

JAN 18 RECD

THE ENVIRONMENTAL ROLES OF
DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Burton J. Cohen
Management and Behavioral Science Center
The Wharton School
University of Pennsylvania
215-243-6199

January 1977

Prepared under Grant #76-JN-99-0005 from the National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, LEAA, U. S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

53769

INTRODUCTION

Research and evaluation projects in the field of juvenile delinquency, as in most areas of human services, typically focus on the performance of a single organization. The focal organization is viewed as being relatively autonomous with respect to attaining certain goals, and whether the goals are attained is attributed to the processes that take place inside the organization, especially its direct contacts with the client population. In this model of evaluation, referred to as the "goal model" (Coates and Miller 1973), the attainment of previously established goals is used as the primary means of measuring program effectiveness.

The "goal model" is based on several critical assumptions:

1. Project goals can be easily deduced from the program and operationalized.
2. Both the goals of the program and the organizational environment will remain stable over the life of the project.
3. The focal organization can adapt relatively autonomously with respect to its environment.

Frequently, however, these assumptions cannot be taken for granted. Although researchers are generally in agreement about the desirability of defining operational goals and objectives, this is an extremely difficult process, particularly when the program is well underway when the research effort begins. Also, programs often develop somewhat independently of what staff think "ought" to be done to solve a particular problem. For example, one researcher (Spergel 1973), in a review of community based delinquency prevention programs, found that "organizational and professional ideology and particularistic access to resources appear to determine the connection between the problem and the

the program." Therefore, program goals may only emerge after a thorough analysis of how the program got started and how it relates to a larger system.

The goals of a delinquency prevention program are also likely to change during the course of the project. The traditional evaluation model assumes a relatively stable environment in which certain variables can be manipulated through experimental designs. However, prevention programs are often embedded in extremely complex and rapidly changing environments. In these cases, simply evaluating a program against the goals that existed when the program began may not give a realistic picture of the program's effectiveness.

The final assumption that is often made is that the program operates relatively autonomously and that success or failure is due to what happens within the program. Unlike delinquency treatment programs that have a legally defined population and are often self-contained, delinquency prevention necessarily takes place in a rather amorphous network of interdependent agencies (Empey 1974; Miller, Baum, and McNeil 1968; and Spergel 1973). Many of the relevant agencies vary widely in philosophy and operating style (Miller 1958) and intervention strategies are often vague and ill-defined. Miller, after an extensive study of a delinquency prevention program in Boston, stated that "...the major impediment to effectiveness in this field relates more to the nature of relations among the various concerned institutions than to a lack of knowledge as to effective procedure" (p. 23).

The need is for a systems approach to the evaluation of delinquency prevention programs. This would entail studying the program in terms

of the larger system or systems of which it is a part and determining the roles played by the program in these systems.

THE YOUTH SERVICES CENTER

The focus of the current research project is a delinquency prevention program in South Philadelphia called the Youth Services Center and its interactions with a larger network of services. The Youth Services Center is a youth service bureau type project that has been operating for approximately two years and is a part of a neighborhood community center operated by a private Philadelphia social services agency. The Center offers supportive counseling by paraprofessional workers and also attempts to connect youths to appropriate services that can meet their immediate needs. The staff also consists of a coordinator, an attorney (who represents clients who must appear in juvenile court), an employment specialist, a court liaison officer, a school liaison officer, and a social worker.

The formal objectives of the program are:

1. To divert juveniles from the juvenile justice system.
2. To reduce delinquent behavior among youths on caseload.
3. To bring about positive changes in clients' self image.
4. To act as an advocate for youths in their interactions with community institutions.

The research project, which began in November, 1975, is being conducted by the Management and Behavioral Science Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The work described in this paper is only one part of the overall research effort aimed at producing knowledge at three different levels:

1. the extent to which the project is effectively serving the purposes of its clients and staff
2. the extent to which it is effectively serving its own purposes

and improving its abilities to learn and adapt, and

3. the extent to which it is effectively serving the purposes of the larger systems of which it is a part, (e.g. the community, the juvenile justice system).

This paper is concerned primarily with the third level, that is, the extent to which the Youth Services Center is able to play an effective role in the larger system of services to youth of which it is a part.

We are concerned with the interactions that take place between the Youth Services Center and its environment, and with determining the role that the Center plays in this larger network. Furthermore, we are interested in the strategies that can be developed for managing the complex set of relationships that a prevention project must develop and maintain.

THE ROLE OF DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

In order to describe and understand the relationships between a delinquency prevention program and its environment, we first need an appreciation of the role or function that the program fulfills within the community. Programs with different functions will likely develop different patterns of interaction and influence and will be faced with very different kinds of interorganizational problems. Different types of analyses will also be more appropriate for studying certain projects than for others.

In recent years, many different types* of delinquency prevention programs have been developed. These go under many different names, including Youth Services Bureaus, Youth Service Systems, diversion programs, advocacy projects, or information and referral programs. Many of these names are confusing because the same name may be used to refer to very different program models. For example, Schucter and Polk (1975) and others have found that the term "Youth Services Bureau" is used to describe programs with very different objectives, operating styles, or philosophies.

The typology developed below, rather than being based on the specific services offered, is designed to distinguish among the different functions that a delinquency prevention program may perform within the larger community. There are two relevant dimensions. The first is the specific target of the intervention efforts. The program may seek to intervene at

*See, for example, Dixon and Wright (1974) and Spèrgel (1973).

the level of the individual or at the level of the community as a whole, or some of its salient institutions. The second dimension has to do with the extent to which the program itself is directly involved in the change process, or plays a more indirect or mediating role. This leads to four major types of delinquency prevention programs, each having a different role in the community.

		INVOLVEMENT IN CHANGE PROCESS	
		Direct	Mediating
TARGET OF INTERVENTION	Individual	Direct Service	Service Broker
	Community	Comprehensive Planner and Coordinator	Network Facilitator

Types of Delinquency Prevention Programs

Direct Services

The core of most direct service prevention programs is some form of counseling, either on an individual or peer group basis. These programs focus primarily on the individual as the object of change and are usually created because of a perception that the needed services are available nowhere else in the community. Ancillary services, such as legal counselling, job placement, vocational training, or remedial education may also be provided. Such programs are often organized according to a "medical model" whereby clients are first diagnosed and then a treatment plan is developed and carried out.

Service Broker

The service broker also focuses on the individual, but plays a less direct role in bringing about behavior change. It acts as an intermediary between those seeking or in need of services and those parts of the network that can provide them.

Comprehensive Planner

Comprehensive planning projects usually see themselves as being the coordinator of a fragmented network of services. Their objective is to directly influence the ways in which various agencies operate and interact and they believe that the entire network can be managed through their own direct actions. The preparation of a comprehensive plan is usually the primary focus of attention in this type of delinquency prevention program. Local youth commissions often are designed around this model.

Network Facilitator

This type of project is similar to the previous one in its focus on a system of agencies and services, but differs in that it is less concerned with directly changing behaviors, and more concerned with mobilizing the efforts of many different organizations and creating a forum through which new policies and directions can be discussed. A project in this role usually has no formal authority within the juvenile justice system as compared to the comprehensive planning agency which often has a more legitimated role within the authority structure.

Each of the types of programs mentioned above is likely to perceive its environment in a different way. For example, the direct service agency will probably perceive its environment as less interdependent

and less rich in resources than will the service broker. The planning and coordinating agency will perceive the environment as less turbulent and more stable than will the network facilitator.

Also, each type of program will likely be faced with different inter-organizational problems because of their differences in perspective and in what they need from other parts of their complex networks.

THE ROLE OF THE YOUTH SERVICES CENTER

The following discusses which of the above roles the Youth Services Center has played. Our analyses are based on interviews with program staff and selected outsiders, observation of staff meetings and procedures and collection of data from program files by both research and program staff.

The Youth Service Center as a Provider of Direct Service

The Youth Services Center functions primarily as a provider of direct services to individual youths in the target area who are on its caseload. The evidence for this statement comes from a variety of sources. First, it is apparent in the way in which the program is organized according to a casework model. The major focus of intervention is the individual client with the objectives being an improvement in self-image, attitudes, and anti-social behaviors.

The second source of evidence is the behavior and perceptions of staff at various levels. One member of the research team observed the coordinator in depth for three days and found that the majority of his time was spent on general interagency issues or on processes to facilitate the programs' interactions with other agencies. Also, the youth service workers themselves see their job as providing services to youths on caseload and trying to bring about positive changes in attitudes and behaviors. Other observations indicate that in general, given a situation where a particular service could be provided either internally or by someone else, staff seemingly would prefer to offer the service themselves.

The Youth Services Center as a Broker

Despite the fact that the Center is primarily a direct service project, it does also function in the role of a service broker: Referrals are made for various types of therapy or counselling, to drug related programs, for medical services, psychological testing, and to a wide range of residential programs. In addition, many clients are provided with legal services by the Public Defender who works with the project and with job counselling or job placement services by the employment specialist. The following data concern only referrals of clients to various social service agencies.

Of the first 155 youths served by the project, twenty have been referred to other social service agencies. This represents approximately 13% of the first group of youths served. The term "referral" is used here to refer to an explicit attempt on the part of the Center to arrange for the provision of services to the client by an outside agency. It is not restricted to instances where these attempts were successful. Many of the youths were referred to more than one agency, such that the actual number of referral attempts is 44.

Only 27% of the referral attempts led to the client's actually receiving the services recommended. The client refused to accept the referral 32% of the time. The remainder were either turned down by the agency to whom the referral was made, or else the referral was still pending.

The Youth Services Center as Comprehensive Planner

It had not been intended that the Youth Services Center would play the role of systems planner or coordinator, and to date we have not

observed any instances in which this type of behavior has been exhibited. The role of planner coordinator in Philadelphia has been assigned to the Youth Services Commission, a quasi-public agency created by City Council several years ago.

The Youth Services Center as Network Facilitator

There has been some indication that staff would like to see the Center play more of an organizing or facilitating role with respect to the larger community. The original project proposal states that "the project will concern itself with the processes in the community which propel children and youth into the system." It also states that "if possible, the program will serve as the catalyst to bring youth agencies together for cooperative decision making in the designation of program funds." Also during a one-day workshop reviewing the progress of the project, when staff were asked what role the Center should play in the surrounding community, three of the four responses were the following:

1. Clearinghouse for community problems
2. More active role in solving racial problems in South Philadelphia
3. Should deal more with attitude change

These responses were in contrast to the responses concerning the role the Center currently plays, which has more to do with providing individual services to members of the community.

Despite these indications of interest, there has been little evidence

that the project is making serious attempts to play an organizing role within its relevant network of agencies. For example, nearly all of its interactions with other agencies are on a one-to-one basis rather than with groups of representatives from many organizations. Second, the focus of these interactions is usually an individual case rather than the overall relationship between the agencies. In the one instance where the project has played more of an organizing role, the underlying objective still seems to have been related to the direct service aspects of the project, namely, getting more youths referred to itself.

This points out one of the potential conflicts in trying to be both a direct service agency and an organizer of community resources. Given two conflicting sets of objectives, an agency will normally try to attain those that are most closely related to its core values. Another explanation is derived from a statement by Etzioni (1961) that "one of the most important observations of students of organization is that the 'tools' in part determine the goals to which they are applied." This means that in a situation such as the one described, an organization whose primary "tools" are casework and direct service will choose a course of action that allows those tools to be used. If the agency does not emphasize or place a high value on skills in community organization or mobilization, it is less likely that they will choose a course of action that requires these skills, even if it seems appropriate.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING INTERORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The management system of a delinquency prevention program must be concerned not only with those processes internal to the organization (intraorganizational processes), but also with managing the relationships between the program and relevant parts of its environment (e.g., police, courts, social service agencies, schools, etc.). However, the management of external relationships requires different types of coordination mechanisms than those used to manage intra-organizational processes. The principal coordinating mechanism within an organization is the hierarchy. Hierarchical coordination is based on the organization's authority structure which can be used to mobilize interactions between different units or divisions and through which conflicts can be resolved (Litwak and Hylton 1962). In contrast, many of the relationships in which the Youth Services Center is involved take place in the context of a "multi-organization" (Stringer 1967), where there is no overall authority structure.* Other mechanisms for coordination must therefore be developed. These will typically be examples of "lateral relations," (Galbraith 1973) that is, relationships that cut across formal lines of authority in order to increase the amount of information that can be processed.

In order to manage these external relationships, the Youth Services Center has utilized various strategies. These enable the project to maintain communication with other agencies, exchange information, consult about individual clients, try to resolve differences, or set up

*Stringer uses the term "multi-organization" to describe "situations where parts of several organizations - each with its own affiliations, its own goals and its own values - are all involved in the achievement of a plan or of an end-result."

cooperative procedures. Two of the strategies are relatively informal and are used on a more or less ad hoc basis. They are:

1. Personal Networks

This is probably the most frequently used mechanism among YSC staff for interorganizational coordination.. Personal networks are used by staff at every level of the agency. This includes contacts and informal relationships with staff members from various different organizations. Use of personal networks can be extremely valuable in dealing with ad hoc situations that occasionally arise and which cannot easily be predicted. Examples would be the infrequent referral of a client to a particular specialized program, settling differences that might arise over the release of information, or reacting to a crisis situation involving a large city agency. Personal relationships as a coordination mechanism are not sufficient, however, in situations or relationships where the frequency of interaction is much greater or where problems are expected to arise routinely. In these instances, more formalized and systematic procedures will be needed.

2. Exchange of Information

Another informal strategy used by YSC staff is the exchange of information with other agencies in their network. This takes place through exchanging written materials and participating in community meetings. Exchange of information in itself does not insure coordination among different agencies. However, it does help to increase awareness of each other's programs and to

identify the areas where there are interdependencies, which is a necessary condition before coordination can take place (Litwak and Hylton 1962). Warren (1967) also has hypothesized that inter-organizational coordination could be improved by making "the interactional field less opaque", so that organizations "would be better able to adapt their behavior to each other in a more deliberate way" (p. 417).

The remaining strategies used by YSC to manage interorganizational relationships require a greater degree of formalization and a greater commitment of resources than the first two. They should be used in situations where the level of interaction is relatively high or where recurring problems are expected. They are:

3. Standardized Procedures

Standardized rules or procedures are a relatively easy and low cost way of coordinating repetitive activities at the individual case level. For example, the process through which a given agency refers to YSC may be facilitated if there are standardized procedures for referral. This cuts down on the need for extensive communication and discussion about what is to be done each time a referral is made.

4. Written Agreements

Written agreements are a slightly more formalized mechanism for coordination than standardized procedures (which may or may not be written down) and begin to take on more of a "program coordination" rather than a "case coordination" function (Reid 1964). Program coordination would involve developing such things as joint agency programs, mutual modification of programs, or

engaging in joint planning or decision making activities at the policy level.

While the YSC proposal stated that interagency agreements would be obtained from a number of public and private agencies, relatively little has been accomplished in this area, particularly around program policies and procedures with many of the relevant system components.

Letters of agreements in themselves do not insure program coordination and are probably not necessary for most of the organizations that the YSC comes in contact with. In particular, they are of little importance in cases where YSC interaction would be relatively infrequent or where few exchanges are anticipated in the near future. However, they are necessary with respect to key city-wide agencies which have frequent interactions with the project, or which could enhance the formal diversion aspects of the project.

5. Creation of Liaison Roles

When the frequency of interactions between organizations becomes relatively large, it often makes sense to create a special role to manage the interactions between them (Galbraith 1973). These liaison roles are created to facilitate communication and joint decision making between two interdependent units. The Youth Services Center proposal called for five specialist roles that to differing degrees would act as liaisons between the project and other key organizations, including the Family Court, the Public Defenders, the schools, employers, and social service agencies.

The original intention had been that all of the specialists, with the exception of the social worker, would be obtained through contracts with city or state agencies. In this case, they would have been functioning more in the role of "integrators" (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967), having personal networks in each of two agencies and attempting to resolve interagency conflicts and facilitate joint decision-making. As it turned out, the School District and the Family Court, while expressing their desire to cooperate, were unable to assign staff members to the court liaison and school liaison roles. Therefore staff from outside these agencies were hired. The desired agreements were reached with the Public Defenders and The Bureau of Employment Security.

6. Creation of Temporary or Permanent Groups

When recurring problems or large numbers of interactions occur among several different organizations, the use of liaison roles is not as effective and temporary task forces or permanent teams become the more appropriate coordinating mechanisms. The project has made relatively little use of this strategy because of the greater emphasis on the direct service role of the YSC as opposed to its role as a network organizer.

The various strategies for coordinating interorganizational relationships will vary in their degrees of formalizations, standardization, and intensity. Some are also more appropriate than others for programs with particular roles in mind. It is hypothesized that direct service programs will make more use of personal networks and informal exchanges of

information while brokers will be more concerned about developing standardized procedures and written agreements. Comprehensive planners will stress the use of standardized procedures and formal structured groups. Facilitators will make use of liaison roles and less structured temporary groups for problem solving activities.

IMPLICATIONS

This discussion of the Youth Services Center has been intended to demonstrate the value of looking at delinquency prevention projects not only as single organizations but as parts of larger systems of services. The typical evaluation model takes the focal organization or system as the largest system under examination and then looks at the relationships among its parts or between its parts and its clients, and attempts to measure how effectively these processes are being performed. For example, a typical evaluation of a correctional treatment program might take the program itself as the largest unit of analysis and then examine the relationships among the parts of the program or between the program and its clients. This type of evaluation is only appropriate under certain conditions; namely, when the program is relatively stable, its environment is stable, its goals are clearly defined and operational, and it can meet its goals through its own direct actions. Even then there are likely to be some unintended consequences of the program that were not originally envisioned.

Such conditions are rarely, if ever, present in delinquency prevention programs. We therefore need to employ an evaluation model based on a systems approach. This means that in order to fully understand the behavior of delinquency prevention projects, it is necessary to examine them as parts of some larger system and look at the role or set of roles that they assume. Four major roles have been identified and described and a given program may take on one or more than one of these roles. However, it should be noted that some roles may conflict with each other. For example, it is difficult for a single program to

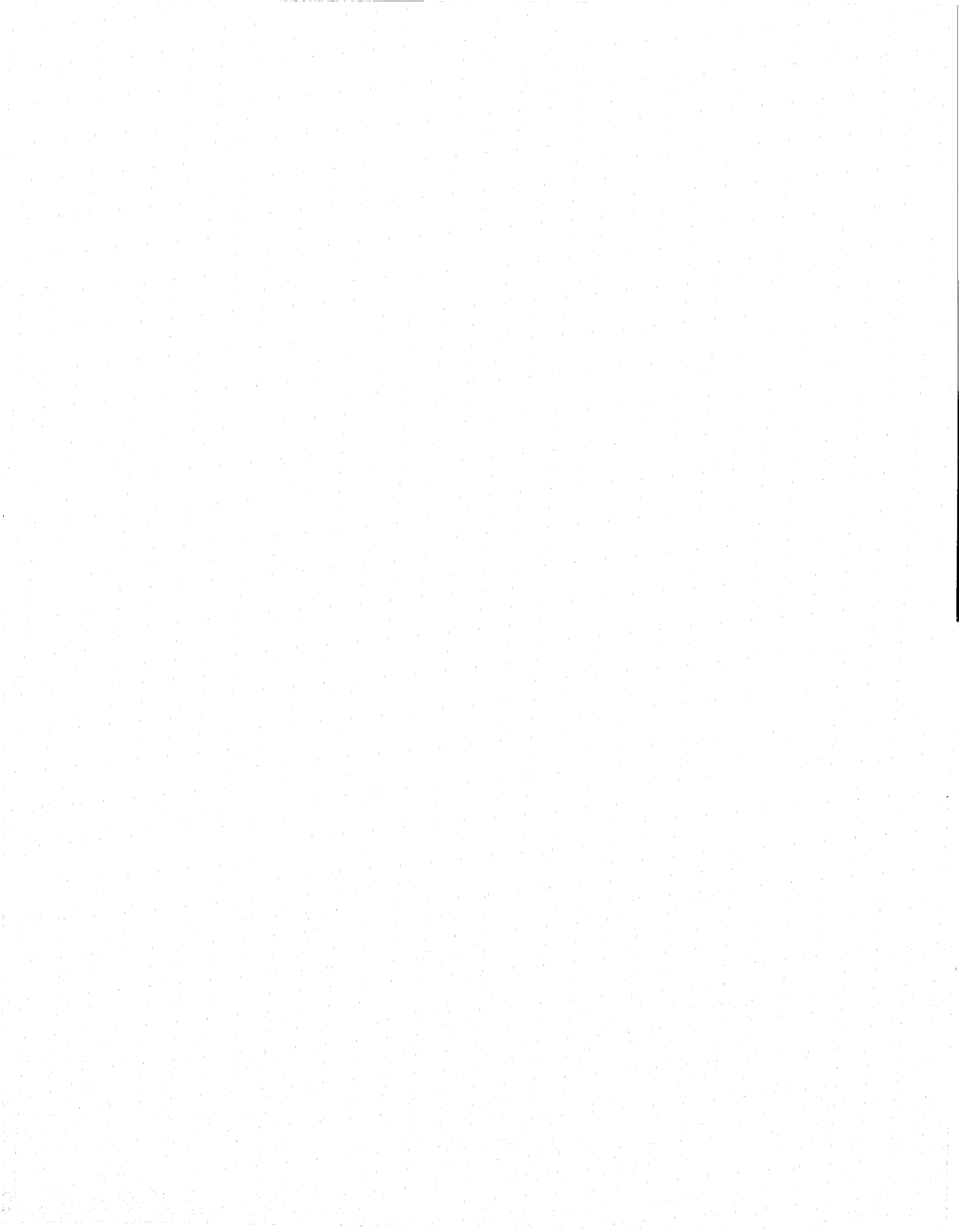
be both a direct service agency and a comprehensive planner because of the tendency of individual case problems to drive out any time for planning. The Youth Services Center has found it particularly difficult to balance the roles of direct service provider and service broker, due to the desire of staff to hold onto cases and try to provide everything that the clients need. The emphasis on direct service has also interfered with the desires of some staff to try to bring about changes in the larger service delivery system because of fears that this might lead to retaliation on the part of some other agencies whose cooperation is needed.

The next step in a systems approach would be to examine the relationships between the program and parts of its environment, and to look at the types of mechanisms being used by the program to manage its external relationships. These strategies were described briefly and vary in terms of their degree of formalization, intensity, and standardization.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the match between the program's desired role or roles and the types of strategies it uses to manage its environment. For example, a program that is trying to assume a network facilitator role should be more concerned with establishing interagency groups or task forces than would a direct service program. It was found that the YouthService Center relies mainly on personal networks and exchanges of information each of which is appropriate to the direct service role. However, there is a notable lack of use of standardized procedures or written agreements each of which is important in the development of the service broker role. There has also been practically no attempt at creating interagency groups which would be necessary if the program wishes to play more of a facilitating role.

REFERENCES

- Coates, R.B., and Miller, A.D. 1973. Evaluating large scale social service systems in changing environments: the case of correctional agencies. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, July, 1975.
- Dixon, M.C., and Wright, W.E. 1975. Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Programs. Nashville: Peabody College for Teachers.
- Empey, L.T. 1974. Crime prevention: The fugitive utopia. In Handbook of Criminology, ed. D. Glaser. Chicago: Rand McNally College Pub. Co.
- Etzioni, A. 1961. Complex Organizations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Galbraith, J. 1973. Designing Complex Organizations. Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley Publishing Co.
- Lawrence, P.R., and Lorsch, J.W. 1967. New Management Job: The Integrator. Harvard Business Review. Nov/Dec.
- Litwak, E., and Hylton, L.F. 1962. Interorganizational analysis: A hypothesis on coordinating agencies. Administrative Science Quarterly. Vol. 6 pp. 395-420.
- Miller, W.B.; Baum, R.C.; and McNeil, R. 1968. Delinquency prevention and organizational relations. In S. Wheeler (ed.) Controlling Delinquents. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Miller, W.B. 1958. Inter-institutional conflict as a major impediment to delinquency prevention. Human Organization. Vol. 17, No.3, Fall.
- Reid, W. 1964. Interagency co-ordination in delinquency prevention and control. The Social Service Review. Vol. 38.
- Schucter, A., and Polk, K. 1975. Summary Report: Phase I Assessment of Youth Service Bureaus. Boston: Boston University.
- Spergel, I.A. 1973. Community-based delinquency-prevention programs: an overview. The Social Service Review. Vol. 47, March.
- Stringer, J. 1967. Operational research for "Multi-Organizations." Operational Research Quarterly. Vol. 18, No. 2, June.
- Warren, R.L. 1967. The interorganizational field as a focus for investigation. Administrative Science Quarterly. Vol.12, Dec.



END