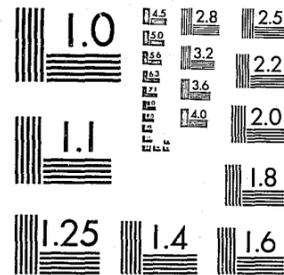


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Community Service Networks  
for Adolescent Antisocial Youth

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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ACQUISITIONS

A. PURPOSE AND NEED

The proposed action research is designed to identify critical community characteristics that enhance the mental health of adolescent youth who are at risk because of antisocial delinquent behavior. Such behavior has been shown to be significant for subsequent adult mental health and adjustment, but adolescent youth have been underserved in most states of the U.S. Service needs may well be at their highest, precisely, during the teen years. On the other hand, society has been quick to respond with punishment and coercive control of adolescent anti social behavior, thereby exacerbating the problems at issue. Because of deinstitutionalization policies, profound family structural change, high and persistent unemployment, serious substance abuse and self-injury, as well as crime and violence, youth at risk need community-based services that will open channels for movement into positive adult roles. Likewise community agencies and groups need knowledge of programs, strategies and procedures that will be effective in serving these youth. The proposed project identifies the critical mechanisms and will determine how these social units can operate to serve youth effectively and efficiently in the long run as well as the short run.

B. RELEVANCE

The project proposed here has direct and immediate relevance for the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, but it also is of importance to the Administration on Aging and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities because it is primarily concerned with action research and utilization directed toward the enhancement of effective and cost-efficient community-based intervention programs for populations which, in the past, have been treated primarily in residential facilities. Deinstitutionalization has been a national priority in mental health and youth services for a period of

more than twenty years, but in the case of adolescent youth there has been a failure to develop viable community-based services which are in accord with community goals and values, and which permit substantial involvement of local agencies, families and youth in the design and administration of services. Research findings indicate that unless there is such active involvement community-based services will not be effective and they also will be very costly in the case of youth programs.

The knowledge gained from this research will provide a more thoroughgoing understanding of community potentials and limitations and of the prerequisite for viable programs. This project focuses its attention on community and organizational level variables, examining their differential impact on adolescent antisocial behavior. The present federal administration is placing considerable emphasis on stimulating state and local government, as well as the voluntary/private sector, to be responsible for human services provision. Resources will be made available through block grants and other mechanisms to encourage greater local planning and responsibility. This situation is particularly problematic for adolescent youth because often the local community views their interests as marginal and would prefer that someone else deal with them.

This study's findings will enable us to provide some definitive guidelines about the design and implementation of community programs that will be of interest to a broad range of policy makers -- legislators, judges, mental health and justice officials -- concerned with formulating policy affecting the processing of females and males into and through the control systems for antisocial/delinquent behavior. It will also inform us about the impact, at the local level, of several federal initiatives that have been operative in past years. The county in which this study is being completed

has taken advantage of these external resources to a considerable extent, so it will provide an opportunity to study a variety of alternatives and their differential impact. In turn, the findings will provide the basis for concrete programmatic recommendations.

One explicit implication from current federal strategies is that the family, in particular, parents, are expected to assume greater responsibility for the care of their children. However, if the family is to be the primary source of personal and economic support for children, then it is appropriate for the state to facilitate and endorse those roles. Moroney's (1980) study of family care given to mentally handicapped children indicates that the parents are willing, but that professionals and agencies have failed to act in ways which facilitate the family's effective participation in the care function. Families are changing significantly in structure and functions, and these changes have important implications for community life and for social policy. The dramatic increase in single-parent households, the rise in recognized domestic violence and child abuse, and the complex family structures which have emerged because of new life styles -- all of these factors have influenced the family in ways which require new responses by police, schools, and other youth-serving agencies. Where the ecological predictors of social disorganization and stress are significant, it will be possible to ascertain how organizations, with more limited resources today, respond to these conditions. For example, resource limitations have resulted in the reduction or elimination of many crisis and early intervention programs just when external conditions suggest an increased need for such services.

There is also a growing interest in the development of local mediation panels for families and youth -- to resolve conflicts outside the formal mechanisms of the juvenile court. The county in which this project is

proposed has evidenced interest in the development of such panels. Their implementation could be very cost-efficient since elaborate due process conflict resolution through the court is becoming extremely expensive.

This proposal is particularly worthwhile and relevant because it builds on existing knowledge and on-going research but it does so in ways which are innovative regarding the approaches to coordinate community services for adolescent youth. It involves public and private youth serving and mental health agencies, public and private schools, and local voluntary efforts by families and neighborhood groups. Finally, this research will yield information upon what specific recommendations can be given for youth programming, taking into consideration both ecological and organizational capabilities of the various urban communities in the U.S.

#### C. THE PROBLEM AND APPROACH

Because the adolescent years are a period of transition, it is also a period of high risk in terms of social maladjustment. Gold and Petronio (1980), among others, contend that as a result, there is a persistently high level of delinquency in mid-adolescence as well as personal maladjustment manifested by self-injury, pregnancy, running away, dropping out of school, suicide, withdrawal through substance abuse, and increased alienation and lack of participation. This study will focus on how variable types of interaction of community structures and service systems affect the behavior and control of this population (Lerman, 1980). Quite a few studies have linked community characteristics to social adjustment. Most commonly, communities have been characterized by ecological or social organizational dimensions. The present study is built upon these traditions, but it is also designed to deal with some of their limitations. With the intent of interpreting and extending

ecological and social disorganization arguments on the community role in creating, preventing, and responding to youth problems, we will examine:

- 1) the impact of community characteristics on service system intervention modalities in the mental health and youth services sector;
- 2) the impact of organizational integration on official delinquency and service organizations' clientele; and
- 3) the impact of information about youth behavior and community contextual characteristics on the effectiveness of intervention.

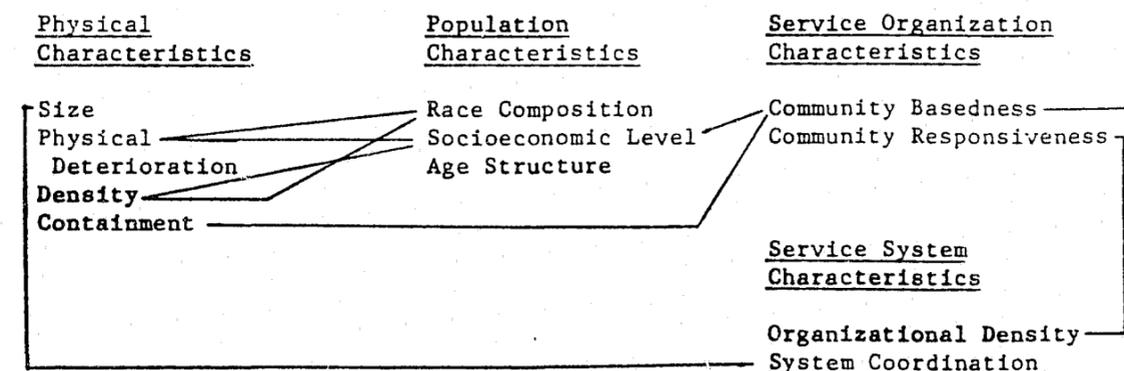
Theoretical Framework

Roland Warren (1966) argued that in rapidly changing, complex, differentiated societies a variety of forms of community structures have evolved to mediate essential relationships of individuals, families, and primary groups. Consequently, any characterization of communities that focus exclusively on informal or grass roots arrangements is necessarily distorted and incomplete, missing important functional dimensions carried by local organizations. Warren (1973) later conceptualized a series of social functions, each of which calls for a differential response by the appropriate human service organization if effective services are to be delivered for the resolution of a particular social problem. Thus, in this instance, it follows that the response to adolescent antisocial behavior must be differential in terms of the social functions to be optimized. Rushing (1979), in his study of distribution of medical resources within communities, concluded that while societal factors such as access to social and economic opportunity, technological and cultural changes directly affect individual behavior in availability and procurement of health services, they were also significantly mediated and influenced by the community organizational structure. Turk (1970) proposes that communities can best be defined as interorganizational fields, since interorganizational forces and not social characteristics of a particular population may produce social policy. Consequently, community

organizational structure has the major impact on social problems and is not simply a complement or supplement to primary groups.

If community is to be defined in terms of the local organizational network we have to analyze differential community service delivery systems in terms of certain organizational and interorganizational characteristics. Because we are specially interested in the adolescent population, only youth related organizations will be focused upon. Our previous conceptualization of the community organizational network as a system of secondary controls also leads to the emphasis on certain organizational and interorganizational exchange and such organizational characteristics as community basedness and tolerance are thought to be particularly relevant to community integration (Spergel, 1977). That is, the more services available in the community, the more they are able to work in concert, the greater number of organizations with local roots and greater their understanding of youth needs the more the organizational system will function as effective community secondary controls. At this stage we are especially interested in investigating how the community contextual variables are related to dimensions of service systems and organizations as indicated in model 1.

FIGURE 1  
MODEL 1. ECOLOGICAL PREDICTORS OF ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRATION



Spergel and his associates also found that volunteer participation in the service organizations (another measure of community basedness) was greater in communities with medium socioeconomic level and a lower percentage of blacks. This is consistent with the findings reported by Rothman (1975: 279-325) and by McPherson (1981) that indicate that the pattern of volunteer participation differs importantly for high and low status individuals. High status individuals not only tend to join organizations at a greater rate but also to remain in them longer. Huckfeld (1980) reports that in communities of higher density and homogeneity (in terms of population characteristics), the organizations tended to be more locally oriented and perform in ways consistent with the predominant preference of the community. Warren (1966: 69-77) also proposes that horizontal links among community organizations will increase with local orientation (e.g., community basedness and organizational responsiveness). Hall (1977), Spergel (1977) and Downs (1977) addressed the issue of the consequences of different patterns of interorganizational exchanges among youth service organizations for behavior control. Their focus was, however, on the organizational determinants of the exchanges rather than on the community context.

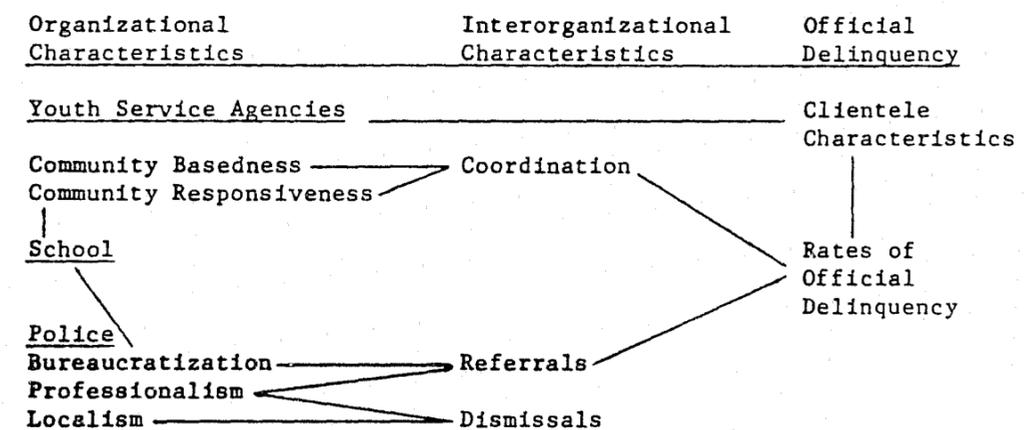
For many of the relations between the variables identified in model 1 we cannot formulate hypotheses based on past research and consequently this stage of the study will be truly exploratory. We can, however, propose a few hypotheses based on the previous discussion such as:

- 1) The larger the community population the higher the density of all services.
- 2) The higher the socioeconomic level of large communities the higher the density of community based services.
- 3) The lower the socioeconomic level of large communities the higher the density of externally based services.
- 4) The higher the percentage of low income and black population in a community the lower the participation rates in the community service organizations.

- 5) The more homogeneous the population the greater the responsiveness of the organization to community needs.
- 6) The interconnectedness or coordination among the community's service system is expected to vary directly with the extent to which the service organizations are community based and responsive to the community needs.

Model 1 tries to identify how certain community characteristics shape the types and nature of services available. However our major interest is to evaluate the efficiency of different service networks in dealing with the problem of juvenile delinquency. That is, at this second stage we are specially interested in comparing the effect of different organizational systems on control. The investigation of the impact of the organizational system on control involves an expansion of the interorganizational analysis initiated under model 2 having the police as the focal organization. That is, here we are especially interested in the links between the individual organizations in the community system and the police. Those links are expected to determine the extent of use of non-official secondary control in a given community.

FIGURE 2  
MODEL 2. ORGANIZATIONAL PREDICTORS OF OFFICIAL DELINQUENCY



In fact, the expected outcome of diversion prevention would be a decrease in official delinquency as a result of the transfer of cases previously

handled by the law-enforcement agencies to youth service agencies. The concept of diversion as a strategy in dealing with delinquency depends consequently on the interorganizational links between the police and other youth service organizations.

Coordination alone will not guarantee that fewer youths will be processed by the police. Spergel (1979) found little or no change in the total number of juveniles officially processed in spite of a concerted effort by several service organizations to deal with youth referred by police. Characteristics of the police departments are likely to determine the real effect of diversion in official delinquency. For example, Wilson (1968a) found some evidence of an inverse relationship between bureaucratization and dismissals as well as openness to other community organizations. Sarri and Bradley (1980) observed in Australia that police trained in youth service were more effective in implementing diversion. The internal organization of the police and of the youth service agencies will directly or indirectly affect both the rates of official delinquency and number of youth receiving support services (Lynch and Spergel, 1980; Black and Weiss, 1970).

Based on the above discussion the following hypotheses can be advanced:

- 1) The more community based an organization in terms of source of budget, source of volunteers and staff and responsiveness to community needs, the greater its willingness to coordinate with other local agencies and its openness to police referrals.
- 2) The less bureaucratized a police department and the more it is staffed by locals the greater the likelihood of informal handling of juveniles both through dismissals and referrals.
- 3) A police department with a specially trained youth police unit is expected to make more referrals to youth services than a police department without it.
- 4) Communities characterized by a high degree of coordination of their youth service organizations and a police department simultaneously low in bureaucratization and high in youth police professionalization will have lower degrees of official delinquency than communities with the opposite characteristics.

#### Dissemination and Utilization

The information obtained from this research will be directly usable at the following levels by administrations of youth services in Michigan.

- a) Michigan State Office of Children and Youth of the Department of Social Services -- Ms. Shirley Tate and Mr. Roger Lewis
- b) Michigan State Department of Mental Health - Mr. Patrick Babcock
- c) Oakland County Juvenile Court, Oakland County Intermediate School District Planner, Oakland County Community Mental Health Board, School Superintendents and Boards of Education in four local communities, Principals of three parochial secondary schools
- d) Michigan State Office of Criminal Justice Programs - Mr. Ralph Monsma, Planner.

The investigators have been engaged in an on-going process with all of the above offices for a period of several years and know that they will be responsive to the findings from this research for applications in the one county that is a specific target, but also in other metropolitan counties of the state of Michigan. There has been a state priority for several years for the development of community services, but the serious economic recession and high unemployment has prevented some of the research and evaluation necessary for ascertaining which programs are most effective and how these could be implemented efficiently.

When the information about community service networks has been obtained and analyzed, the results will be presented in written reports to state and county officials. It will also be presented orally in a state conference for selected administrative and program staff. The respective county staff then will be assisted in the utilization of the information for the enhancement or redesign of youth serving programs to redirect antisocial behavior through more effective services.

It is expected that the dissemination and utilization will be quite successful since Oakland County is one of the most responsive in the state of Michigan in the planning and implementation of innovative programs. It also

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It is expected that the dissemination and utilization will be quite successful since Oakland County is one of the most responsive in the state of Michigan in the planning and implementation of innovative programs. It also

has a long history of successful collaboration between public and private sector agencies so it should be possible to determine the community and organizational conditions necessary for such successful collaboration. This dissemination strategy could then be applied throughout the United States.

#### D. PARTICIPANTS

The ultimate purpose of this study is to evaluate alternative service delivery systems in terms of their effectiveness in containing juvenile delinquency behavior. This imposes two requirements to the research design:

- 1) Access to multiple communities so that the merits of different service delivery systems can be comparatively assessed.
- 2) Access to measures of youth needs within each community so that the efficiency of different systems can be evaluated.

We have selected four communities in an area currently characterized by high unemployment and increasing economic hardship. These conditions are assumed to be precipitants of high delinquency and since they affect all these communities, variation in delinquent and deviant behavior can more clearly be traced to the characteristics of the service network. As discussed below, these communities also meet the two requirements mentioned above. That is, the communities have distinctive characteristics and information on youth need collected in a recent survey are available for all of them.

The boundaries of the communities to be included in this study are defined in terms of school districts. This special criterion of community was chosen because the populations to be focused on are high school students (the age of higher incidence of delinquent behavior). Since the behavioral data was obtained in school, the subjects interviewed constitute a sample of the universe of youth of the same age residing in each school district.

The selection of the specific communities to be studied was, by necessity, based on the availability of behavioral data of students in certain

school districts. However, the school districts had been initially selected with the purpose of maximizing variation in the respondents' community environment. That purpose fits the needs of this research. To explore the associations discussed in the first part of this proposal, either a large number of communities would be required or a purposive selection of a few communities with a wide range of variance on the ecological dimensions that constitute our first level predictors.

The four school districts included in the study correspond to four administrative areas including thirty-one census tracts. All these communities are located in an SMSA and are, therefore, urban. Consequently, our comparisons and findings refer only to urban settings. This should also be kept in mind when examining the variance of community characteristics across sites because the commonality of urban setting limits the range of possible variation.

Some selected characteristics of these areas, based on the 1970 census, are given in Table 1. The areas are distinct along the indicators presented. On one extreme is Highland, a medium-size community, exclusively white, with the vast majority of its population having at least a high school diploma, where income and property values were reasonably high. On the other hand, we have Centerburg, a fairly large community, almost half nonwhite and under twenty-one, with the lowest median income, low property values, low education level, and a fairly high proportion of substandard housing.

The range of variation by census tract is, however, much wider (see appendix). For example, within Centerburg, the larger community, we find the least populated tract (10). The percent of youth in tract 3 of Highland, the oldest community, is higher than in tract 1 of Industrial Park, the youngest of all the communities. The median income is lowest and the percent youth

Table 1

	Size	% Black	% Under 21	Density	Economic Level	Educational Level	Growth
Highland	small	very low	medium	high	high	high	low
Centerburg	large	very high	high	high	low	very low	low
Industrial Park	medium	very low	high	high	med. low	low	low
Newton	small	very low	high	low	medium	medium	high

highest in tract 4 of Newton, the second most affluent community, offering an ideal setting to test strain propositions. This characterization of the areas and tracts is rudimentary and, as proposed in the section on measures, other indicators beyond these will be used. Data on more than 54 youth serving agencies will also be utilized.

#### E. LEVEL OF EFFORT AND TIMING

It is expected that the research could be complete within a one-year period with the second year (approximately 8 months) for the dissemination and utilization phases. Therefore project support of at least 18 months but no longer than 24 months would be necessary for completion.

In order to complete all major phases of the project just outlined we would need \$135,000 over a minimum of eighteen months. These resources would be expended for the first 12-month period as indicated in the appendix.

The university will match at least 5% of the above expenses in the form of computer time, supporting personnel and equipment.

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Community Characteristics by Community and by Census Tract<sup>a</sup>

Characteristics

Community	Census Tract	Total Population	Population Density	% of Population Nonwhite		% of Population Under 21	Median Family Income	Median Value of Owner Occupied Housing	% of Housing Substandard	% of Population with High School Education	% Change in Population 1970-1980
				Black	Nonwhite						
Highland		26,170	5,452	.1	1.2	37.8	14,557	31,900	2.9	85.4	-17.3
	1	4,985		---		37.7	12,563	22,400	6.0	73.2	
	2	6,662		---		36.8	12,039	24,200	1.0	80.4	
	3	3,745		---		45.1	22,517	45,700	1.0	94.1	
	4	4,843		---		38.1	21,055	50,000	1.0	93.4	
Centerburg		85,279	4,746	26.7	42.2	42.7	8,288	15,400	13.7	37.7	-10.6
	1	9,697		10.4		40.4	9,207	15,200	11.0	33.1	
	2	6,442		11.3		36.7	10,971	16,700	9.0	43.0	
	3	8,050		10.9		44.6	10,056	16,000	17.0	37.9	
	4	7,611		10.6		37.9	8,287	15,200	15.0	36.7	
	5	5,076		10.0		36.1	7,920	11,100	13.0	30.9	
	6	3,717		9.7		37.2	7,786	11,400	16.0	27.1	
	7	1,845		8.8		30.1	4,500	---	20.0	21.6	
	8	3,103		12.1		27.4	8,007	17,900	4.0	58.5	
	9	4,006		10.7		38.6	6,492	15,000	14.0	36.2	
	10	819		10.1		28.8	4,065	11,400	34.0	31.8	
	11	5,169		10.3		39.1	5,086	14,500	15.0	31.1	
	12	3,814		11.5		39.5	7,571	14,100	10.0	46.3	
	13	9,734		9.9		50.6	8,067	12,900	21.0	31.7	
	14	6,681		10.2		45.1	8,190	14,100	20.0	31.0	
	15	3,486		9.5		48.9	5,911	11,900	21.0	28.5	
16	6,205		12.1		32.2	11,278	20,900	3.0	60.2		
Industrial Park		38,599	5,475	.06	4.1	45.6	11,705	20,000	11.2	54.1	-8.8
	1	3,447		---		28.1	9,591	26,600	3.0	73.3	
	2	4,190		---		47.9	12,591	24,800	12.0	64.9	
	3	7,079		---		48.6	12,863	22,500	12.0	60.9	
	4	11,052		---		48.8	12,582	20,200	14.0	53.6	
Newton		24,513	744	.7	2.4	40.8	10,879	28,180	9.0	63.7	+82.7
	1	4,392		1.0		45.6	12,178	27,500	6.0	67.3	
	2	5,720		---		47.5	10,916	18,500	12.0	48.0	
	3	4,786		---		44.7	10,530	15,100	15.0	36.2	
	4	6,107		1.3		56.6	7,993	41,600	3.0	89.0	
5	1,248		---		48.9	17,506	18,200	4.0	77.9		

<sup>a</sup> Information regarding community characteristics based on 1970 census data

**END**