasons a house might tend toward requiring more decision-making responsibility of the kids might be to increase the feeling of unity among the kids and between the kids and the staff, to avoid tensions that might arise if the staff were to make decisions with which the kids could not live (e.g., in staff hiring) and finally, to place more responsibility with the kids for their own lives.

Other than staff attitudes with regard to the general appropriateness of decision-sharing, factors which might influence the degree of sharing would be the age of the kids, the types of problems the kids in the home have, and possibly some external factors such as

to whom (i.e., the public or private agency) the group home is responsible.

Disciplinary Structure

The disciplinary structure of group homes can be very formal, to the extent of having many rules with consequences of violating them prespecified. At the other extreme, there can be a few major rules (e.g., no drugs), with the emphasis on a less formal rule structure in which violation of the rules brings different results, depending on the circumstances. Punishments generally consist of some type of restriction of privilege, though in many homes there is also a large reliance on peer disapproval as a means of discouraging further transgressions.

The use of a highly formalized set of rules may result from a desire by the staff for consistency in dealing with the kids or a fear that the kids might more easily manipulate the rules and the staff to their advantage if the rules were less formal. The use of a less formal system usually happens in homes which employ peer pressure and try to foster identification on the part of the kids with the staff goals. The same informal rule structure may also be designed to avoid setting up expectations of wrong behavior while living at the house, or a desire to more nearly duplicate the real world, where precise consequences do not always follow from wrong actions.

Degree of Responsibility Given to the Kids

The extent to which responsibilities are placed on the kids varies somewhat from home to home. There are some standard requirements such as that of going to school or work, but the extent to which this

requirement is enforced may vary somewhat. In general, the kids have some kind of house chores but while in some houses the chores are assigned by the staff, in others the kids as a group decide how the chores are to be divided. In addition to these task-oriented responsibilities, in some houses the kids are required to take responsibility for each other; an "older kid" (one who has been in the house longer) might take a newer kid out for the evening and look after him/her, or with a similar purpose, the staff might depend on "leaders" among the kids to maintain lines of communication and to try to help their fellow residents to deal with problems.

The level of responsibility given to the kids will depend on staff perceptions of the kids' ability to handle it, how well the staff feel they can trust the kids, and how important the staff feel that responsibility is for fostering such goals as independence and responsible behavior. Obviously, these staff perceptions will be influenced by their attitudes toward delinquency, their conception of the reasons that the kids are in the home, and finally, the age of the kids.

Involvement of the Family

While some houses take affirmative action to involve the families of the kid, and other homes welcome family involvement only if the family is interested, other homes see little usefulness in involving the family. The basic reason for a home involving the family is that it views the kids' problems as stemming from their relationships with the family and feels that the family can potentially be the greatest positive or negative influence on a kid.

Those homes that don't have this point of view and don't involve the family, are frequently dealing with older kids and are preparing the kids to live on their own. Still other homes feel that the kid's relationship with the family is so bad and the family is so disinterested in the kid, that there is no point in "trying to patch things up".

Footnotes

(Chapter 2)

1. Anthony Platt. The Child Savers, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969, 54-55.
2. Edwin Schur. Radical Non-Intervention: Rethinking the Delinquency Problem, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1973.
3. Oliver Keller and Benedict S. Alper, Halfway Houses: Community-Centered Correction and Treatment, Lexington, Massachusetts, D.C. Heath and Co., 1970, 27.
4. Linda Singer, Ronald Goldfarb. After Conviction, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1973, 554.
5. Ibid., 566-7.
6. Ibid., 66-9.
7. See: Rosemary McGrath, Residential Group Center for Delinquent Girls, Welfare Reporter, 14 (July): 66-73, 1963 (New Jersey Institutions and Agencies).
Estelle Turner. A Community Group Home for Delinquent Girls, California Youth Authority Quarterly, 21 (3): 14-22, 1968.
8. The information contained in the remainder of this chapter is taken generally from the following sources:

Oliver Keller and Benedict S. Alper. Halfway Houses: Community Center Corrections and Treatment, Lexington, Massachusetts, D.C. Heath and Co., 1970.

National Institute of Mental Health, Community Based Correctional Programs, Rockville, Maryland, 1971.

Op. Cit., Singer.

Conversations with people in the Massachusetts Division of Youth Services and others in Massachusetts who have worked in some connection with group homes for juveniles.

Chapter III: Methodology

The methodology chapter will start with a brief description of the structure of the Massachusetts juvenile justice system and a section on the use of group homes in Massachusetts. It is hoped that these sections will clarify various statements which will be made in later parts of this chapter. Following that, I will discuss the impetus for the study and why I chose to examine the particular issues that I did. The next section will lay out the basic issues and questions which I will address in the study. The next section will lay out the actual methodology. The fourth section will discuss some methodological problems. And the fifth section will give a brief sketch of each of the six group homes in the study.

The Setting

Brief Summary of the Structure of the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice System

Until the beginning of 1974, a delinquency complaint could be brought against a juvenile (defined as a person between seven and seventeen years of age) for a violation of any law of the Commonwealth or city ordinance or for being a runaway, "stubborn child" or truant. Under the Children in Need of Services Law passed in 1973, delinquency complaints can no longer be brought against runaways, "stubborn children", or truants. Instead, a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) complaint is brought directly to the court by parents or school officials. Whereas a child who is adjudicated "delinquent" is committed to the Department of Youth Services, a child who is adjudicated CHINS is supposedly provided services by the Division of Family and Child Services of the Department of Public Welfare or referred to some services directly by the court. However, since no funds have been allocated for services for them and at the same time they are still being dragged through a court process.

Many children presently being serviced by D.Y.S. were committed on CHINS-type charges prior to the time when the law went into effect. Some of these youths (primarily girls) are presently in group homes. Additionally, some of the group homes used for D.Y.S. placement also have children who were placed in the home under the CHINS law and other non-delinquent children who were placed in the home by the Division of Family and Child Services of the Welfare Department. Thus group homes frequently contain runaways or neglected or abused children

as well as "delinquent" children. In many cases, the children placed by the Division of Family and Child Services have also been in trouble with the law.

Juvenile cases are heard in either special sessions of the district courts or special juvenile courts. The outcome of the trial can be any of the following: case dismissed; continued without a finding (sometimes the kid is on probation while the case is continued; after a period of time, if the kid doesn't get into any more trouble, the case is usually dismissed); placed on probation to a court probation officer; voluntary "referral" to D.Y.S. for services (a referral does not necessitate a finding of delinquency); finding of not delinquent; or upon a finding of delinquency, commitment to the Department of Youth Services (DYS).

When a child is committed to DYS she/he is assigned to a caseworker who decides upon a placement with the child. (DYS is divided into 7 regions and the child is assigned to the office for the region in which she/he lives.) There are basically four placement options: foster care; residential placement; non-residential placement (to be used in conjunction with residential placement, foster care or living at home); or the child may be sent home and will visit the caseworker periodically. It is very significant that most placements, including all group homes, may refuse a child for any reason.

Frequently a child will be involved with several placements over the course of time she/he is with DYS. Technically, children are committed to DYS until the age of 21, but the caseworker can place a case in the inactive file if the kid no longer seems to be in need

of the services of DYS. If a kid runs from a program, that usually ends contact, unless the kid voluntarily returns or gets into some more trouble and is picked up.

Since Massachusetts deinstitutionalized juvenile corrections, DYS has operated on a purchase-of-service basis. Until a few years ago, DYS ran a half-dozen large training school type institutions (one for girls and the rest for boys). These have all been closed down except for the girls' school, which has a small number of girls and is still being phased out. (It was scheduled to close in 1972 but didn't-- probably because of the lack of alternative services for girls.)

Under the purchase of service system, DYS pays private groups on a weekly basis for each kid placed in their programs. The amount of payment varies from program to program, but the program must produce a budget to get its rates approved.

There are several points about the Massachusetts system which will be particularly relevant in this study. First, since DYS operates on a purchase of service basis, there is a large degree of variation among the services available to delinquent kids. Second, since there is a natural selection process by which a kid and a group home choose each other, the kids in any group home do not represent a cross-section of DYS kids. And, since a kid can effectively leave a group home at any time by running, kids who are very dissatisfied with the group home they are in are not likely to stay. Third, most group homes which are used for DYS kids also take Division of Family and Child Services kids-- kids who for some reason other than "delinquent" behavior are not able to stay at home. Since the group homes themselves do not distinguish

between these kids, I will not do so in the study.

Group Homes in Massachusetts

Massachusetts is very unusual in terms of service to delinquent youth. During the early seventies it virtually eliminated the use of training school type institutions for "delinquent" youngsters. The "de-institutionalization of the Massachusetts system has led to a heavy reliance on group homes as primary sources of treatment.

According to the Department of Youth Services¹ there were many benefits which would accrue to the youths if they could be placed in non-institutional, community-oriented settings, in particular, group homes as opposed to training schools:

- 1) Children would not be subjected to the brutalizing and dehumanizing atmosphere of the training schools. Group homes could provide a more supportive atmosphere for kids whose self-image was already badly damaged.
- 2) Children would be benefited by a therapeutic community. It was felt that training schools encouraged negative behavior from the kids due to the development of a subculture among the kids which was at odds with the staff and fostered negative values. Under the training school system, the staff were forced to be primarily concerned with custodial functions and encouraged to be overly authoritarian. This situation prevented the development of positive, supportive, counseling relationship between staff and kids and at the same time encouraged the development of the negative valued

subcultures. It was felt that in a group home, staff and kids could work together to bring about positive behavior from the kids. Staff would not be custodians or overly authoritarian. At the same time, the kids would not form groups whose raison d'etre was to oppose the staff, but they would work together to help each other overcome their difficulties. Peer support and positive peer pressure would be an important part of group homes.

- 3) Group homes would allow the kids to be involved with the community. It was felt that kids who spent a lot of time in institutional settings became dependent upon the highly structured institutional way of life. At the same time they lost contact with their friends and family in the community. In a group home, the kids go to school or work in the community, they make friends in the community, they learn to function in the community. The kids in a group home have the opportunity "to test out newly learned constructive behavior" within the community.²

The group homes which resulted from these goals have developed a number of common structural characteristics. Generally they are houses in the community, which usually accommodate six to twelve kids (though some groups have as many as twenty). There is usually some type of counseling staff which, in most cases, consists, in part, of live-in counselors. In addition to the counseling staff, there is frequently some type of administrative support staff and sometimes a consultant psychologist or social worker.

These homes also have similar programmatic features. In most homes the residents are required to work, go to school, or be in a job-training program, almost always in the community, and they are generally free to come and go, being limited only by evening curfews. The kids are also permitted to have guests though some minor restrictions may be imposed (e.g., guests may only be allowed in certain parts of the house). There is often a heavy reliance on both formal and informal peer interaction with the objective that the peer group will be supportive of positive changes in behavior. A related therapeutic goal is the development of a helpful but not overly authoritarian or custodial relationship of the staff to the kids.

Impetus for the Study

In doing some research (during the summer of 1974) on services for delinquent girls in Massachusetts, I learned two things from the people with whom I spoke which led me to the present study. First, there is a critical shortage of services for delinquent girls in Massachusetts. Second, there is a significant controversy over how well group homes, which constitute a major portion of the services available to delinquent children in Massachusetts, work for girls. Since there has been a recent increase in interest in providing services for girls and since group homes would be a likely choice for expansion of services, it is important to determine whether group homes are or are not appropriate for girls.

I chose to do an exploratory study due to the shortage of literature in the area of services, particularly group homes, for delinquent

girls. I felt that a case study comparison approach between girls' and boys' group homes would be appropriate because of several opinions that had been expressed relative to services for delinquent girls. Some people indicated that they felt that boys and girls generally had different problems and therefore should be dealt with differently. Some people indicated that the staff in group homes have differing attitudes, some of which are unfounded, towards the problems of delinquent boys and girls and the best methods for dealing with them.

In general, people³ in the system seem to think, for one reason or another, that DYS committed girls are "heavier" or more seriously delinquent than boys, and that girls are more difficult to deal with than boys. A partial explanation that is given by these people for this situation is that a typical DYS committed girl has been to court many more times than her male counterpart before committment to DYS, and has therefore had more time to get "messed up." The other reasons given are based on assumed characteristics of delinquent girls or differences between delinquent boys and girls. These assumptions are as follows:

- Boys are more "up front" about their feelings than are girls. They are more likely to talk things out or express their feelings through concrete action (e.g., stealing a car) while girls will hold their feelings in until they explode.
- Girls are more likely to run or be self-destructive than are boys.
- Girls "act out" emotionally (i.e., scream and yell and get violent) more than boys. This is part of the idea that girls

hold their feelings in until they explode.

- Girls are more "manipulative" than boys, meaning that they try to manipulate the staff and the kids through lying and through playing people off against one another.
- Girls have problems relating the changing role expectations for women. They are confused about their proper roles. Those who have been involved in "non-feminine" delinquency have been rejected for being "non-feminine" as well as for being "bad."
- Girls have a very low opinion of themselves and other women and are sometimes hostile towards other girls and women.
- Girls are very dependent upon males and will frequently allow themselves to be used and hurt by males.
- Large group homes (i.e., more than four or five kids) don't work for girls because girls are very competitive with each other and they fight a lot.

Hopefully, during the course of the case studies I will get some sense of how much truth there is to these perceptions. To the extent that these perceptions are not true, I would like to find out the extent to which they are influencing staff behavior and to the extent that they are true I would like to know how they are influencing the kids' behavior.

Questions and Issues

Ideally, in this study I would like to answer the questions: "Do group homes work as well, or better, for girls as they do for boys?" and "Why is such the case?" However, due to the inherent difficulties

in determining the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs, I will instead address the more general question: "Do group homes work differently for girls than they do for boys?" Then, I will attempt to relate any differences I might find to the question of whether group homes work as well for girls as they do for boys. Such an analysis should be useful in planning the expansion of services for girls. For instance, if I found that delinquent girls have a particular problem in relating to members of their own sex and that group homes for girls, as presently structured, are not set up to deal with this problem, then future planning for girls' group homes would need to consider this issue.

The study will address itself to two major potential sources of differences: the program itself (including staff attitudes, program structure, informal staff methods of dealing with the kids) and the kids (their attitudes towards their situations, their interaction with each other, their behavior).

The Program

A major component of any group home program is the staff. The attitudes of the staff regarding the problems of delinquent kids and the appropriate means for solving those problems will be reflected in both the formal program structure and the informal staff interactions with the kids.

In the course of the study I will try to determine if there are differences in these program components with respect to the sex of the kids in the house. The specific areas I will look at will be:

- I. Staff attitudes concerning:
 - A. The causes of delinquency and the problems of delinquent boys/girls
 - B. The ultimate goals (in the time frame of the program) for delinquent boys/girls
 - C. The best ways to deal with delinquent boys/girls on a formal and informal level
- II. Program structure:
 - A. General program structure
 - B. Disciplinary structure rules
 - C. Decision sharing responsibility given to the kids
 - D. Counseling and the "therapeutic environment"

The Kids

In comparing male residents of group homes with female residents of group homes, there are two important caveats to keep in mind. First, it is necessary to try to separate those differences which are due to the selection policies of the individual homes from those that appear to be differences in delinquent boys and girls generally. Second, it is virtually impossible to separate out what the kids are from what they are in reaction to the group home they are in; but, again it is necessary to try. For example, if the kids in a home don't get along well with the staff, or for that matter, with each other, one must attempt to decide if that situation is the result of something about the kids or something about the particular program.

Given those caveats, these are the general areas in which I will compare the girls and boys:

I. Attitudes:

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- A. Towards their situation
- B. Towards the program of the home they are in

II. Interactions

- A. With the staff
- B. With each other
- C. With people outside of the home

III. Personal problems relating to:

- A. Self-esteem
- B. Independence
- C. Relating to people of the same sex
- C. Relating to people of the opposite sex

Methodology

This study is based on case studies of six group homes which serve "delinquent" youth committed to the Massachusetts Division of Youth Services. The case studies of three boys' homes and three girls' homes are based on interviews of the staff and youngsters which were conducted by a colleague⁴ and myself. Typically we spoke with two to three staff members (which in most cases included the director or one of the houseparents) and with two to four youngsters. In four of the houses we made one afternoon visit which consisted primarily of interviewing with some slight opportunities for less formal observation. In two of the homes (one for girls and one for boys) we were able to make several visits.

Selection of the Group Home Sample

The group homes were selected from a list of residential programs serving DYS youth in 1974.⁵ They are all programs which were identified by DYS as group homes with fifteen or fewer youngsters. The three girls homes were the only girls group homes which had two or more DYS committed girls living in them as of May 18, 1974.⁶ The boys homes were chosen primarily on the basis of their accessibility, both in terms of proximity to Boston (the author's home) and the willingness of the program director to let my collaborator and me interview at the home. In addition, I tried to get a balance in the types of boys' homes studied. One of the homes, for example, had a reputation for taking "tough" kids. A second home was selected because it took younger boys. The resulting sample of three boys homes had several or more DYS committed boys living in them as of May 18, 1974.

Questions for the Staff

In order to address the issues previously discussed, we used the following set of questions as a guide for interviews with staff members:

- How many kids does the program serve? What age kids are accepted? What is the selection policy for kids?
- What type of staff are there? What qualities do you look for in hiring staff? What are the organizational functions of the staff?
- What are the goals of the program for the kids? How do you know when a kid is prepared to leave the program? How do you

- know when a kid isn't working out in the program?
- What is the basic structure of the program? What types of counseling or group meetings are there? What are the day-to-day activities?
 - What type of disciplinary system is there? What are the major rules? To what extent do kids share in disciplinary decisions?
 - What decisions do the kids share in? Policy? Discipline? Intake? Activities?
 - What is the nature of the staff-kid interactions? What kind of communication is there between staff and kids? Do the kids come to the staff about their problems or do the staff go to the kids?
 - How well do the kids get along with each other? Do they talk to each other about their problems? Are there informal group standards among the kids? Is there any leadership among the kids?
 - Have there been any major changes in the program in the past several years and if so, why were the changes made?

Questions for the Kids

We used the following set of questions as a guide for interviews with the residents:

- How do you feel about living at the house?
- What did you want to get out of the program when you came here? Do you still feel the same way? Is the house helping you?
- Do you feel that the staff is straight with you?
- How do you feel about the other kids in the house? Do you

have friends in the house? Do you generally spend your free time with kids from the house or with kids outside of the house?

- Can you talk to other kids in the house about your problems?

Do you talk to other kids about their problems?

- How do you feel about the rules at the house?

Additional Observations

We also tried to make observations on the nature of interactions between the staff and the kids and the interactions among the kids. In particular, we tried to determine whether the kids and staff had an "easy going or "comfortable" relationship.

Methodological Problems

Problems Relating to the Selection of the Sample

In this study, two major factors will be examined to determine whether group homes work differently for boys and girls. One of these factors is the group homes themselves, including policies, structure, and staff attitudes. The other factor is the kids, their attitudes, their interactions with the staff and each other. For each of these groups, a selection process was involved.

I made the selection of the group homes. Since the three girls homes selected were the only girls group homes in Massachusetts which on May 18, 1974 had two or more DYS girls living in them, they should accurately represent group homes serving delinquent girls in the state. However, since the boys homes were chosen primarily on the basis of

accessibility and are three of over a dozen boys group homes in the state serving DYS kids, that sample may be biased.

The kids in the homes studied probably do not represent an accurate cross section of "delinquent" kids in Massachusetts. They have gone through two selection processes. The first was when the decision was made to commit them to DYS. The second was when the decision was made to place them in a particular group home.

It was hoped that by examining data on the flow of boys and girls through the Massachusetts juvenile justice system I might determine if boys and girls being committed to DYS were going through a different process of selection and if so how that process was different. The examination of this data does indicate that a different process of selection is occurring, but it does not answer the question of how that process is different; it simply suggests a number of very different possible answers.

I was able to obtain sex segregated data on arrest, court arraignment and commitment to DYS for 1973 (prior to the date the CHINS law became effective). It was not possible to obtain data for totally corresponding geographic areas, however. All the data examined is generally from the Boston area. The Boston Police Department has jurisdiction for the entire city of Boston. The Boston Juvenile Court covers a portion of the city of Boston and it accounts for a majority of the cases which come through Boston. DYS region 6 is comprised of Boston and a couple of small neighboring communities.

-Arrest (Boston Police Department. Area of Jurisdiction: City of Boston.):

For 1973, girls account for 17.4 percent of the juvenile

arrests by the Boston Police Department (see Chart I).

Most of the girls arrested were charged with the same offense--larceny--while the boys tended to be arrested on a wider variety of charges. 58 percent of the girls arrested were charged with larceny (excluding auto theft) while the most common charges against boys were larceny (22 percent), breaking and entering (17 percent) and auto theft (16 percent).

The category of "larceny" includes a broad set of possible charges including shoplifting and pickpocketing. It is also possible, due to what is called the "chivalry factor", that it might be used as a lesser charge for a more serious crime. Several people⁷ I spoke with indicated that there is a "chivalry factor" operative whereby police hesitate to arrest girls or to charge them with serious crimes.

The next largest category of offenses for which girls were charged is "prostitution and common vice." This charge accounts for 9% of the girls arrested. This offense and larceny are the two offenses for which the ratio of girls to boys charged is highest, though the number of boys charged for each of the offenses exceeds the number of girls charged.

There is no complaint category of "runaway" though one assumes that the police picked up runaways that year, since in 1973 it was still a "crime". There is a category labeled "all other except traffic" which might include some runaways. However, since there were only 63 girls in this category and there were 108 girls in Boston Juvenile Court alone who were arraigned on the charge of "runaway," it is

BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
JUVENILE ARRESTS (1973)

Complaint	Boys	Girls
Murder and non-negligent manslaughter	15	1
Murder-negligent manslaughter	1	3
Forcible rape	31	1
Robbery	348 (9%)	26
Aggravated assault	193 (5%)	22
Breaking and entering	620 (17%)	17
Larceny	847 (22%)	470 (58%)
Auto theft	601 (16%)	53 (7%)
Narcotics law violations	156 (4%)	6
Receiving, selling stolen goods	113	7
Prostitution and common vice	90	70 (9%)
Sex, except rape or prostitution	20	2
Vandalism	60	4
Weapons-carrying, possession	56	4
Non-aggravated assaults	76	18
Drunkenness	186 (5%)	13
Disorderly conduct	118	20
Driving under the influence	17	0
Liquor law violations	10	6
Arson	14	1
All others except traffic	250	64
Total	3,822	808

CHART I. Note: Percentages in parentheses indicate what proportion of all arrests of juveniles of a particular sex consist of a particular charge.

clear that many of the girls being charged in court with being run-aways were not arrested, per se, or if they were arrested, the charge was something else initially.

-Arrest (Boston Juvenile Court. Area of jurisdiction: major portion of the city of Boston.)

Girls accounted for 24½% of the complaints in Boston Juvenile Court in 1973 (see Chart II). The fact that girls accounted for a larger portion of arraignments than arrests might be due to the fact that the activities with which the girls were charged (pickpocketing, shoplifting and prostitution) are likely to be more disproportionately committed in the BJC area of jurisdiction (which includes the downtown business district) than are those activities for which the boys were charged. The higher representation of girls in arraignments might also be due to the introduction directly into the courts of kids charged with being runaways.

The statistics for BJC do include the charges of "runaway," "truant" and "stubborn child" which are now covered by the Children In Need of Services (CHINS) Law. These charges accounted for 20% of all BJC complaints against girls as compared to 6% of all complaints against boys.

While larceny accounted for 57% of the Boston Police charges against girls, it accounted for 67% of the BJC charges excluding CHINS type complaints (which do not seem to be included in the arrest figures). There was a similar effect with larceny charges against boys which accounted for 27% of the arraignments, but only 22% of the arrests. This skewing is probably due to the fact that kids are

BOSTON JUVENILE COURT
TYPES OF COMPLAINTS (1973)

Complaint	Boys	Girls
Larceny	523 (26%)	344 (53.7%)
Runaway	79	108 (16.8%)
Stubborn child	24	20
Truant	8	1
Sex offenses (excluding rape)	9	49 (7.6%)
Breaking and entering	226 (11%)	4
Motor vehicle without authority (car theft)	200 (10%)	11
Motor vehicle-driving under influence	1 /	0
Motor vehicle without license	92	3
Speeding and others	61	0
Motor offenses and others	152 (7%)	26
Armed robbery or assault without intent to rob	140 (7%)	16
Robbery	94	5
Assault and battery		
Assault and battery with deadly weapon	75	13
Murder, manslaughter, assault with intent to murder	6	0
Possession of deadly weapon	25	1
Receiving stolen goods	71	8
Possession of burglar's tools	60	1
Drugs	49	4
Rape	8	0
Arson	8	0
Kidnapping	3	10
Possession of mace	2	0
Total	1,983	641

CHART II: Note: Percentages in parentheses indicate what proportion of all complaints against juveniles of a particular sex consist of a particular complaint.

more likely to get picked up on larceny charges in the downtown shopping/business districts (which are in BJC's area of jurisdiction) than in other parts of Boston.

While more boys than girls were arrested under the combined categories of "prostitution and common vice" and "sex charges excluding rape" (110 as compared with 72) over five times as many girls were arraigned under the category of "sex offenses excluding rape" (49 as compared with 9). Part of the skewing may be due to the fact that girls would be more likely to be engaging in prostitution in the downtown area than in other parts of Boston. However, it appears that, to some extent at least, charges of sex offenses against boys were being dropped more readily than those against girls.

-Commitment to DYS* (These statistics are for commitment to DYS over a four month period in 1973. The statistics are divided by regions. Region 6 is composed of the city of Boston and a couple of small neighboring communities.)

Girls accounted for 19% of the commitments in region 6. This compares with 24% of the BJC complaints and 28% of the commitments statewide (see Chart III).

In comparing the commitment data with the data on arrests and arraignments, there are some glaring differences. First, while most of the arrests and arraignments for girls were on the charge of larceny, the overwhelming majority of commitments to DYS were for status offenses ("runaway," "suborn child" and "truant"). These offenses account for seven out of nine of the girls committed in region six and 68% of the girls committed statewide. This compares

COMMITMENTS TO DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES
From April 15 to August 15, 1973

Offense	Region 6		Total for State	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Motor vehicle	47	0	50	3
Breaking and entering	9	0	73	3
Larceny	7	2	35	5
Runaway	3	4	9	33
Aggravated assault	1	0	18	3
Simple assault	5	0	19	5
Stubbornness	3	3	12	21
Sex offenses	0	0	0	0
Drunk	1	0	3	3
Drugs	2	0	8	3
Disorderly conduct	0	0	2	1
School offenses	0	0	3	5
Other	0	0	1	2
Total	31	9	231	87

CHART III.

with 20% of the BJC complaints. (It should also be noted that commitments on status offenses are disproportionately high for boys, too, but not to the extent that they are for girls. 15% of the boys committed in region six and 11% of the boys committed statewide were committed for these offenses.) This discrepancy could be the result of one or both of two things. Either girls who came into court on status charges were being committed at a much higher rate than girls who came in on other charges and/or non-CHINS charges against girls were being "reduced" to status complaint some time during the court process. The latter is a likely possibility due to the "chivalry factor" since judges might want to avoid labelling girls as "criminals."

Second, while the two most common offenses for which girls were arrested were larceny and "prostitution and common vice," there were very few girls committed on charges of larceny and none for "sex offenses."

Girls represented a higher percentage of referrals (40%) than they do of commitments. This could also be due to the "chivalry factor" since the judge might have wanted to avoid placing the stigma of commitment on the girls. Some of the girls who are referred for services to DYS are also going into group houses.

With these statistics in mind, one can make some comments on the selection process by which girls get into DYS. In comparing the charges on which the girls are arrested and arraigned with those for which they are committed to DYS, it might seem that it is the "lighter" (or less seriously delinquent) girls who are being committed to DYS. One might get this impression because of the high proportion of DYS girls, compared

to arrested and arraigned girls, who are in on status complaints. This may be an illusion, however, since most of the people I spoke with, both in and out of DYS, who have worked with girls, said that, in general, a girl goes through court a much higher number of times than a boy before a judge will commit her. (Unfortunately, there weren't any statistics available by which I could verify this.)

A possible explanation for the situation is that the girls who come into court on status offenses are being committed at an incredibly high rate while girls who come in on other charges are being committed at an incredibly low rate. It might then be the case that girls who come through court on non-status charges (which make up the bulk of the cases involving girls) are going through court a much larger number of times than are boys before being committed.

This is not likely to be a complete explanation since people have indicated that it is most of the girls in DYS who have been through court a large number of times and most of those girls are in on status offenses. A more likely explanation is that, to some extent at least, many of the girls who are being committed on status offenses were really brought into court on other charges, or, at least, came to the attention to the juvenile system because of more serious activities, but the judge did not want to place a serious charge on the girl's record.

The foregoing discussion indicates that the girls in DYS are probably not representative of "delinquent girls" to the same extent that DYS boys are representative of "delinquent boys" either because they disproportionately consist of status offenders or because they disproportionately consist of many-time offenders and more seriously

delinquent kids. Thus, the group home for girls are not drawing on the same population that they would be if the juvenile justice system handled girls in the same way that it handles boys.

As for how accurately the kids in group homes represent kids in DYS, there is no data available. However, given the process of selection there are some assumptions which can be made. Group homes generally take "cream" when they select residents. They usually look for kids who are not drug-dependent and not violent and can generally be trusted with a large amount of freedom. An individual group home will also try to select kids whose goals for themselves are consistent with those of the home, as will the kids select programs whose goals are consistent with theirs. Thus, it is fairly clear that the kids in group homes do not accurately represent kids in DYS as a whole.

However, is the proportion of boys in DYS as a whole who are similar to those boys now in group homes the same as the proportion of girls in DYS as a whole who are similar to those girls now in group homes? It is clear that there is a disproportionately low number of girls (compared to boys) in group homes. However, there is also a disproportionately low number of group home placements available to girls. The low number of placements for girls is due to insufficient interest in developing such placements for girls.⁹ However, it is not clear that if more group homes for girls of the type now in existence were to be developed that there would be a sufficient number of DYS girls who desired such placements and were deemed appropriate for them or that these girls⁸ would be similar as a group to the girls now in group homes.

Thus, it may or may not be the case that the girls in group homes today are a much more highly selected sample than the boys presently in group homes. Thus, even if the boys' and girls' group homes examined in the study seem to be operating in similar fashions, I could not conclude that if more girls' group homes of the type operating today were to be started that these homes would operate in the same fashion since the rest of the girls in DYS may have very different problems from those presently living in group homes.

Problems Relating to the Interviewing Situation

One problem always inherent in any interviewing/observation situation is that the reporting is subjective. The interviewer will naturally introduce his or her own biases into the situation. I did two things to try to avoid this problem. First, the overwhelming majority of interviewing was done by two persons, myself and another female student. Second, we tried to be aware of potential biases and avoid them.

There were, of course, at least two biases affecting our work. First, both of the interviewers were young women. The fact that the boys were more to talk to us than were the girls may be due to this fact and may have affected our results. Second, due to the delicacy of the interviewing situation, we were not always able to gather all the information that we had intended to gather. For example, there were sometimes limitations as to the persons with whom we could speak.

Fortunately, this was only a serious problem at one of the group homes. 10

A final problem was that the interviewing and observation situations at the homes were not comparable. At some homes we were able to

conduct only formal interviews, while at others we were able to observe the interactions between the staff and the kids and among the kids.¹¹

A Brief Sketch of the Group Homes Studied

Delta

This group home serves a maximum of six girls aged 15 to 18. Delta takes kids from both the Division of Youth Services (DYS) and the Division of Family and Child Services (DFCS). Delta maintains a low-pressured atmosphere without a large emphasis on explicitly "therapeutic" interaction (e.g., group sessions or formalized individual counseling). Delta sees its goal as developing independence in the kids. Most of its kids do not go back to their families when they leave the program.

Theta

This group home serves a maximum of ten girls aged 16 to 20. Theta takes kids from both DYS and DFCS. Theta is somewhat unique in that the entire program is geared towards preparing young women for an independent living situation (i.e., an apartment). There are three progressive stages to the program: the main house; an apartment in the basement; and an apartment located several blocks away. The atmosphere is low-pressured, very unstructured and designed for girls who are already fairly independent.

Sigma

This home serves a maximum of twelve girls aged 13 to 17 and takes kids from both DYS and DFCS. The program is fairly low-pressured with a moderate degree of structure and explicitly therapeutic interactions.

It is geared towards girls who are not initially very independent and its primary goal is to return the girl to her family.

Epsilon

This program serves a maximum of twelve boys aged 16 to 20 and takes both DYS and DFCS kids. The program maintains a low-pressured atmosphere coupled with a high degree of formal therapeutic interactions. The program is highly structured and there is a large degree of restriction on the activities of the kids. The program is geared toward returning the boy to his family.

Omega

This home serves a maximum of twelve boys aged 15 to 18 and primarily takes DYS kids. The program maintains a very high-pressured atmosphere with a high degree of both formal and informal therapeutic interaction. The program is geared towards teaching the boys to function independently without getting into trouble with the law.

Alpha

This group home serves a maximum of eight boys aged 12 to 16 (though most of those presently in the home were 15 years old). Alpha takes both DYS and DFCS kids. The program maintains a low-pressured atmosphere with a low degree of structure and a low degree of formal therapeutic interactions. The program is geared towards returning the boys to their families.

Footnotes

(Chapter 3)

1. Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, "1972 Annual Report," Boston, 1972, and,
Joint Legislative Committee on State Administration, "Report on the State of D.Y.S. Services." Boston, 1972.
2. Op. Cit., Joint Legislative Committee on State Administration.
3. Discussion with various D.Y.S. employees and others in Massachusetts who have worked with delinquent girls.
4. The interviews were done in collaboration with Gloria D. Ridley, a senior in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at M.I.T.
5. Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, "Residential Program Providing Services to Youth of the Department of Youth Services," Boston, 1974.
6. Ibid.
7. Discussion with various D.Y.S. employees and others who have worked with delinquent girls.
8. Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, Residential Program Providing Services to Youth of the Department of Youth Services.
9. Discussions with various D.Y.S. employees who have worked with delinquent girls.
10. At Sigma we were able to speak with only one staff member--the director--and were not allowed to speak with the kids.
11. At Delta I was able to make extensive observations over the course of two separate evenings. The first evening was not a typical situation because the kids and the staff had just had a big fight over a disciplinary matter and thus, most of the kids were in a very bad mood.

Chapter IV: The Case Studies

Introduction

In this chapter I will present information on the three boys' homes and three girls' homes which I visited during the fall of 1974. The information will be divided into sections by subject rather than having a separate section for each home. There will be seven major sections.

The first section will deal with broad staff attitudes. There will be one sub-section on attitudes toward the causes of delinquency and the problems of delinquent kids. The other sub-section will deal with the staff's attitudes toward the major changes which their program should ideally help a kid to bring about for himself or herself.

The second section will deal with staff composition and selection. The sub-section on selection will discuss the qualities which the programs sought in staff members.

The third section will deal with criteria used by the homes in selecting kids, including objective and subjective criteria.

The fourth section will compare basic program design within the homes. Such topics as counseling, day-to-day activities, disciplinary structure and degree of decision sharing among staff and kids will be discussed.

The fifth section will deal with staff-kid interactions. The staff's ideas regarding ideal methods of interacting as well as the general character of the interactions will be discussed. The information presented will be based on discussions with staff and kids, as well as observations of the interviewing team.

The sixth section will deal with the kids' attitudes toward the program, including their goals while in the program.

The last section will deal with interactions among the kids. This section is based primarily on discussions with staff, but also contains information obtained from the kids and based on personal observation.

General Staff Attitudes

Causes of Delinquency

I visited six halfway houses. Among the six houses, I found two different sets of staff attitudes as to the causes of delinquency, or in a more general sense, the reasons the staff see for the kids' presence in the programs. One set of attitudes focuses on the kid and his/her inability to function in society. The staff at homes holding these attitudes did have some specific ideas as to what the kids' problems are, but made few generalizations about the causes of the problems. The other set of staff attitudes focuses on the home situation and the parents as the reason for the problems of the kids.

Omega (boys), Delta (girls) and Theta (girls) are the three homes who focus on the kids' inability to function in society. Though all three homes view the kids' problems in terms of not being able to function responsibly and independently, the boys' home places more emphasis on the problem of getting into trouble with the law than do the girls' homes. This is probably because the boys at Omega more frequently have backgrounds which involve criminal activity (e.g., breaking and entering, car theft) than do the girls at Delta and Theta.

Both Delta and Theta said that the major reason that the girls are in group homes is that though for one reason or another they are not able to stay at home, they are not yet sufficiently independent to be out on their own. The reasons they are not ready to be out on their

own include not knowing the logistics of handling an apartment and a budget, not having the self-confidence to deal with the world on their own, not having marketable job skills and not yet being finished with school. Deita also cited the feeling of being rejected from the home as a major problem for many of the girls.

Epsilon (boys), Sigma (girls) and Alpha (boys) see the home and parents as being the major source of the kids' problems. Though Alpha differs from the first two in that it is less critical of the parents, Epsilon and Sigma feel that the kids are irresponsible because the parents have not encouraged or forced them enough to take responsibility for their actions. They feel that the kids' problems are due to too much influence from peers and not enough from the family. In particular, parents don't show the kids they care by taking the effort to guide and restrain them. Epsilon, for example, said that kids are "angry at their parents" because they aren't getting affection and strength from them, and that they are looking for attention when they get into trouble because they haven't gotten positive attention before. Both programs said that the kids are upset because they can't live at home, and that all kids want to live at home no matter how bad it is. As a result of feeling rejected by their families, the kids have a low self-image. Sigma goes one step farther to emphasize the fact that the schools are very poor and don't offer kids any challenges, and that this has contributed to the boredom and irresponsible behavior of the kids.

The attitudes of Alpha's staff are similar to those of Epsilon and Sigma in that the home is viewed as the primary source of the problem, but they place more emphasis on the lack of a supportive family

atmosphere as opposed to how poorly the parents have raised the kids. In the sense that Alpha emphasizes rejections from the family, its attitudes are similar to Delta's. However, while Delta does not feel that return to the home is appropriate, Alpha does, probably due to the youth of its residents (12 to 16 years of age).

Major Formal Goal of the Program

All the programs stressed building the kids' independence and teaching them how to deal with personal problems, as formal goals for their houses. These larger goals for the kids included learning how to make decisions about things and to be responsible. Those three programs which emphasized the importance of the home (Epsilon, Sigma and Alpha) want ideally to be able to return the kid to the home, though they recognize that this is not always possible.

There are many other informal goals evident in the programs, which can be inferred both from the structure of the programs and from statements made by the staff. These are discussed in other sections.

Staff Selection and Composition

Composition

All of the programs except Epsilon have very young staff of both sexes and even Epsilon said that they would like to get a female staff member in the near future. Two houses, Alpha (boys' program oriented toward returning the kid to the home) and Theta (girls' program oriented toward independent living) had young live-in houseparents with additional counseling staff of the same sex as the kids. Contrary to

what one might have expected, only one of the two houses with house-parents is oriented towards returning the kids to their families.

Selection

I have information from two houses on staff hiring criteria. In these homes the criteria are not formal; selection is based primarily on a "gut reaction" of those doing the hiring. To the extent that certain qualities in potential staff members are sought, these qualities are very consistent with the present staff's philosophy of running the program.

Omega wants "aggressive, dynamic" people who command respect and are good with kids. Several of their male counselors are from "tough" backgrounds (e.g., ex-con, ex-marine drill instructor). This last characteristic was unique among the six houses.

Sigma wants people who are good with kids, have strength in handling feelings and can show a sense of stability. (The director mentioned a male former staff member who, during a crisis situation in the house when the girls needed support, had had problems handling his own emotions; instead of giving the girls support, he needed support himself.) The director also said that it was hard to find a good male staff member who didn't get "caught up in an ego trip" because some adolescent girl was "coming on to him".

Selection of Residents

In addition to age, there are two major sets of criteria used in the selection of kids for the houses. One set of criteria deals with how well the kid is likely to work out in the program or whether the kid

is likely to be helped by the program. These criteria primarily focus on the degree of motivation in the kid. The other set of criteria are aimed at insuring the right kinds of interaction among the kids. These criteria are mainly directed at achieving a proper mixture of types of kids.

The programs serve slightly different age groups: Omega and Delta serve 15 to 18 year-olds; Theta and Epsilon serve 16 to 20 year-olds; Sigma serves 13 to 17 year-olds; and Alpha serves younger kids, 12 to 16 year-olds.

All of the programs select kids with a likelihood for success in their particular home. For example, none of the programs will take kids who are drug-dependent or who have violent behavior patterns. All the programs said that they look for some indication in the kid of motivation to change, but there is a difference in the degree to which the house will go out of its way to find that motivation in the kid. Epsilon (low-pressure, home-oriented boys' program) and Delta (low-pressure, independent-oriented girls' program) are the two programs who seem the most willing to "bend over backwards" to find some sign of motivation in a kid. This is consistent with their low-pressure atmosphere. Theta, because it sees itself as a last step in preparing a young woman for an independent living situation, and because it does not have a high degree of supervision, looks for girls who are very committed to straightening themselves out and who are fairly independent. Many of the girls who come to this house have been through other programs before.

Of the six programs, the only one which made extensive statements about what causes a kid to become motivated to change and what types of kids were most likely to be successful in the program is Epsilon. They said that most kids don't decide to make a commitment to change on their own, but are pressured into doing so by the courts, their families (who sometimes rely on the juvenile justice system to discipline their kids) or from within, because they get tired of the situation they are in (e.g., being out on the streets). (Sigma, Alpha and Theta made similar statements about kids finally just getting tired of the situation they are in.) The kids that Epsilon saw as most likely to be successful are those who are willing to make some outward change in their behavior and to accept an authority figure even if their reactions to the staff appear to "start off as a game". They feel that kids who will "just tell the staff where to go" won't make it. These comments indicate that Epsilon, like most group homes, is trying to pre-select kids who will be successful in their program.

Several houses made comments indicating the importance of obtaining the proper mixture of kids in the house. For example, several houses (both boys' and girls') said that it is important to have some "strong" kids who are committed to the program and who will set an example for the other kids. Sigma cited a house with too many "acting out" kids as one that would not work, presumably because those kids would absorb too much of the staff's attention.

Despite the concern about interactions among the kids, only two houses (one boys' and one girls') have any formal procedure for input

from present residents concerning potential residents, and in both houses the staff make the final decision. In a third house (Delta) the director admitted that they "wouldn't refuse a girl just because the other kids didn't like her".

Omega is one of the houses with formal input. After the prospective resident has spent a trial week at the house, there is a house meeting with kids, staff and the prospective resident. All the kids give their opinion as to whether they think the prospective resident is motivated and whether the house can be of any help to him.

At Theta, after a prospective resident has made several visits to the house, there is a group discussion about the girl on the same basis as the discussion at Omega except that the prospective resident is not present. The staff said that this input is very helpful because frequently, the kids will find out something that the staff didn't know about a prospective resident; for example, that she is a heavy drug-user.

The Programs

Program Structure and Rules

There are a number of differences in the houses in formal program structure. These include differences in "work or school requirements", rules, disciplinary systems, and the degree of decision sharing between the staff and the kids.

All of the houses required each kid to attend "normal" school (i.e., a regular public or private school) if under sixteen years of age or to go to school, hold a full-time job or participate in a full-time job-training program if over sixteen. The degree to which these rules are

enforced varies with the house. At Theta (independence-oriented girls' house), Sigma (home-oriented girls' house) and Alpha (home-oriented boys' house) these rules are very strictly enforced. At Delta (independence-oriented girls' house), however, the director said of one girl (who, at the time of our visit, was not employed or in school) that they (the staff) would just leave her alone and "after a while she will get bored and decide to do something". Epsilon (home-oriented boys' program) requires a kid to remain in the house at all times for his first thirty days in the program, thus precluding work or school during that time.

Theta has a somewhat unique program. Theta's primary goal is to prepare young women for apartment living and the program is structured to fit this goal. The program has three stages. There are six girls who live in the main part of the house, two in a basement apartment with a separate entrance and separate cooking facilities, and two in an apartment several blocks away. Each stage requires progressively more responsibility from and gives more freedom to the kids who are in it. For example, the apartment residents have their own food budgets which they must stick to, but the staff tends to give more attention to how the basement residents are handling their budget, than to how the separate apartment residents are handling theirs. Likewise, the staff expects that the separate apartment residents will come to them less often for guidance on matters of running the apartment, than will the basement residents. The apartment residents are also less closely supervised on matters such as curfews than are the house residents.

The houses vary in the degree of restrictiveness regarding privi-

leges and prohibitions on activities. Epsilon and Sigma are the most restrictive houses, while Theta and Omega are the least restrictive. It is interesting that the more restrictive houses are those that are oriented towards returning the kid to the family, while the less restrictive homes appear to be those that are oriented towards preparing the kid for independent living. This is probably due to the fact that the staff in the home-oriented houses feel that the parents of the kids have not exerted enough controls in the past, while the staff in the independence-oriented houses are trying to prepare the kids for a time when there won't be anyone to tell them "what to do and what not to do".

At Epsilon, for his first thirty days in the program, a boy is on total "grounds". This means no visitors, no phone calls and no leaving the house for any reason. Even after this initial grounding period, all privileges must be slowly earned. And, to a large extent, the kids must ask permission for "privileges". When we were there, for example, one boy asked if he could have a friend over in the afternoon, and the staff member said yes but made a point of setting an exact time, 3:00 to 5:15. Another two kids asked if they could go out on the front lawn to play frisbee. (Those two were under more restrictions than most of the boys in the house.) The staff said that none of the kids can get completely off "grounds" anymore. There was a time when they could, but a "crisis" occurred where most of the kids were getting into a lot of trouble away from the house, so the staff clamped down.

At Theta and Omega the rules are much less restrictive than the other houses. For example, at Theta the curfews on staying out at night are midnight on weekdays and 2 A.M. on weekends, which is much later

than most of the other programs. Another example of the dichotomy between the restrictive and less restrictive houses is rules about alcohol and drugs. At Epsilon and Sigma, the kids are not allowed to use alcohol or drugs on or off the premises, despite the fact that at Epsilon a number of the kids are over the drinking age. At Theta, kids who are over eighteen, and at Omega, any of the kids, can drink off the premises so long as they can exercise proper control (which essentially means that they don't come home drunk or get into trouble). Also, at Omega, the kids can use marijuana away from the house so long as they remain basically in control of themselves and don't get into any trouble with the police. (The staff said that this rule is, in part, a recognition of the fact that the kids will "smoke dope anyway".)

At all of the houses, the degree of freedom for an individual kid is somehow linked to that kid's behavior. This is done through rewards and/or disciplinary systems. The rewards systems generally take the form of allowing the kid to earn more and more privileges, such as later curfews, larger allowances, and overnight passes to go home. The disciplinary systems take the form of restricting the kid in some way for bad behavior.

Several of the homes have some kind of reward system. Both Epsilon and Sigma have highly individualized systems whereby curfews and other privileges are continually adjusted, based on the demonstrated responsibility of the kid. Omega has a "levels" system with increased responsibilities and privileges for kids on each of the three levels, though many individual adjustments are made within each level. Theta's

arrangement is similar to Omega's in that each of the three "stages" in the program entail increased responsibilities and freedoms for the girls in them. In both Omega and Theta the kids have a large input into decisions about who will advance to the next "level" or stage.

In all the homes, disciplinary decisions are made on an individual basis. With one exception (Delta) disciplinary decisions are made by the staff, though sometimes the youngster involved takes part in the decision. A few homes made statements indicating their philosophies regarding the use of disciplinary measures.

Delta is the one home in which disciplinary decisions are made by the kids as a group. This is due to a recent change in policy. Previously, the staff decided all disciplinary matters, but now there is a "board meeting" once per week where the kids decide as a group how to handle situations where a girl has broken a rule. The kids also have some say as to what the rules will be, although it has not been explicitly decided by the staff how far these powers go. (The staff have ultimate veto powers, but had not yet exercised them in the first few weeks under the new system.) This change in policy has had some impact on the relationships between staff and kids, which will be discussed in the section on interactions between staff and kids.

Both Sigma and Theta in some way indicated that their disciplinary systems are designed to foster responsibility on the part of the kid. For instance, Theta said that there are two reasons that there are no rules designating particular punishments for particular behavior:

- 1) the staff didn't want to set up an expectation of bad behav-

ior, and;

2) they didn't want to make it possible for a kid to "buy her way out of" good behavior (e.g., if a girl were out at a party she might say, "Since I'm enjoying myself, I'll stay out past curfew and get put on restriction tomorrow when I wasn't planning on doing anything anyway.")

This way, good behavior is expected to become a matter of responsibility. Sigma gave another example of how disciplinary decisions are used to foster responsibility. One of the girls had broken a rule and the girl suggested that her punishment be two weeks restriction, but the director said, "Oh, no. You're not going to get me to take responsibility for keeping you in for two weeks. You'll have to take responsibility for something yourself."

Epsilon and Omega both indicated that they sometimes use restrictions as a means of control when things are "generally getting out of hand". They both indicated times when they had placed the entire house on restriction so that the staff and the kids could spend some time together straightening things out, and so the staff could keep better track of the kids.

Several of the houses have some formal mechanism for decision-sharing between staff and kids as regards policy matters. In the other houses the staff simply indicated that the kids know that the staff will listen to the kids' opinions if they offer them (though this is more believable in some of the homes than in others). Of those homes with formal decision-sharing mechanisms, Theta is the one where the kids have

the largest say in policy matters. Sigma, Omega and Delta also have some formal process for decision-sharing.

At Theta, the kids may change any rule in the house except for the three basic rules prohibiting drugs and alcohol, requiring work or school and requiring attendance at the weekly meetings. However, if they wish to change a rule, they must offer a "workable" alternative. For instance, it is recognized that the house must be kept clean, but if they want to change the system by which that is presently being done, that is allowed. It is hoped by the staff that this type of freedom will encourage responsible decision-making. In addition, the kids at Theta decide who will get to move on to the next stage of the program and they have some input into decisions about accepting new residents.

At other houses, the decision-sharing is limited to specific areas. At Omega, the kids take part in decisions about taking in a new resident, level changes in the house and group activities. At Sigma, the kids have some input into decisions about rules, though this input is somewhat limited (the staff did not indicate how it was limited). At Delta, the kids make disciplinary decisions and have some input in formulating rules.

At both Epsilon and Alpha, the two houses where there is no formal decision-sharing process, the staff said that the kids' opinions on policy matters are readily accepted. I think that this may be less true of Epsilon than of Alpha simply because it seemed to me that the staff at Epsilon did not have a lot of respect for the kids as capable individuals (this will be discussed further in the section on "Staff-

Kid Interaction").

Counseling and the "Therapeutic Environment"

There is a substantial amount of variation in the houses in the area of "therapy". All of the houses have some formal counseling though the type and amount varies. The informal "therapeutic environment" or the atmosphere which the staff try to generate in the house to encourage the process of change in the kids also varies, though in most houses it is usually characterized by a low amount of external pressure. For an extensive discussion of the techniques used by the staff to foster change in the kids, see the section on "Staff-Kid Interactions.

There is a wide variation in the houses in the degree to which the staff try to "pressure" the kids to change. Omega is the high pressure extreme; the other houses are all much lower-pressured in one way or another.

At Omega, the staff try to generate an atmosphere where the staff, with the help of the kids, are always pressing each boy to examine his behavior, to talk about his problems, and to change. Neither the staff nor the other kids will allow a kid to isolate himself from the house.

Epsilon is a mixture of high-and-low pressure techniques. The staff said that they emphasize patience when dealing with the kids and that if a kid doesn't "open up" by himself, the staff will just continue to be supportive and give him a chance to open up on his own time. The staff said they will wait a long time, possibly several months, before

starting to "increase the pressure". However, Epsilon does create a situation which they believe will induce change through a type of internal pressure. The initial thirty days in the program during which each kid must stay in the house is supposed to foster boredom so that: 1) the kid will reflect on his situation and 2) the kid will have to think of something constructive to do to occupy his time (one boy got an old car and fixed it up). It seems that this situation would create a lot of internal pressure so that when the staff say that they don't pressure a kid, they are probably referring to verbal pressure.

The remaining four houses all made statements which indicated that they do not use high-pressure techniques to change kids. This is very believable in three of the houses (Theta, Delta, Alpha) where the staff seem to have easy-going relationships and attitudes towards the kids. At the fourth house, Sigma, the director is much less easy-going and seemed as though she might be "tougher" with the kids. This might indicate a greater use of pressure, although she said nothing explicit to indicate this and I did not have a chance to observe her interacting with the girls or to speak with the kids about this issue.

All of the houses which emphasize returning the kid to the family have some formal set-up for family counseling. For example, Epsilon has a parents' group which meets weekly. The other homes will do family counseling in some situations.

Omega, Epsilon and Sigma are the houses with the largest amount of group counseling. All of these homes have several or more meetings weekly. The large number of meetings at Omega seems consistent with

their mixed attitudes towards pressure.

The other houses, Alpha, Theta, and Delta have one or, in the case of Delta, two group meetings weekly. At Theta, the group meetings are slightly more oriented towards managing the house, as opposed to "therapy". The meetings at Delta and Alpha are run by an outside consultant (a psychologist at Alpha and a male social worker at Delta). The low number of meetings at these houses seems consistent with their low-pressure atmospheres.

There do not seem to be any definite patterns in the use of group counseling in the houses with regard to sex. However, the situation at Delta is a case of slightly different attitudes. The group meetings at Delta were only recently begun (a month or so before my first visit). This may be due to an opinion on the part of the director that the girls couldn't deal with their problems in this type of forum. These attitudes are discussed in depth in the section on staff-kid interactions.

Kids' Attitudes Toward the Program--Their Goals in the Program

In this section I will discuss what the kids see as their goals while in the group home. Additionally, I will discuss the kids' attitudes toward the rules and structure of the program, as well as some general attitudes toward the program.

Not surprisingly, the kids' goals for themselves seem to be the same, in a general sense, as those of the staff. This is probably because of the mutual selection process by which the kids enter the program

and the fact that if a kid's goals are at odds with the staff's goals for him or her, after awhile either the staff will expel the kid or the kid will run from the house.

In the houses oriented toward returning the kid to the home, the kids usually entered the program because they saw it as something they had to do to be able to return home. Unfortunately, this observation is only based on conversations with boys from home-oriented programs since we were not permitted to speak with the girls at Sigma. The kids usually went along initially with other facets of the program (e.g., school, group meetings) because they saw it as something they had to do to be able to go home. However, as time went on the program changed their attitudes towards some of these other things. For instance, a couple of the boys at Alpha said that initially they didn't want to go to school but did so only so that they could be in the program. One of these boys said that the program had since changed his attitudes about school and that he can now see reasons for attending school.

In the independence-oriented programs the kids frequently had more of an idea of the kinds of personal problems they wanted to work out than did the kids in the home-oriented programs. For instance, one girl at Delta said that she wanted to develop her leadership potential and learn how to get close to people more easily. However, as in the home-oriented programs, some kids came into the house with just one simple goal in mind--being able to get out on their own. One girl at Theta, for example, wanted a place to live while she finished high school, because she couldn't support herself while she did that. Since she also

didn't feel ready to get an apartment on her own yet, she felt that the program was a good way to ease into that situation.

The kids in the houses with a low-pressured approach to personal problem-solving seem to like that approach. The boys in Omega, which is a high-pressured program, generally tend to go along with the pressure, though at times an individual kid will express a dislike for the pressure. One boy in the group meeting, for example, was talking about quitting the program. He said that people were always telling him about all the things he should change about himself, yet that he thought that he was "OK" (though he didn't sound like he believed he was). Though he was, at the time, expressing a dislike for the pressure, it is not clear whether over time he was responding favorably or unfavorably to it.

At Delta, the girls had just started having group meetings two months before the visit when I discussed the matter with them. Two of the girls said that they didn't like the group meetings, one of them saying that they were "pointless". However, that same girl said that she was getting something out of the program (My impression is that she may have been getting something out of the meeting but just felt uncomfortable about admitting it.). Since the girls had been in the house for several months before the meetings started, they may have been having difficulty adjusting to the idea (see social worker's comments in the section on kid-staff interactions). A third girl said that the meetings were very helpful. She said that they had helped her with a lot of

things and that they made it "OK" for her to discuss things with another girl about that girl's behavior without the other girl thinking that she was prying. She was saying, in effect, that the meetings legitimized the type of peer pressure which is supposed to take place in group homes.

The kids generally think that the rules in their house are reasonable, except in Epsilon where they tend to think the rules are a little too restrictive. One boy there said that he didn't think that the rules were too restrictive at first because he had just come from a "concept" house which had even more rules. But now he is in school and involved in outside activities and he finds the rules too restrictive.

I picked up a seemingly unusual (compared to the other houses) attitude at Delta. I got the impression that the girls there are more interested in getting out of the house as often as possible (usually to see boyfriends) than are the kids at other programs (I may have been overly influenced by the evening I spent there when several kids were on restriction and they were, indeed, anxious to get out of the house, but based on the other time I spent there, I think the impression is still valid to some degree). I didn't get this impression at the boys' houses, nor at Theta, but the girls there are much more mature, and I don't think that would be a valid comparison. Unfortunately, I have no information in this regard on the girls at Sigma.

Staff-Kid Interactions

There are two general types of interactions to be discussed in this section. First, there are "methods" used by the staff in their

"informal" interactions with the kids to further those goals which the staff have for the kids. These goals generally include getting the kid to deal with personal problems, getting the kids to be responsible and independent, and raising the kids' self-esteem. The second type of interactions discussed are the character of the interactions generally and the nature of the less "planned" interactions. This includes a discussion of the attitudes the staff have toward the kids in their relationships with them, and the nature of the relationships between the staff and kids generally.

Methods of Interacting

In an earlier section I dealt with the issue of whether the staff of the houses generally tend to use high-or low-pressure techniques for getting the kids to deal with personal problems. In this section I will discuss some of the specific techniques used by the staff in informal interactions to get kids to deal with personal problems and to get kids to be responsible and independent.

The techniques which the staff at any given house say they used to get the kids to deal with personal problems are generally consistent with what the staff has said about the degree of pressure at the house. For instance, the staff at Sigma said that they try to get the kids to verbalize about their problems but that this is best done under low-pressure conditions. For instance, a staff member might walk with a girl to the store and have a chat with her on the way.

The staff at two of the low-pressure, home-oriented houses (one girls' and one boys') also stressed the importance of building up the

kids' self-esteem. Sigma said that it was important not to tear the kid down as a person. If a girl does something wrong, the staff emphasizes that it is her behavior that is wrong and that that can be changed, but that she is "OK". At Epsilon, the staff try to emphasize the "positive" in dealing with a kid. One counselor said, "If a boy does ten bad things and one good thing, I emphasize the one good thing and not the ten bad ones."

Though all of the homes stressed the importance of getting kids to be responsible and independent, few of the homes had anything concrete to say about how they try to accomplish this goal. At some of the programs, particularly Theta, the structure of the program is geared to establishing independence and the staff supplement the structure through their dealings with the kids. At other programs there is no structural orientation towards encouraging independence, and thus, the staff's interactions with the kids become very important. The three types of things that the staffs cited in this respect were allowing or forcing the kids to make their own decisions (Theta and Sigma), getting the kids to do "nuts and bolts" things themselves (Theta, Sigma, Delta and Omega), and getting the kids to develop outside activities for themselves (all of the houses do this to some extent).

Though both Sigma and Theta, two girls' houses, emphasized the importance of getting kids to make their own decisions, they have different attitudes as to how this should be done. At Theta, the staff said that if there is some important decision which a girl has to make, the staff will try to give her a realistic appraisal of the ramifications

of all the options and then let the kid decide for herself. The staff there seemed very "straight" about informing the kids about the consequences of their actions.

Sigma expressed a set of somewhat conflicting views. First, they said that it is very important to get kids to make their own decisions, but that the kids will try to avoid this. At the same time, they said that when dealing with kids, one has to remember that they are only kids and that they shouldn't be pressured too hard about making decisions which would be hard even for adults. Despite the emphasis on getting kids to make their own decisions, though, the staff said that sometimes it is necessary to "play games to get the kids to make the right decision". For example, each girl who works is required to either pay the house 25 percent of her salary, keep the check, but forfeit the various subsidies that the house pays for her, or she can put 25 percent of the check in the bank and clear any spending of that money with her counselor. Naturally, the kids "choose" to put the money in the bank. Several other similar examples of "game-playing" were mentioned.

In all of the houses, the kids are required to carry out some personal responsibilities. These include such things as doing their own cooking or shopping or maintaining a bank account. The nature of these duties does not seem to vary according to any particular patterns among the houses. Though several of the houses mentioned that these activities are important for developing independence, there was very little attention given to the subject in the interviews and thus it is difficult to determine if there is any variation among the houses in

the emphasis placed on these activities.

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All of the houses in some way encourage the kids to develop independent activities in the community. However, there are frequently more of these activities available to boys than to girls (e.g., YMCA groups).

General Character of Interaction

In this section I will discuss the staff's attitudes towards the kids and how these attitudes influence interactions, the nature of the relationship between the staff and kids, including how comfortable a relationship the staff and kids seem to have, whether the staff is "straight" with the kids, and whether the kids tend to come to the staff about their problems; and relationships of the kids to staff of the opposite sex.

The amount of "faith" that the staff have in the kids' abilities to act responsibly, and the amount of respect that the staff have for the kids' opinions is very important in shaping the relationships between the staff and the kids. My impression, based on general conversation and on specific program elements in the houses, is that there is a large amount of variation in the amount of respect that the staff in these houses have for the kids. It seemed that the staff at Omega, Alpha and Theta have a high degree of respect for the kids, that Sigma and Epsilon have a low degree of respect for the kids, while the level of respect at Delta runs somewhere in between.

At both Epsilon and Sigma, it seemed that the staff does not have much faith in the kids' abilities to make good decisions. At Epsilon, this is indicated by the fact that the kids have to ask permission be-

fore doing just about anything. At Sigma, a similar attitude is reflected in the staff's statement that it is necessary to play "games" to "get the kids to make the right decision".

At Delta there seemed less agreement about the degree to which the kids were to be trusted. The director, for example, indicated a low degree of faith in the kids by several of his comments. First, he said that the kids are sometimes manipulative and thus, that some of the house rules were designed to preclude manipulation of the staff by the kids. Second, he admitted that he would not refuse to take a kid into the house "just because the other girls didn't like her". He implied that he felt that the only kind of feedback that the kids are likely to give would be superficial. Finally, he said that the kids are not "up front" about discussing their problems. He said that he thought that girls are generally less "up front" than boys are, meaning that girls are less likely to express their true feelings or talk about their problems.

The social worker at the house has another view on the matter. Since he runs the weekly group meetings (which had started only two months prior to our talk), he had some chance to observe the house as a kind of "outsider". He felt that the problem at Delta related to the expectations the house had for the kids' behavior. He believes that when kids are encouraged to be "up front", the atmosphere is "contagious"--kids will share their feelings if such an atmosphere exists, but they won't start behaving like that on their own. Thus, he thought that the reason the kids at Delta are not "up front" is that it was

not expected of them when they entered the program, but that as a result of the group sessions, they are becoming more willing to talk about their problems; though he thought both girls and boys could be "up front" in a group situation, he did concede that girls are not as accustomed to group situations as are boys, and may, therefore, not react as effectively.

At Alpha, Omega, and Theta it appears that staff have a high degree of respect for kids. This is indicated by the freedom given the kids, and by the fact that the staff does not speak of the kids in such a negative manner as the staff at the other houses. For instance, the staff at Alpha mentioned that the kids are sometimes manipulative, but they do not see that as a big problem in the way that the director at Delta had viewed a similar problem with the kids there.

The attitudes of the staff toward the kids seemed to be reflected in the relation between staff and kids. At four of the five houses where we were able to observe interactions between the staff and the kids (Sigma is excluded) there seems to be a fairly comfortable, easy-going relationship between the staff and the kids. The major exception to this is Epsilon, where the requirement that the kids ask permission for practically everything that they do seems to have created a paternalistic relationship between the staff and the kids. Also, there seems to be a greater "distance" between the kids and the staff at Epsilon than at the other houses.

One of the counselors at Delta said that a recent change in their disciplinary structure (see Rules and Structure) had been responsible

for a change in the relationships between the staff and kids. She said that prior to the change, the kids had often viewed the staff as "super-cops", but now things are more relaxed and it's easier for the staff and kids to talk to each other. My own observations tend to support this, since the first night I was at the house some kids had been placed on restriction and were very mad at the staff. They kept swearing and complaining to the staff. The second night I was over was after the new system was in effect and the staff and kids seemed very comfortable with each other and spoke freely with each other.

The counselor at Delta gave an example of how the new system had changed relationships. She related a story about a girl coming in after curfew one night just after the new system had started. The girl said, "Alright, tell me." When the counselor said, "Tell you what?" , the girl responded, "Tell me I'm on restriction, go ahead!" The counselor said, "That's not my place anymore." The girl then said, "Oh yeah. Uh-oh." and the two of them sat down and had a friendly chat about what the girl had done that evening. Previously, the counselor said, there would have been a big fight. The counselor said that the girls are more willing to accept disciplinary decisions from the group than from the staff (which implies a fairly good relationship within the group).

The kids said that the staff is very straight with them at all of the four homes where we discussed the issue with the kids (two boys' houses, Omega and Alpha and two girls' houses, Theta and Delta). The only thing we found at any of these four houses which seems to counter-indicate this was at Delta. We asked the (male) director if there are prob-

lems with girls trying to "come on" to him sexually and how he handled these situations. He said that in a situation like that he just starts talking a lot about his wife. He then said "Maybe I should say something, but..." I had felt that this, along with my feeling about the general tone of his conversation, indicated that he might not be very straight with the kids. However, one of the kids with whom I spoke, who impressed me as being very perceptive, said that, in general, the staff is very straight with the kids and mentioned the director, in particular, in this regard.

In most of the houses we were able to discuss the issue of relationships between the kids and staff of the opposite sex (either with a staff member of the opposite sex or with another staff member). Two of the girls' houses, Delta and Sigma, mentioned problems with the girls trying to "come on" sexually to male staff members though this does not seem to be a problem at Theta, nor was there mention of a corresponding problem at the two boys' homes with female staff. At Sigma, the director said that she finds boys easier to work with because they are more willing to cooperate with her than are the girls, and that she knows male child care workers who have found the reverse to be the case. At both Omega, a boys' home, and Delta, a girls' home, the staff said that kids tend to look to the male staff members for authority more than to the female staff members.

Interactions Among Kids

This section will deal with general interactions of the kids, how well the kids get along with each other, whether the kids help each

other to deal with their problems and whether there is any leadership among the kids.

The staff at all the programs said that the kids generally get along pretty well. There is an exception to this pattern. At Sigma, the director said that since there have been only three girls in the program for several months, that the kids are getting tired of each other and are beginning to get on each other's nerves. She didn't say how the kids get along when the house is full, but she did later say that the girls have a lot of problems relating to other females, which might mean that they generally have difficulty getting along with each other.

Delta (a girls' home) is the home at which I had the most opportunity to speak with and observe the kids. After my first evening at the house, it seemed to me that the kids did not get along very well, but after my second evening and some discussions with the staff, I concluded that the girls there are, indeed, very close.

The first night I was at Delta, the kids were "bitching" at each other a lot and didn't seem to get along very well. This could have been attributed to the fact that several of them were in a bad mood because they had been placed on restriction. However, the second time I visited, the kids seemed to be very close and very comfortable with each other. The staff agreed that the kids are generally very close.

Another point about Delta is that the staff said that sometimes the kids will tend to use one girl as a "scapegoat", particularly when that girl is doing something that they don't like. When these situa-

tions arise, the staff try to get the kids to understand that that girl has problems, just like them and that while they may not like her particular problems, they should try to be more understanding. The social worker said that the staff is usually successful in doing this and that the kids are generally fairly tolerant.

On the matter of an individual kid trying to get other kids to look at their problems, the kids' behavior usually reflected that of the staff. In the high-pressure Omega, the kids generally put a lot of pressure on each other to examine their problems. In other houses, where there is less pressure from staff, there is also less pressure from kids, though they do talk to each other about their problems.

In most of the houses there is some leadership from some of the kids in the program. This sometimes comes from the kids who have been in the program longer and sometimes comes from the older kids in the house. The leadership is generally consistent with the staff goals for the kids in the program and is helpful in achieving those goals and in maintaining solidarity within the house. At Alpha, the staff said that there is not much leadership within this particular group, but there has been more in the past. At Sigma, the director said that with only three girls in the program, there isn't any leadership presently. When asked if leadership is positive when it does exist, she only said, "hopefully", which seemed consistent with her generally negative view of peer pressure.

In four of the houses, the staff or the kids indicated that a high degree of commitment is expected from the kids by the other kids in the program. These houses included two girls' houses and two boys' houses, Theta, Delta, Omega and Alpha. This would tend to counter claims that

there is necessarily less cohesiveness among girls' houses than boys' houses.

In all of the houses, the kids tend to have a lot of outside activities. The kids at Omega seemed to do things together in a group more than kids in other programs, though this is difficult to judge.

In two of the girls' houses, Sigma and Delta, either the staff so stated or it seemed from listening to the kids talk that the girls don't have many female friends outside the house, and to some extent, have a dependency on males. The director of Sigma said that the girls tend not to have any female friends and that two of the three girls presently in the house, in addition to having no female friends, relate to males in a sexual way only. When I was at Delta, it seemed that most of the kids wanted to get out of the house at night as much as possible--usually to see boyfriends. However, not all of the kids at Delta seemed to have this attitude, nor did these girls' relationships with boys seem as narrow (i.e., purely sexual) as did those to whom the director at Sigma referred.

The staff at Theta, the house for older, independent girls, mentioned an interesting point in respect to this "boy-dependency". Both the staff and the kids expect a high degree of commitment from each girl to the group. The staff said that most girls who fail to succeed in the program do so because they have lost their commitment to the group and its goals as the result of a romantic involvement with someone who does not approve of what the house is trying to do. A girl may then seek the approval of her lover, rather than the group, and lose her commitment to

the group and the goals she had previously established for herself,
and eventually leave the program unsuccessfully.

Chapter V: Findings and Conclusions

Summary

In this study I examined two major areas of possible differences in the operation of girls' and boys' homes. The first area was the staff, their general attitudes toward delinquency and the proper formal and informal methods for dealing with it and their interactions with the kids. I also examined several issues relating to the kids--their attitudes, their interactions with each other and the staff. In general, I found very few differences in the homes which appeared to be related to the sex of the kids in the homes.

Concerning the staff, there were no sex-linked differences in general attitudes toward the causes of delinquency, and only a few sex-linked differences in the formal and informal methods for dealing with delinquency. One of the boys' homes places large emphasis on helping the kids learn to stay out of trouble with the law, while all of the girls' homes focused on more personal problems. In one of the boys' homes, the staff try to maintain a very high-pressured environment which none of the girls' homes do, and it seems unlikely that the girls' homes would try to do that. Finally, the director of one of the girls' homes was, at one time, reluctant to use group counseling with the kids, probably because of his attitudes regarding delinquent girls (he feels they are less "up front" than boys).

There were also very few sex-linked differences in the kids' attitudes and interactions with each other. The kids' goals for themselves are generally similar to their homes' goals for them, regardless of their sex. This fact is probably due to the mutual selection process which is

carried out by the group home and the kid.

The kids' interactions do not appear to differ in substance, though there are some differences in style. In one of the boys' homes there is an atmosphere of high pressure comradeship. This high level of pressure does not exist in any of the girls' homes. However, it seemed that the kids in the girls' homes have a close enough relationship such that the therapeutic effects of peer interaction which are supposed to take place in group homes can take place.

The only difference between the girls and boys which seems as though it might impair the working of group homes for girls is that some of the girls have a problem of being overly dependent on males. It seemed that the staff in girls' homes are not dealing explicitly with this problem, though there are certain aspects of the group home process which are probably helping the girls to solve this problem.

General Staff Attitudes

There are differing attitudes among the houses as to the nature and causes of the problems of "delinquent kids" and the appropriate direction in which the group home should help these kids move, but these differences, for the most part, do not seem to be correlated with the sex of the kids. In fact, there are some sets of houses which serve kids of different sexes, but which have identical ideas about the causes of delinquency and the appropriate responses to it. For example, Sigma and Epsilon have essentially identical opinions regarding the home environment as the cause of delinquency and the necessity of returning the kids to that environment on a workable basis.

There is only one instance in which staff attitudes toward the kids seem significantly sex-linked. Though the staff at Omega, Theta and Delta all have similar ideas as to the necessity of kids learning to be independent and deal with personal problems, Omega (boys) has slightly different attitudes than the girls' homes as to the focus of the attempt to change behavior patterns in the kids. Though all these homes emphasized helping the kids to deal with personal problems, the boys' home places more emphasis than do the girls' homes on helping the kids learn how to stay out of trouble with the law. The difference in emphasis is most directly related to the fact that it is much more common for the boys in that home to have been in trouble with the law than for the girls in the other two homes. It is, of course, no accident that Omega has a lot of kids who have been involved with criminal activity, since the home is oriented toward selecting those boys.

It is significant that girls' homes do not select many girls who have been heavily involved in criminal activity and therefore, that they do not focus on keeping girls out of trouble with the law. On the most superficial level this difference may be due to the fact that girls who've committed serious offenses are not committed to the Department of Youth Services or that, for some reason, group homes are not considered (either by D.Y.S. or the group homes) to be appropriate for these girls.

The difference in selection criteria; however, may be linked to more basic views as to how criminal behavior relates to other problems of the kids. The girls' homes may see criminal behavior as entirely a

symptom of problems within the girl and therefore unnecessary to deal with as a separate issue. The boys' home may see it as somewhat more distinct from a boy's other problems (such as might be the case with a kid who becomes a "car theft addict") or as something which results from the boy's reaction to a situation which is outside of himself-- the boy might be angry at a society which cannot seem to accommodate his needs (such a view would be similar to Ohlin's theory of delinquency and opportunity). In either of these cases, a boy's home might feel that the problem of staying out of trouble with the law needs special attention.

Staff Selection and Composition

The only difference in staff composition which correlates with the sex of the kids in the houses is that in all houses the staff is composed primarily of people of the same sex as the kids, presumably because it is felt that kids can more easily identify with and confide in adults of their own sex.

The selection policies for staff are very subjective and, to the extent that houses do seek different qualities in staff members, these qualities seem to be most strongly correlated with the philosophy of the program. A difference in selection criteria that is related to the sex of the kids rather than to the philosophy of the program is found at Sigma, a girls' home. The director there said that in choosing a male staff member, it is necessary to find a man who would be able to handle situations where an adolescent girl is acting seductively towards him

without getting "off on an ego trip". The fact that Sigma is seeking this quality in male staff reflects the fact that there are perceived to be problems of this type in staff-kid relations in girls' houses but not boys' houses.

Selection of Residents

All of the homes used the same two sets of basic criteria, other than age, to select residents: perceived likelihood for success (primarily based on probable "motivation" to change) and contribution to the achievement of an appropriate mixture of kids in the house. The variations in selection criteria which exist are in regard to the process by which these criteria are applied and the extent to which present residents contribute to the decision to admit a new resident.

Regardless of the sex of the kids, those houses whose staff mentioned the necessity for achieving a proper mixture of kids have very similar views about the nature of this mix. They feel that it is necessary to select some "strong kids", who will lead the group, and to avoid having too many kids who will require an inordinate share of the staff's attention.

The main difference among the houses in regard to the way in which selection criteria are applied is the extent to which a house will "bend over backwards" to find "motivation" in a kid. This difference in attitudes does not seem to relate to the sex of the kids--girls' and boys' homes fall on both ends of the spectrum in this regard.

The degree of "motivation" which a house seeks in a kid, however, does seem to be related to other characteristics of the house. Houses

with a low degree of pressure are less likely to insist on kids who are obviously highly motivated. It seemed, too, that houses that do not have high expectations of the kids, or a great deal of respect for their capabilities, are less insistent on strong evidence of motivation. The two houses which fit this pattern are Epsilon (boys) and Delta (girls). It may be that to expect a high degree of motivation from a kid would be inconsistent with having low expectations generally for that kid. In contrast, those houses, such as Theta, which allow the kids a high degree of freedom, tend to select kids who appear to have high degree of motivation.

An interesting point about Theta is that it tries to select kids who are already fairly independent. Though the discussion was not specific on this point, it is probable that Theta tries to select young women who are not "boy-dependent", since the staff also mentioned that most failures of young women in the program had been related to romantic involvements which were at odds with what the house was trying to do for the girl.

The fact that Theta probably tries to screen those girls from the program is very interesting when one considers that Theta is probably the most respected girls' group home in the state and is considered to be very successful. It also raises the question of whether other group homes are screening out girls whom they perceive to have "boy-dependencies", just as many group homes screen drug-dependent kids. But while there are homes which deal primarily with drug-dependent kids and whose programs reflect this fact, there are no girls' homes which are geared

towards dealing with "boy-dependent" girls. And, if statements made by people who work with delinquent girls are valid, "boy-dependency" is a major problem among these girls.

The variation among houses as to the degree to which the staff seek input from the present residents on decisions to admit new residents does not vary with sex, but does seem to be related, not surprisingly, to the amount of respect that the staff appear to have for the kids' capabilities. Thus, Theta and Omega, the two houses where the staff seek substantial input from residents regarding potential residents are homes where the staff seem to have a high degree of respect for the kids' capabilities.

The Program

Program Structure and Rules

In the four areas of program structure and rules which I examined ("work or school requirements", rules, disciplinary structure and decision-sharing between staff and kids) there do not seem to be any differences which clearly are related to the sex of the kids. However, there are some differences in the area of disciplinary policies which may be weakly correlated with the sex of the kids.

There are differences in the programs which correlate with factors other than sex and some additional differences among the houses in the degree to which work or school rules are enforced and differences in the amount of formal structure for decision-sharing among staff and kids, but neither of these program characteristics seem to be systematically related to aspects of the programs.

There are also some differences in the degree of restrictiveness of

the rules in the houses. It appears that those houses which feel that the parents have not exercised enough control over the kids and feel that the kids should ideally be returned to the family, tend to be the most restrictive. Those homes which are oriented toward independent living and where the staff have a high degree of respect for the kids, tend to be the least restrictive.

The staffs of the girls' homes, but not the boys' homes, indicated that the disciplinary systems at their houses are used to foster the growth of responsibility in the kids. Theta and Sigma made specific remarks as to how this is done. At Delta, the fact that girls decide disciplinary matters as a group, is intended to place some responsibility with them. Other than a coincidence in terms of what the discussions at the various houses focused on, I have no explanation for this apparent difference in boys' and girls' houses.

Counseling and the Therapeutic Environment

In terms of counseling practices and maintenance of a therapeutic environment, there are no overall patterns with regard to the sex of the kids being served by the program. However, there are situations at two of the houses which may be related to the sex of the kids there.

Omega, a boys' home, maintains a much higher-pressured atmosphere than do the other homes in an effort to foster change in the kids. This is done in conjunction with a very high degree of peer pressure and a high degree of "comraderie" among the kids. It is my impression that the particular way in which these aspects of the environment are handled has produced a stereotypically "masculine" atmosphere. While

it is clear that peer pressure and close interpersonal relations within the group can and do exist in girls' group homes, it seems to me that the staff at a girls' group home would not have attempted to generate those environmental qualities in quite the same manner as the staff at Omega have. Nor is it likely that girls would respond the same way to the type of high-pressure comraderie which exists at Omega since that style of interaction is rarely expected from girls and they would not be accustomed to it.

The situation at Delta raises another issue. Apparently, the director there had been hesitant to use group counseling because of his feelings that girls are not as "up front" in expressing their feelings as are boys. It is clear, from his statements that he would not have shown the same reluctance to use group counseling with boys.

Kids' Attitudes Towards the Program and Their Goals While in the Program

At the five houses where we were able to speak with the kids (Sigma is excluded) there do not appear to be any differences in the kids' attitudes toward the program which correlated with their sex. In the case of both boys and girls, the kids' goals for themselves while in the program are generally consistent with the staff's goals for them. Both the boys and girls with whom we spoke expressed positive feelings toward their house and feel that they are getting some benefit from being in the house.

Staff-Kid Interactions

In the case studies, I examined two types of interactions between staff and kids: the staffs' "planned" methods for interacting with the kids and the general character of the interactions. I found no patterns

of differences based on sex in the staffs' philosophies regarding methods of interaction with the kids and very few differences in the character of interactions which appear to be based on sex.

Those "planned" interactions which the staffs of the houses discussed are directed at getting the kids to deal with personal problems and getting the kids to be responsible and independent. The only differences in planned interactions which seem to follow any pattern at all are in the area of getting the kids to deal with personal problems. In this regard, the approach taken in any home seems to be consistent with the amount of pressure which the staff had indicated exists in the home. One particular approach, trying to build up the kid's self esteem, was emphasized by the staff of two houses which are very similar in their attitudes about the cause of delinquency--Epsilon, a boys' home and Sigma, a girls' home.

In terms of the nature of the interactions, which includes staff attitudes towards the kids, how comfortable a relationship the staff and the kids seem to have, whether the kids feel that the staff are "straight" with them and whether the staff think that the kids come to them about problems, there are very few differences. Those differences which do exist are in the area of the amount of respect the staff have for the kids' capabilities and the nature of relationships between the kids and staff of the opposite sex.

Those houses where the staff seem to have the least faith in the kids' capabilities are Epsilon and Sigma. It is not surprising that these houses are similar in this respect since they are similar in so many other ways. In another home, Delta, a girls' home, the director seemed to have a low amount of respect for the kids' capabilities. In the case of Delta,

the director's attitudes toward the kids may be related to the fact that they are girls. I feel that this may be the case because his comments which indicated a lack of faith in the kids echoed stereotypes which are frequently held in regard to delinquent girls; he said that they are "manipulative", they are not "up front" and implied that they are not able to make serious decisions in regard to helping each other.

There are a couple of interesting points about relationships between kids and staff of the opposite sex. First, a couple of the girls' homes mentioned problems with girls trying to act seductively toward male staff members; there was no corresponding problem cited by the boys' homes. That particular problem is, of course, part of the larger problem of "boy-dependency" among delinquent girls. The second point is that in some of both the boys' and the girls' homes (those without houseparents, in particular) the kids tend to look toward the male staff members as authority figures. This can be a problem in the operation of girls' homes since one of the problems of delinquent girls is that they have a low opinion of themselves as women, and a situation where they are allowed to continue to look to men, only, for authority will perpetuate this problem.

It is noteworthy that the problem of the kids looking to male staff for authority is less pronounced among those homes with houseparents. The male director at Delta(girls) said that while there is a problem of this sort now, that previously when he and his wife ran the program together, the kids looked to them equally for authority, possibly because "they saw us as more of a partnership". On the other hand, the fact that kids seem less likely to look to the male for authority in homes

may be due to a coincidence in personality differences.

Interactions Among Kids

Aside from the differences noted earlier in regard to the high degree of peer pressure and strong atmosphere of comraderie at Omega, the interactions among the kids at the houses seem to differ in few, if any, significant ways. Within both boys' and girls' homes, the kids discuss their problems with each other, some kids take leadership roles and the kids maintain close friendships with each other. This evidence tends to counter claims that the girls in group homes do not get along well together.

There is one significant point which relates to the girls' interactions with people outside of the house and indirectly relates to their interactions with the other kids in the house. The point is that many of the girls have a dependency on males. As the staff at Theta pointed out, this dependency can sometimes result in the failure of a girl to accomplish those goals which she had originally set for herself since the dependency can interfere with her commitment to the group. None of the houses mentioned anything which they are doing to help the girls deal with this dependency though to the extent that girls' group homes set up a situation where the girl can develop close friendships with other girls and develop respect for female staff members, the group homes are probably helping the girls with this problem.

Implications for Planning and Future Research

The study indicates that group homes work for at least some girls --those girls that are presently being served by them. So it might be advisable for DYS to encourage the development of additional services of this

type for girls. However, it is not clear, because of the selection process by which girls are placed in group homes, how well the girls in group homes represent the general group of girls in DYS.

It may be that most of the other girls in DYS would have problems, personality characteristics or needs such that group homes would be an inappropriate type of service for them. For example, they might, in general, be much more hostile than the girls presently in group homes which would make it difficult for them to form friendships in the home. If this were the case, the peer interactions of the home would be less beneficial to them.

Thus, before DYS makes any decision as to the type of services for girls of which it wishes to encourage development, it should make some sort of assessment of the needs and characteristics of the girls it is serving. In particular, DYS should try to determine if there are any significant differences in the needs and characteristics of these girls as compared with the girls who are currently in group homes. It should be emphasized that due to the critical shortage of services for girls, DYS may not be able to delay encouraging the expansion of particular types of services while further study of the problem takes place. DYS will have to weigh the possibility of inappropriate services against the certainty of insufficient services in order to decide whether further study or immediate encouragement of new group homes is appropriate at this time.

The only special problem of girls which group homes do not seem to be explicitly dealing with is an overdependency, for some girls, on males. The staff in group homes should be sensitive to this problem and

have some ideas as to how to help the girls with respect to it.

Since this problem is very closely related to the fact that many delinquent girls have a low opinion of themselves because they are females, the staff in group homes should be sensitive to helping those girls who have such a problem to raise their opinion of themselves as women. The female staff members can do this, in part, by setting an example of themselves as reasonably independent and self-confident people and the male staff can help by showing that they respect the independence and judgement of the female staff members.

It would probably be helpful for the staff of girls' group homes and others who work with delinquent girls to have some discussions on how to help girls to deal with this problem.

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