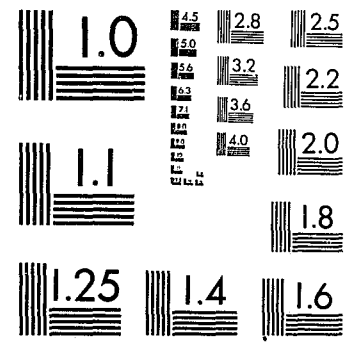


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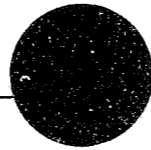
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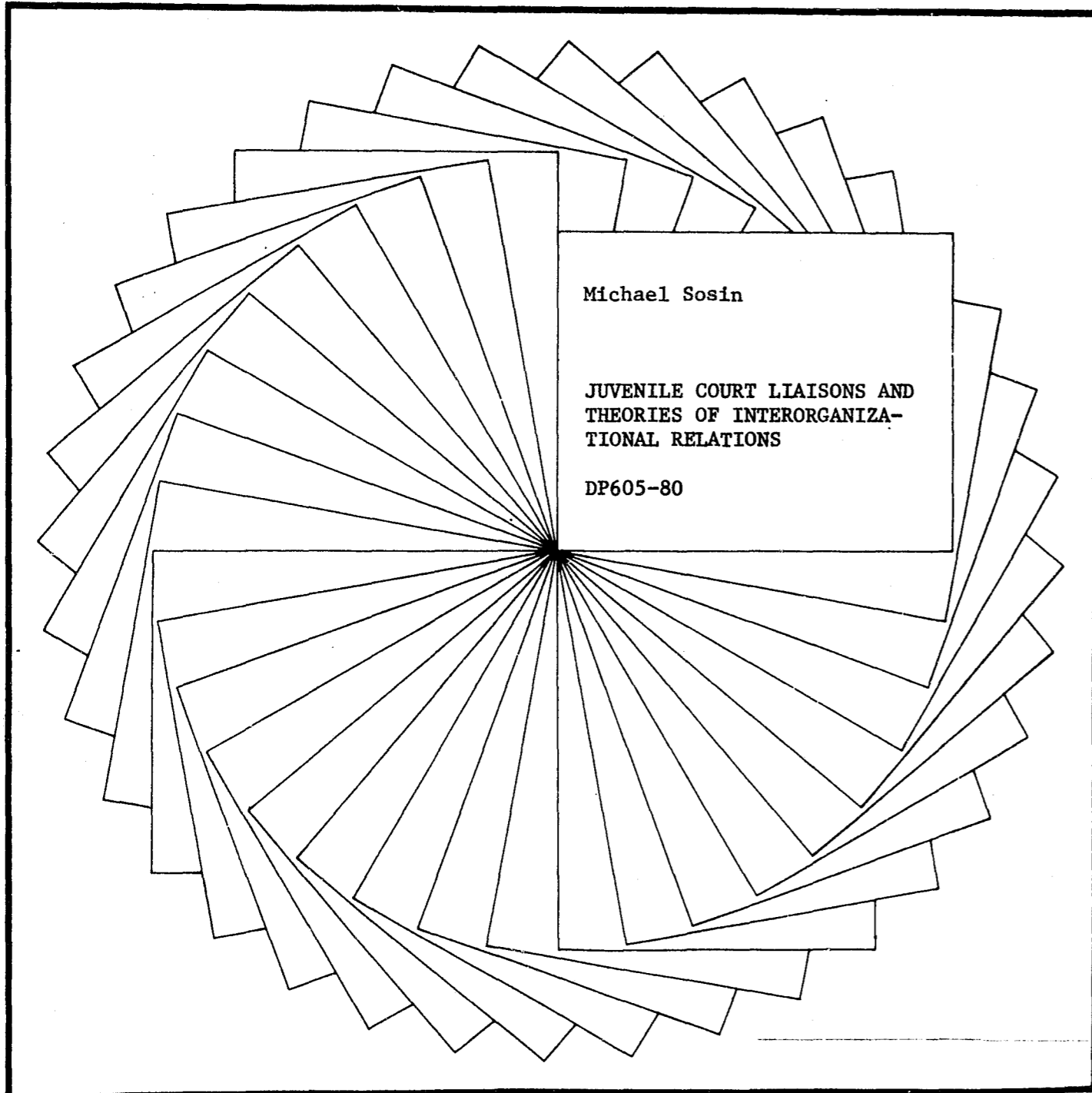
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Juvenile Court Liaisons and Theories of Interorganizational Relations

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ABSTRACT

Organizational uncertainty has been used to explain interorganizational relations between corporations, but it has not been widely applied to public human service organizations. This paper argues that the lack of attention makes sense: resource uncertainty is not a key motivator in public human service organizations. Rather, interorganizational relations among these units must be viewed as the product of the way the individual motivations of organizational leaders interact with conflict with community groups. This perspective is used to develop and empirically test a set of hypotheses concerning the rate at which juvenile courts invite liaisons into the organization. The data supports the hypotheses and it is argued that the juvenile court example thus supports the general perspective concerning motivations and responses in public human service organizations.

JUVENILE COURT LIAISONS AND THEORIES OF INTERORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONS

There is an interesting dichotomy in studies of interorganizational relations. Analyses of relations among corporations often rely on one theory, an application of the open systems perspective (Katz and Kahn, 1966). The theory suggests that the protection of the core technology is a key organizational motivation, an uncertain flow of resources is a key threat to the technology (Thompson, 1967), and interorganizational relations are prime strategies of guaranteeing resources, reducing uncertainty, and protecting the core technology (as summarized in Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). The approach is thus characterized by a linking of a general motivation (protection of the core technology) and environmental demand (uncertainty) to a variety of organizational responses. It enables researchers to develop a related body of research with respect to many environmental issues.

In contrast, most examinations of interorganizational relations in public human service organizations do not have such comprehensive theoretical underpinnings. Instead, studies rely on different perspectives for each type of relation or set of organizations analyzed. Various approaches consider conflict (Litwak and Hylton, 1962), consensus (Levine and White, 1961), a combination of the two (Schmidt and Kochan, 1977), organizational structure (Aiken and Hage, 1968), or legal mandates (Hall *et. al.* 1977). Due to this diversity, these studies of public human service organizations do not locate core motivations, nor do they rely on a common conceptualization of the environment that lends itself

to the development of a related body of research. It is difficult to apply the findings from any one study across interorganizational relations or types of organization.

Even though studies of corporations thus seem to be more useful in developing generalizable results, the underlying theory probably cannot be applied directly to public human service organizations. The uncertainty approach relies on the central concept of a market in which protection of the technology from an uncertain environment is a key organizational task, but public human service organizations do not face such an environment. Funding does not depend upon a market but on a variety of specific political agencies; the technology of serving people may not even be important in determining whether the organization survives and prospers.

Nevertheless, public human service organizations may have some general traits and environmental demands in common; it is possible that there is an equivalent of a market mechanism that has some generality across human service organizations, although this equivalent may not rely on the uncertainty concept. Finding such an equivalent would be quite useful if it used an open systems theory, enabling a comparison to be made between analyses of corporations and those of public human service organizations.

This paper attempts to develop such an open system explanation of interorganizational relations in public human service organizations. It begins with an examination of one type of relation between juvenile courts and their "organizational set" (Evan, 1966), an examination which

attempts to utilize a version of open systems theory. It tests the explanation empirically, and discusses the implications of the results for a more general theory of interorganizational relations in public human service agencies.

Liaisons in Juvenile Courts

The juvenile court is one type of public human service organization, and as such, an analysis of the interorganizational relations of this institution might help exemplify the possibility of creating an open system theory for examining interorganizational relations in public human service agencies in general. Indeed, this analysis seems to face some of the typical problems that make the development of a general theory difficult. But for each problem, it appears that a solution exists.

A first problem is that it is difficult to select an appropriate dependent variable. Juvenile courts, like most public human service organizations, do not have the freedom to develop as many different types of ties as (apparently) do corporations. Often relations are either mandated or made unlikely by forces outside of the control of courts. Some ties are automatic due to the nature of the task. These ties include formalized procedures for dealing with referrals from the police, schools, or local public welfare agencies (Hall et al., 1977). Other ties are practically forbidden by law or propriety. All mergers, and special relations between the court and the county-wide unit of government that usually provides funds (and thus is the closest equivalent to a market), must be placed in this category.

At first glance, this seems like an argument for the more specific approaches other researchers have taken. If relations are highly constrained, they apparently can only be analyzed with a very particular explanatory framework. But, in actuality, this need not be the case; there can be some general strategies which are used to deal with potential problems or conflicts with groups with which ties are possible. Of course, the analysis of such ties cannot explain why only certain outside agencies can have special relations with courts. But this is typical for theoretically-based research; even analyses of interorganizational relations among corporations study only general phenomena such as the number of mergers or the number of voluntary, formal ties with potentially useful outside groups. The trick, then, is to locate a fairly general strategy that can be analyzed without resort to discussions of laws or precedents--even though these more particular arrangements do place limits on almost any strategy.

The development of formal liaisons with external agencies seems to represent one such general strategy. In about half of the nation's juvenile courts, representatives from other public agencies are invited into the court where they may more directly refer youth to hearings or (more rarely) decide on whether a youth should be accepted for treatment in their facilities. Inviting liaisons in seems to be consistent with Thompson's (1967) description of general strategies for dealing with the environment, a description used to frame the uncertainty approach to interorganizational relations. Liaisons enable juvenile courts to anticipate the behavior of other public organizations and smooth over

potential problems. For example, the behavior of liaisons may be a first indication of whether the police are planning to change the number of youth referred to court, and conversations with the police liaison may help ease any tension that could arise from court reaction to an alteration in referral patterns.

In other words, inviting liaisons into juvenile courts is a useful dependent variable. It is somewhat voluntary, and it is a general response to environmental pressures used by courts (and other human service organizations) that can be analyzed without recourse to specific laws or precedents. It is an equivalent for the measures used in studies of corporations.

Explaining Liaisons: Conflict

The second difficulty is that, as might be expected from the traits of public human service organizations in general, it is unlikely that resource uncertainty can be used to explain why some juvenile courts tend to invite liaisons in more often than others. The uncertainty approach is premised on the assumption that the core technology of the organization is threatened by resource uncertainty and must be protected by interorganizational relations, but juvenile courts do not face much uncertainty that might threaten the survival of the units. These public institutions are well legitimated (Platt, 1969), have a monopoly on services, are required to fulfill certain tasks by law, and can even mandate sufficient funds (in some states) if the local government does not appropriate them.

In addition, the leadership of juvenile courts seems to be relatively immune from the small amounts of resource uncertainty that might exist. Judges head juvenile courts, and their positions and salaries are quite certain. Even if juvenile courts were to experience some reduction in support, it is unclear if the well-protected judges would respond to the threat in the same manner that heads of corporations apparently do. And, because judges have much say in what type of interorganizational relations their courts develop (Emerson, 1969), such distance further undercuts the role of resource uncertainty.

Given these conditions, an equivalent of uncertainty must be found. Conflict with groups with which courts have day to day contact seems to be this key environmental constraint. Conflict does not impose as severe a threat as resource uncertainty, but in the absence of a market mechanism, it can lead to many problems judges might want to counteract. It can deflect attention away from treatment goals, thus limiting the extent to which the goals judges desire to reach can be attained. For example, if a juvenile court judge desires to refer youth to drug treatment centers, conflict with the leaders of these centers can limit referrals and undermine court goals.

Conflict also has a direct effect on the careers of judges. Some of the groups with which courts have contact have some political power. If there is conflict with external groups, it is possible that such political power will be used to threaten advancement opportunities for a judge, or even to remove a judge from office.

Using the open systems framework, it is important to distinguish three sources of such conflict. Conflict might occur with the input

group, which includes the police, the schools, and public welfare agencies. Input agencies are often able to threaten courts politically, and they are also involved in day to day case processing. In general, they desire that youth who are referred are handled formally (rather than simply counseled by an intake worker) and punished for their offenses (Hasenfeld, 1976).

Conflict might also occur with the throughput group, which includes prosecutors and public defenders. Often conflict with the throughput group involves the extent to which due process standards are followed in courts, and a failure to obey due process laws can cause judges political problems (Sosin, 1977). On the other hand, often a strict use of due process threatens input agencies, who may fear that the guarantees result in too many dismissals. Input and throughput demands thus are often contradictory.

Conflict may also occur with the output group, which includes the state correctional authority and private social service agencies. The output group seldom has political power. Rather, it is important to the treatment goals courts might have. Conflict with output agencies can reduce referrals and thus make it more difficult for judges to treat youths as desired, whether judges desire more punishment (that is, more referrals to the youth correctional authority), or more social services (referrals to private agencies).

Explaining Liaisons: Motivations

In studies of corporations, the interorganizational strategy is related directly to the measure of the environment. This direct relation

is premised on the assumption that corporations are motivated by a common need to protect the core technology from the exigencies of the market. But juvenile courts, like most human service organizations, are not motivated by market problems, given (as has been mentioned) the certainty of resources. Other motivating factors must be discovered.

It seems likely that these motivating factors will rely on the interests of the leaders, rather than on the protection of the organization. The organization, itself, cannot easily be displaced, but it is possible that leaders can, or that the institutional goals of leaders can be subverted. But these motivations can be differentially expressed, depending on the job security the organizational leaders have (Meyer, 1978). Thus, as March and Simon (1958) suggest, and as is common in many recent studies, motivations must be represented by an interaction of individual positions and organizational constraints.

In this particular case of juvenile courts, judges are the leaders, and the distinctive motivation is tied to the manner in which these leaders may maintain office. Some judges are appointed. Appointed judges have much power and security. They cannot easily be removed from office, and their future advancement depends more on impressing higher political authorities than on meeting specific community demands. In short, of the two motivations mentioned above, they are most likely to be concerned with meeting institutional goals. Their interorganizational strategies are likely to stress making long-term commitments that can be beneficial to the chance of organizational success.

On the other hand, other judges are elected. Elected judges are much more dependent on the voters in general, and on the behavior of

interest groups in particular. Their motivation is less in meeting long-term goals than in avoiding immediate, short-run conflicts with groups that can injure their chances for re-election.¹ Indeed, other work indicates the relatively short-term nature of the strategies of elected judges, and the long-term nature of strategies of appointed judges (Sosin, 1978).

Hypotheses

Given the dependent variables, environmental constraints, and tenure conditions, four hypotheses concerning the formation of inter-organizational relations may be developed:

Hypothesis 1. Courts in which judges are elected invite more liaisons into the court than do courts in which judges are appointed.

As has been mentioned, inviting liaisons into the organization increases the ability of judges to anticipate and smooth over problems. Elected judges have a greater need than appointed judges to carry out these tasks, because external groups can more directly affect their tenure. Assuming some level of rationality, elected judges, with greater incentives to invite liaisons into the organization, should be expected to do so.

Hypothesis 2. Among courts with elected judges, the higher the conflict with the throughput group, the more often liaisons are invited into the court.

The throughput group is likely to threaten the job security of a judge. It is comprised of agencies that often have political power

which can be used at election time, and conflict with the agencies can upset staff and thus also indirectly undermine a judge's authority. Elected judges, more concerned about the threat to personal security and advancement caused by such conflict, should use the liaison strategy to deal with throughput conflict. This line of reasoning does not imply that conflict with the throughput group will lead only to liaisons with throughput agencies. Rather, while such a direct relationship is possible, it is equally likely that conflict with one group will lead to liaisons with another. For example, conflict with the throughput group tends to increase compliance with due process guarantees in juvenile courts (Sosin, 1977). Such guarantees may hinder relations with the input and output agencies, necessitating the formation of liaisons with the latter two groups of agencies.

In sum, the total number of liaisons is the appropriate dependent variable. In keeping with the goal of explaining general, broadly applicable behaviors, this paper is concerned with explaining responses to conflict on an organizational level, not with explaining what specific liaisons occur--there have been other works concerned with conflict as a variable at this lower level of analysis (Schmidt and Kochan, 1977).²

No relation is predicted between conflict with the throughput group and liaisons with appointed judges. The throughput group is not able to affect court goals significantly, because the due process demanded by the throughput group does not (as past research has shown) actually alter court dispositions (Sosin, 1978). And it is these court goals that motivate appointed judges. Therefore conflict with these groups is only a minor annoyance to appointed judges and will not result in the formation of liaisons.

Hypothesis 3. Among courts with appointed judges, the higher the conflict with the output group, the more often liaisons are invited into the court.

Appointed judges are more interested in meeting long-term goals, and conflict with the output group can undermine these goals. This conflict may reduce the ability of the court to obtain the desired placement for youth (whether it be corrections or social services), thus undermining the treatment goal. Therefore, when conflict is high, appointed judges might be expected to invite more liaisons into the organization to anticipate or smooth over problems. Again, these liaisons might be invited from the treatment agencies in order to smooth the referral process, but appointed judges might also develop liaisons with input groups when conflict with output groups is high, in order to obtain a referral pattern that helps meet court goals. For example, if placements are insufficient, appointed judges might attempt to develop liaisons with the police in order to limit police referrals or to reduce pressure to find placements.

No relation is predicted between conflict with the output group and liaisons among elected judges. The output group does not have considerable political power, so that conflict with this group does not threaten the status of the elected judge. There is no motivation for an elected judge to anticipate or smooth over problems caused by conflict with this group.

Hypothesis 4. For all courts, the higher the conflict with the input group, the more often liaisons are invited into the court.

The input group may affect courts in two ways: by applying political pressure on courts, or by affecting day-to-day conduct. Thus, conflict with input agencies can hinder the short-term political goals of elected judges, as well as the long-term goals of appointed judges. Therefore, one would expect both types of judges to invite more liaisons in when conflict with input groups is high, to counteract political pressures (for elected judges) and to smooth case processing (for appointed judges).

Data and Methods

The hypotheses thus are an attempt to place the analysis of juvenile court liaisons within a broader theory. The success of the attempt may be determined by testing the hypotheses, using a mail survey of juvenile courts conducted by the National Assessment of Juvenile Corrections in 1974. The survey includes a random sample of all courts in counties having populations of at least 50,000 people. 400 such counties were selected, and questionnaires were sent to 600 possibly relevant courts.

The judge's questionnaire includes information relevant to judicial status and environmental conflict, while the administrator's questionnaire includes questions concerning court liaisons. 277 judges responded, representing a response rate of 60%, after correcting for the attempt to send questionnaires to all possible juvenile courts in counties, some of which turned out to be ineligible. 237 court administrators responded, for a response rate of 58%. Because a special effort was made to obtain responses from urban areas, the sample slightly overrepresents more populous areas (National Assessment of Juvenile Corrections, 1976).

One problem in using multiple sources of data from mailed questionnaires involves matching response rates. When questions concerning judicial status, liaisons, and conflict, are combined, only about 160 cases are left. The number decreases to slightly more than 100 when one judicial status that is not of interest to us, that of judges who are first appointed and later elected, is left out. Even though this is still a large sample for organizational analysis, it must be admitted that biases are possible. However, because this paper is aimed at illustrating a somewhat new frame of reference that admittedly needs more testing, these limits, perhaps are acceptable.

The three sets of variables are operationalized fairly directly from these questionnaires. The status of the judge is operationalized as a binary variable, coded zero if the judge claims to be elected, and one if the judge claims to be appointed. This distribution is about even, as 43% of judges claim to be elected, 57% claim to be appointed.

The conflict questions are operationalized from a series of six-point scales on which judges were asked to rate how much conflict there was with external groups. Averages are in order to create the three scales of interest. Conflict with the input group averages conflict with schools, the police, and public social services. Conflict with the throughput group averages conflict with the prosecutor and public defender. Conflict with the output group averages conflict with the private social service agencies and with the public youth corrections authority. The average conflicts are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Conflict with Interest Groups

| Group | Average Conflict | Standard Deviation |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Input Agencies (police, schools, public welfare) | 2.47 | .71 |
| Throughput Agencies (prosecutor, defender) | 1.70 | .79 |
| Output Agencies (state corrections, private social services) | 1.84 | .79 |

Conflict is on a five point scale, coded here with five representing high conflict.

n = 230

Table 2
Liaisons Invited In

| Agency | Number of Liaisons Invited In |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Police | 17 |
| Schools | 34 |
| Public Social Services | 92 |
| Public Defender | 3 |
| Prosecutor | 8 |
| Private Social Services | 28 |
| Drug Program | 4 |
| Other | 20 |

n (courts) = 216

Note: A court can invite more than one agency in. The average number invited in is 0.94; the standard deviation is 1.30.

Table 3
Zero-Order Correlations Among the Elements

| | Judicial Status | Conflict with Input Group | Conflict with Throughput Group | Conflict with Output Group |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Conflict with Input Group | .05 | - | | |
| Conflict with Throughput Group | -.09 | .37* | - | |
| Conflict with Output Group | -.21* | .52* | .36* | - |
| Liaisons invited in | .25* | .15* | .18* | .22* |

*P < .05

Administrators were asked to list the agencies that had liaisons invited into the court. As Table 2 notes, the majority of such ties involve the three input agencies: there are 34 liaisons with schools, 17 with the police, and 92 with the local public welfare agency. There are very few liaisons with throughput organizations (11), as expected, given cultural constraints. The largest other number of liaisons occurs with private output groups (34). The dependent variable used throughout this analysis is the number of liaisons a court invites in, which averages at about one.

Analysis and Results

The nature of these hypotheses demands multi-variate analysis that takes interaction terms into account. Nevertheless, for comparison's sake, the zero-order correlations are as reported on Table 3. Interestingly, the table notes a reversed relation from Hypothesis 1, as liaisons are frequent in courts with appointed judges. Further, all three conflict variables show small, but statistically significant, positive relations to the number of liaisons invited in. If simple correlations were used, one would have to conclude that conflict and the status of the judge demonstrate statistically significant, but small, effects on the number of liaisons invited into courts.

In order both to deal with interaction effects and simultaneously to determine the effect of judicial status, it is necessary to run one regression equation, which uses as independent variables the status of the judge, the three conflict variables, and two interaction terms, which multiply the conflict variable (for throughput and output groups) by the

Table 4
Regression Equation of Liaisons Invited In

| Variable | b | f |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Judicial | -.59 | .20 |
| Conflict with status Input Group | .80 | 21.79 ^x |
| Conflict with Throughput Group | 2.37 | 76.56 ^x |
| Conflict with Output Group | -2.44 | 51.78 ^x |
| Status - Throughput Interaction | -3.01 | 82.13 ^x |
| Status - Output Interaction | 2.73 | 58.09 ^x |

n = 102

$r^2 = .53$

x p < .01

Judicial status is coded zero for elected judges and one for appointed judges.

status of the judge. The interaction terms, of course, measure the importance of the presumed differential between the effect of conflict for appointed and elected judges. Table 4 reports the relevant regression.

A first impression from Table 4 is that the general outline of the hypothesis, if not all specifics, must make sense. Thus, the equation explains 53% of the variance, and this power is not typical of studies of interorganizational relations. Moreover, the interaction effects clearly play a role in the variance explained. While not reported separately on a table, the status of the judge and the three conflict variables together explain only 11% of the variance (status and any one of the three conflict variables are sufficient to explain almost all of this 11%). The interaction terms dramatically increase the explained variance.

Nevertheless, one of the four hypotheses remains in doubt. Hypothesis 1 claims that there should be more liaisons in courts in which judges are elected, but this does not seem to be established. In the equation, the correlation between status and liaisons is in the expected direction, but it is not statistically significant. However, this relation is statistically significant (b xx -2.2) before the last conflict term enters the equation (the interaction between conflict with output groups and the status of the judge). In fact, the status variable alters from demonstrating a statistically significant positive relation, to demonstrating a negative relation that is statistically significant, to its final, non-significant relation as other independent variables are entered; its effect is quite unstable.

While not predicted, this sensitivity of the status variable to the exact variables in the regression equation seems to make sense. Because there are strong interaction effects, the addition or subtraction of a term is quite important in altering relations involving the status of a judge. In sum, the direct effect of judicial status is overwhelmed by interaction effects, and the first hypothesis cannot be sustained.

However, the other hypotheses are supported. Hypothesis 2 predicts that conflict with the throughput group will relate positively to liaisons when judges are elected, while it will not have this effect when judges are appointed. Because the interaction term becomes zero when judges are elected, the effect of conflict for elected judges can be tested by looking at the regression coefficient of the conflict variable. Because the interaction term becomes one multiplied by the conflict variable when judges are appointed, the effect of conflict among appointed judges can be gauged by adding together the coefficient of the conflict variable and the corresponding interaction term.

As predicted by the second hypothesis, among elected judges, conflict with the throughput group is strongly related to liaisons invited in ($b=2.37$), while the coefficient is reversed when judges are appointed ($b=-.67$). This reversed relation may occur because appointed judges, not fearing the political pressure the throughput group can bring to bear, may react to conflict with this group simply by reducing ties, either to minimize conflict by limiting interaction, or to avoid a situation in which conflict with the throughput group injures relations to other agencies.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that there will be a positive relation between inviting liaisons in and conflict with the output group for appointed

judges, but not for elected judges. Again, the hypothesis is supported. Among appointed judges, conflict with the output group is related to liaisons invited in ($b=.29$), while the relation is reversed for elected judges ($b=-2.44$). The reversed relation involving elected judges is much stronger than the direct relation involving appointed judges, and this was not predicted. Perhaps appointed judges, immune to pressures, are actually only weakly affected by threats to their goals, as well; long-range goals may not be such strong motivators as are short-range pressures. But elected judges, who find conflict a direct or indirect threat; prefer to avoid liaisons with agencies with which there is conflict when those agencies do not have direct political power over them. For example, if an elected judge attempted to smooth over relations with an output group with which there was conflict by using a liaison, it is possible that his or her activities would increase conflict with groups that had more power (the input or throughput groups).

Hypothesis 4 predicts that liaisons invited into the organization correlate positively with conflict with the input group, and there is a positive relation ($b=.80$). It has proved impossible to determine if the variable also has an interaction effect, because a multicollinearity problem develops if a third interaction term is added into the equation. Nevertheless, such a relation is not predicted; so far as the data can demonstrate, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Uncertainty. In general terms, then, the framework used seems to generate variable hypotheses. But some may wonder if the traditional uncertainty approach might also help explain the variance. In order to determine the potential effect of the uncertainty concept, another question

on the judge's questionnaire was added to the analysis. Judges were asked to rate the uncertainty of financial support on a five point scale, and this variable is a direct measurement of resource uncertainty, at least as it is perceived (Downey *et. al.* 1979). However, this variable does not add to the explained variance. The zero order correlation between the measure of uncertainty and the number of liaisons invited into juvenile courts is small and is not statistically significant ($r = .12$). Further, when the uncertainty measure is added to the two final equations, increment in explained variance is not statistically significant (the increment is 1.5%), and the individual f value of the variable is also not larger than what would be expected by chance. Finally, when the status variable, the uncertainty measure, and an interaction term multiplying status and uncertainty are placed in one equation, the explained variance is not larger (at the .05 level of statistical significance) than that explained by the status variable alone.

Liaisons and Juvenile Courts

At the level of juvenile courts, it must thus be concluded that the assumed theoretical framework makes some sense. Liaisons cannot be directly predicted from the status (elected or appointed) of the judge. But it explains more of the variance in the number of liaisons invited into courts than an uncertainty model, and most of its predictions are supported. Interactions between conflict and the status of the judge along with one conflict variable itself, explain much of court behavior concerning liaisons. Apparently appointed judges (as predicted) seem

to be motivated to attain treatment goals. When conflict with the output group might make these goals more difficult to obtain, appointed judges develop liaisons to anticipate or smooth over the conflict. Elected judges, concerned over short-range political goals, develop liaisons when conflict with the throughput group is high, in order to minimize the direct and indirect political disruption which conflict with this group might entail. All judges develop more liaisons when conflict with the input group is high, apparently because the input group can disrupt both short-range political desires of elected judges and long-term treatment desires of appointed judges. On the other hand, when judges are not motivated to form liaisons--such as is the case for elected judges when conflict with the output group is high or for appointed judges when conflict with the throughput group is high--the typical relation does not develop. Rather, in the absence of other motivations, judges apparently prefer to avoid the conflict, and to establish fewer liaisons.

It is not a large jump to assume that such an open systems model stressing the motivations of the judge as an interaction term can explain many aspects of juvenile court behavior. In fact, some other studies suggest that this is the case. One work suggests that elected judges are more likely than appointed judges to comply to due process guarantees when they must avoid conflict with environmental groups (Sosin, 1977). Another suggests that elected judges are more likely to commit youth to institutions in response to community pressure (Sosin, 1979). Apparently there is a more general interaction between motivations and environmental pressures. Elected judges are concerned

with short-range pressures and respond to immediate threats, while appointed judges seem to respond to longer range goals (for example, they comply with due process mandates when organizations in their reference group support the mandates). The point of the perspective is to develop a more general view of how public human service organizations interact with the environment, and such a general view of juvenile court reactions to the environment seems to be implied by the existing studies.

Interorganizational Relations

It might be argued, however, that the perspective is not widely applicable in other public human service organizations. While couched in open systems terms, the explanations continually make reference to the particular position of judges, or to the specific types of pressures courts face. This specificity is no surprise; as was stated at the outset, public human service organizations are in quite varying situations, have different internal arrangements, and cannot be expected to act according to any very simple theory.

Indeed, certain aspects of the results may be unique. But it is at least conceivable that the broader underlying perspective, one that is consistent with an open systems perspective, is applicable across organizations. In particular, perhaps studies of interorganizational relations in public organizations in general need to look at the interaction of two sets of independent variables. One of these is the motivation of leaders, which may vary between short- and long-term

perspectives. The second is the amount of conflict with surrounding groups, perhaps analytically distinguishable into an input, throughput, and output group.

This potential for generality seems likely on logical grounds. Almost all public human service organizations lack a market; and in its absence, it seems to make sense that such individual-level motivations as short-range survival needs and longer-term institutional needs influence environmental strategies. Individual leaders or even coalitions (Thompson, 1967) may often be like judges, immune from uncertainty but motivated by political realities or long-term goals. And, these motivations must certainly affect behavior in conjunction with conflict with external groups, given the importance of conflict for individual-level survival and for institutional goals.³ The direction which conflict with the input, output, and throughput groups takes with respect to interorganizational relations may usually vary, insofar as these groups often have differential effects on institutional goals and survival.

This logical argument, of course, needs further support--the current paper is only one of many possible tests. It will be particularly important to determine if the dependent variable (or some variant) can be applied across settings. But in light of the success of the general perspective in one context, it seems worthwhile to carry out the needed studies. As the introduction of this paper noted, many studies of interorganizational relations among public human service organizations are problematic because they do not locate core motivations, do not suggest longer-term research strategies, and do not stem from comparable

perspectives. But the proposed individual motivation-conflict view may overcome these difficulties. This view specifies individual motivations. It also seems to imply a longer-term research strategy, in which researchers may apply the concepts (and compare results) across types of interorganizational relations and public agencies. Finally, the perspective certainly promotes research with some degree of generality, given its reliance on universal phenomena involving motivations and conflict.

In short, this paper may suggest a needed open-systems paradigm for analyzing some aspects of the environmental strategies adopted by public human service organizations. The paradigm is a general one, because it relies on very basic interactions between motivations and constraints. It thus suggests that substantive research concerning interorganizational relations in public human service organizations may share a view of open systems theory in which variations are allowed in motivations as well as in pressures and strategies.

Notes

1. There is a third possible status, as judges might be first appointed to office, to be elected at a later time. About one-third of the judges fall into this category. However, the category is a mixed bag; it includes judges appointed to fill a vacancy and judges who are in a system in which appointment is followed by an election where one must run against one's own record. The former category of judges may be expected to act like elected judges and the latter like appointed judges; the existence of these two contradictory trends suggests that it is better not to analyze this judicial status.

2. Indeed, an attempt to correlate conflict directly with the formation of liaisons with a corresponding agency (such as conflict with police and liaisons with police), even if an interaction term denoting judicial status is allowed, does not explain large amounts of variance. However, an attempt was made to test the hypotheses for liaisons to the input and output group. While not reported for methodological and space reasons, the results are quite similar to those reported here.

3. In fact, it is even possible that some of the relations among corporations that are often presumed to be based on resource uncertainty are actually a special case of the pattern indicated in this paper. For example, mergers have been linked to resource uncertainty (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) under the assumption that these types of strategies protect the core technology from variability in the environment. But another explanation is that mergers are tactics to gain domination over

the environment, in keeping with personal goals of mergers. Large corporations may be much like juvenile courts, having fairly certain resources and thus acting on the basis of other motivations.

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