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THE IMPACT OF AB3121 ON STATUS OFFENDERS AND THEIR PARENTS

by

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## Abstract

This volume presents a picture of the post-AB3121 relationship between the juvenile justice system and status offenders and their parents, as well as the role which community agencies play as a result of changes in this relationship. Descriptive data on calls received by law enforcement from parents requesting assistance in handling status offense situations indicate law enforcement to play a relatively passive role in responding to these calls. Generally, such calls are referred to other agencies. On the other hand, the parents who make these calls generally are requesting greater involvement from law enforcement than a simple referral. The agencies to which these callers are referred are as likely to be justice system or system-related agencies as they are to be community agencies.

Interviews with a sample of the parents who made these calls and their status offender children reveal two differences between parents and juveniles in their perceptions of the existing problem and its solution. (1) While parents tend to see their child as the one who needs to change, juveniles tend to see persons other than themselves as needing to change. (2) While parents view current police policies as appropriate, juveniles do not.

These interview data also reveal that contact with law enforcement, beyond the initial telephone conversation, is both infrequent and negatively evaluated by both parents and juveniles. On the other hand, contact with community agencies frequently occurs once the family considers the agency as an option and is positively evaluated by both parents and juveniles. However, contact with community agencies is infrequently considered as an option, suggesting that law enforcement could play a greater role in making referrals.

1. AB3121 AND THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO  
STATUS OFFENDERS AND THEIR PARENTS

The family and the juvenile justice system are institutions which assert control over the behavior of adolescents. There is a delicate and complex balance between the parens patriae philosophy of the juvenile court and the right and responsibility of parents to socialize their own children. Recent juvenile justice legislation, Assembly Bill 3121, effective in California on January 1, 1977, is likely to have had an important impact on this balance.

This legislation decreased the level of control which the juvenile justice system could assert over one group of adolescents, status offenders (i.e., non-criminal juvenile offenders such as runaways, truants, and incorrigibles). Indirectly, this legislation had the effect of lessening the juvenile justice system's involvement with these adolescents. Concurrently, it encouraged the use of community facilities as alternatives to system processing of them.

These alterations in the handling of status offenders suggested that post-AB3121 they and their parents would find the juvenile justice system a less viable resource in the handling of status offense situations and that community agencies might replace the juvenile justice system in providing these services. However, this was only speculation. It could not be known, a priori, to what degree families would experience a lack of services from the juvenile justice system or to what degree community agencies would fill any existing vacuum. Furthermore, it could not be known how these families would perceive either the lack of services (if such existed) or the availability of services from the community. We do not even know how these families usually think about the status offense situation or what role they expect the system to play in response



to it.

It is the purpose of this report to address these issues. We will present two types of data: descriptions of the law enforcement responses to status offense situations, and interviews with status offenders and their parents who have had contact with law enforcement. First, however, the ramifications of AB3121 for the provision of services to status offenders and their parents will be examined in greater depth.

While AB3121 maintains the juvenile justice system's jurisdiction over status offenders,<sup>1</sup> it greatly reduces the level of control which the system can exert over them. Prior to this legislation, status offenders could be apprehended and processed in ways similar to juvenile criminal offenders. This handling included the option of detaining a status offender in a secure, i.e., locked, facility such as Juvenile Hall. AB3121 specifically eliminated secure detention as an option in handling status offenders.<sup>2</sup> While status offenders could still be apprehended and detained or placed outside the home, these dispositions could not include holding a status offender under lock and key. Without the option of securely holding a status offender, the potential for status offenders walking away from such dispositions was greatly increased, making it more difficult for the justice system to enforce its authority over them.

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<sup>1</sup>Status offenders in California are those persons brought under juvenile court jurisdiction for a violation of Section 601 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. This section prohibits minors from participating in non-criminal acts such as running away from home, truancy, and incorrigibility, i.e., acts which are illegal only for juveniles.

<sup>2</sup>For a thorough discussion of this legislation and its many provisions see Maxson (1981).

Our previous research suggests that this decline in system control over status offenders had a dramatic impact on the degree to which law enforcement involved itself with the handling of status offenders. After AB3121 was passed, there was a sharp decline in the arrest of status offenders (Teilmann, 1981). In fact, some police officers defined at least one group of status offenders, runaways, as no longer a police responsibility (Little, 1981). This decline in law enforcement involvement with status offenders appears to be an unintended consequence of AB3121.

The decline in police involvement with status offenders has two important ramifications. First, it suggests that status offenders are not getting services formerly provided by the justice system. Second, since most status offenders come to the attention of the juvenile justice system through a parental complaint,<sup>3</sup> it suggests that there are parents who contact law enforcement for assistance in handling a status offense situation, but get less of a response than they desire. Presumably, parents who contact law enforcement about status offense behavior of their children are both admitting an inability to handle the situation on their own and requesting assistance from law enforcement. If law enforcement feels that these calls are not appropriately within its realm of responsibility, these parents would be cut off from this avenue of requested assistance. Thus, following AB3121 there is a potential services and assistance vacuum for status offenders and their parents.

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<sup>3</sup>Ketchan (1978) cites evidence that 72 percent of all status offenders are referred by adults, most frequently a relative.

This vacuum may be perceived by families as a greater or lesser problem, depending on (1) their perceptions of the status offense situation and the expectations they have of appropriate role of law enforcement in responding to it, and (2) their ability to locate alternative agencies for services.

With respect to the perceptions these parents have of the problem and the nature of the appropriate law enforcement role in response to it, we have had no existing data from which to speculate. It is one purpose of this report to provide such data.

With respect to the availability of alternative agencies, some data are available from Gordon's (1981) report. She found that law enforcement rarely officially refer status offenders outside the juvenile justice system, preferring to rely on traditional dispositions such as counsel and release when not inserting a juvenile further in the justive system. Gordon does suggest, however, that status offenders (and other juvenile offenders) may be unofficially referred to community agencies (and consequently do not appear as referrals in official statistics) or they may be routed to community agencies via other agencies such as schools. Thus, Gordon suggests, to a limited extent community agencies may be providing services to adolescents who formerly have been clients of the juvenile justice system even though law enforcement does not officially facilitate this process. A second purpose of this report is to examine in greater depth the process of locating and using community agencies. We will examine this process from the perspectives of the clients as well as law enforcement.

We will address the following questions within this report:

- (1) What is the nature of the response of law enforcement to calls from parents regarding the status offense behavior of their children?

- (2) How do status offenders and their parents define the situation in the home which led to the law enforcement contact and what role do they feel law enforcement should play in response to it?
- (3) How do status offenders and their parents evaluate the actual response received from law enforcement?
- (4) What alternative services are considered after the law enforcement contact and to what degree are community agencies providing services to these families?

## 2. METHODS

Two sources of data are used in this report: (1) the telephone contacts received by law enforcement from families of status offenders, and (2) interviews from the families who made these contacts. The data from these sources cannot be used to generalize to all contacts or all families of status offenders, nor can they be used for the purpose of hypothesis testing. However, they do provide a partial picture of these contacts and of the perceptions of a group of status offenders and their families.

The data collection procedures were interrelated. First, the data describing telephone contacts were collected. Then from this information a sample of families to be interviewed was selected. Thus, the families who were interviewed are a subsample of those families who contacted law enforcement. First, the collection and analysis of the telephone contact data will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the interview data.

### 2.1 The Telephone Contact Data

The descriptive data on the telephone contacts were collected from law enforcement stations in Los Angeles County. Our desire was to collect limited information on all calls from family members concerning status offense situations. This information was used (1) to assess the nature of these calls and the law enforcement response to them, and, (2) to provide a population from which to draw an interview sample.

Our sampling procedures entailed two steps. First, a sample of law enforcement stations within which to collect the data was selected. The principle concern in selecting these stations was that they represent a range of law

enforcement organizations and that they be located in a variety of types of communities. The 11 stations selected for other parts of our research met these criteria. (See Teilmann, 1981, for a discussion of these 11 stations.)

Within these 11 stations, we wished to obtain information on every call received between April and June of 1979 from a family member requesting assistance in handling a status offense situation. Information on such calls is routinely recorded by law enforcement only when the caller is reporting a missing (runaway) juvenile, in which case a Missing-Juvenile Report is filed. A record of these reports is generally kept in a Missing-Juvenile Log. All but two of the stations in our sample have these logs. Thus, were we to rely solely on existing police records, we would have information only on this one type of status offense. It was necessary to request that information be collected on other types of status offenses specifically for this study. A short reporting form (see Appendix A) was devised for this purpose.

Our next step was to decide who within each station should be asked to fill out this form. Clearly we could not request every officer to do so without alienating everyone involved. We did, however, wish to include any one in our data collection who, by policy, could be expected to respond to these calls. Who this was varied among the 11 stations, but generally in any one station some combination of the following people were involved.

Dispatchers and other persons working at the main desk

Juvenile police officers <sup>4</sup>

"Intercept" Officers <sup>5</sup>

Non-sworn counselors

All calls which come into the central telephone number at the station are handled by dispatchers or other persons working at the main desk. Depending on the nature of the call, a patrol car may be dispatched or the call may be transferred to an appropriate person within the station for further handling. When the call concerns a status offense, the appropriate person will usually be a juvenile officer or an Intercept Officer. It became clear early in our research that Intercept Officers played an integral role in handling status offense situations. So great was their involvement that, according to police officers and sheriffs in some stations, calls regarding incorrigibility were routinely transferred to Intercept Officers.

Two of the stations had non-sworn counselors located in offices adjoining the stations. These counselors also handled some calls concerning status offenders.

Juvenile officers, Intercept Officers, and counselors may also receive calls directly, by-passing the main desk. This is most likely to happen when a caller has had previous contact with these persons and has the direct telephone

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<sup>4</sup>Juvenile officers are law enforcement officers specializing in the handling of juvenile offenders. See Klein (1981) for a discussion of the history and current status of juvenile police specialization.

<sup>5</sup>An Intercept Officer is a probation officer assigned to work within a law enforcement station. Initially, the Intercept program was established to facilitate decisions regarding the temporary detention of apprehended juvenile offenders. (Temporary detention is requested by law enforcement and probation decides whether or not the request is appropriate.)

number.

In order to obtain a complete tally of all the calls we are interested in here, all these persons in each station would have to participate in the data collection process. This was the request made of the commanding officer and staff at each of the 11 stations. However, we generally had to settle for less than the ideal.

Rarely was it possible for dispatchers to participate. Their job is a particularly busy one involving a great deal of paper work. In nine stations, Intercept Officers participated. The counselors in the two stations participated. In nine stations we had access to Missing-Juvenile Logs, and in six of these the Juvenile Officers also agreed to collect information on any calls they received that were not recorded in the Missing-Juvenile Logs. While these circumstances were not ideal, we felt that we had a good chance of collecting information on most status offense calls in the stations.

Each person involved in the data collection was instructed to fill out the data collection form whenever he received a call from a family member (including foster parents) concerning a status offense situation. These forms sought information on the subject's age, gender, offense, relationship to the caller, the request made by the caller, and the law enforcement response. The name and address and telephone number of the caller was also solicited. There was also a brief statement on the form explaining the research and requesting participation. Recipients of the calls had the option of reading this statement to the caller and recording their response. However, this section was rarely used.

During the data collection period, several trips were made to each station to pick up completed forms and monitor the data collection process.



The coding of this information into machine readable form was relatively straightforward, as most of the information was precoded. Reliability checks revealed less than 10 percent error between coders.

A total of 777 calls were collected from the 11 stations. The majority of these calls (496) were taken from Missing-Juvenile Logs, with 231 collected by Intercept Officers. The number of calls collected in any one station ranged from 2 to 229.

In examining the patterns within these calls, two deficiencies were found. First, in the two stations where Missing-Juvenile Logs are not kept, the number of missing juveniles reported to us by the law enforcement officers was so small (two in one case and six in the other) that we had to assume the data were unreliable. Second, with the exception of the data collected by the Intercept Officers in three of the remaining nine stations, data on calls other than those recorded in the Missing-Juvenile Logs, appeared questionable. Consequently from three stations we have apparently reliable data on calls received by Intercept Officers concerning any type of status offense and on calls received by law enforcement reporting a missing juvenile. From six more stations we only have data on missing juveniles. The analysis of these data is reported in Section 3 of this report.

## 2.2 The Interview Data

From these 777 telephone contacts, we chose a sample of 200 families to interview. With these data our unit of analysis is members of families (as opposed to telephone contacts) and the data concerns perceptions of the status offense situation.

A sample of families was sought with as great a variety of status offense situations as possible. To accomplish this, we chose two variables on which to stratify our sample: type of offense and gender. It was felt that these

two variables were ones that would contribute to different perceptions of the status offense situation among family members.

Prior to applying this sampling scheme, however, a number of cases had to be eliminated from the list of telephone contacts. First, while our list was of telephone contacts, we wished to sample families. Consequently, multiple contacts from the same family were eliminated so that each family was only represented once on the list of contacts.<sup>6</sup> This eliminated 18 percent of the calls.

Contacts were also eliminated for which (1) there was insufficient information to contact the family, (2) the offense or the gender of the subject was missing, (3) the subject was under 12 years of age,<sup>7</sup> (4) the family or the police asked that we not contact the family.<sup>8</sup> This resulted in a total of 518 contacts from which to sample. Table 1 presents the distribution of these calls.

Ideally, selecting a sample stratified by offense and gender would result in 25 cases in each of eight categories. This was impossible given the distribution of contacts. A total of 359 cases was sampled, including those necessary to replace cases which were lost due to refusals, inability to contact the family, etc.

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<sup>6</sup>The following procedure was used to eliminate calls. If a family had called more than once, but always about the same offense, all but the most recent call were eliminated. If the family had called more than once, but about different offenses, one call was randomly chosen from among the calls.

<sup>7</sup>It would be likely that the interview was too sophisticated for juveniles under 12.

<sup>8</sup>In one station, the Intercept Officers asked that we not contact any of the families. In 12 percent of the cases callers were asked if we could contact them, and 36 of these (or 5 percent of the total) declined.

Table 1

## Calls by Gender and Offense

<u>Offense</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>
Incorrigibles	17	17
Runaways	296	104
Truants	1	4
Multiple Offenses	41	38
Totals	355	163

All incorrigibles and truants and all but two of the multiples<sup>9</sup> were sampled. The remainder of the sample was taken from among the runaways.

Of these 359 contacts, 207 families were interviewed, 101 families (generally the parents) refused, and 51 families remained inactive at the end of the data collection period (due to inadequate information or inability to arrange an interview appointment). The principal reason given for refusal was a lack of interest in the research or insufficient time to participate, accounting for 49 percent of the refusals. Refusals were slightly more likely to come from families of female subjects than male subjects, but no more likely within any one offense category.

In each family, an attempt was made to interview the juvenile involved in the status offense as well as both parents. However, if one or more of these family members was unavailable or unwilling to be interviewed, we interviewed those persons who were. A total of 148 juveniles, 187 mothers, and 107 fathers were interviewed.

Five of the 207 families were eliminated prior to analyses. In one case, the father insisted that he and his daughter be interviewed jointly. In the other four cases, either the police (as opposed to the family) had initiated the police contact, or the family had no memory of the particular contact about which we interviewed them. Interviews were conducted in the home of the families (unless the interviewees requested otherwise or were living elsewhere). Interviews were conducted in private with one interviewer assigned to each member of the family to be interviewed.

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<sup>9</sup>Two or more offenses of which at least one is a status offense.

Two separate interview schedules, one for juveniles and one for parents were developed and a pilot study conducted. (See Appendix B for copies of the interview schedules.) The juvenile and parent interview schedules cover similar information but with questions rephrased to be appropriate for the type of respondent.

The bulk of the interview was composed of open-ended questions, although response categories were available on some questions for use by the interviewer. Where response categories were provided, the interviewers circled the category, if any, that best fit the response of the interviewee. Where these were not provided, the interviewer recorded the words of the interviewee.

The one exception to these open-ended questions were three sets of vignettes, each set containing several hypothetical descriptions of one of the three major categories of status offenders: runaways, incorrigibles, and truants. (See pages 6, 7, and 8 of parent's interview schedule.) Interviewers read the set of vignettes applying to the status offense on the basis of which the family was sampled. If more than one status offense was involved, the appropriate sets of vignettes for each offense were presented to the interviewees. Juveniles were asked to choose which description best described them. Parents were asked to choose the description that best described their child.

All ten of the interviewers were females in their mid-twenties to late thirties. Two were bilingual Spanish-speaking. Five percent of the interviews with juveniles were conducted in Spanish, as were 11 percent and 8 percent of the interviews with mothers and fathers respectively. Two bilingual interviewers were Chicana, one interviewer was Black, and the rest were Anglo.

The interview data were coded into machine readable form. (See Appendix B for copies of the coding manuals.) Coding was done by three of the interviewers,

although they did not code interviews they themselves conducted. Coding procedures were pretested and coding categories were added where necessary.

Coding of those questions with predetermined categories went smoothly with less than 10 percent error between coders. However, there were problems in coding those questions where responses were recorded verbatim. Even though many of the coding discrepancies on these questions were relatively minor, we felt that these questions could not be used reliably in a computer analysis. Eliminating these questions did not greatly alter the analysis, but made it less complete than was desired.

### 3. THE LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TO CALLS

Law enforcement officials are the gatekeepers of the juvenile justice system. For most offenders who come into contact with the system, law enforcement is their first, and frequently only, contact with the system. This is particularly likely to be true of status offenders after AB3121, given the decline in arrests and petitioning of status offenders. Thus, at this point in time, the law enforcement response to status offense situations is particularly important. This section of the report focuses on the responses of law enforcement to one particular type of contact: police responses to calls from family members concerning status offense situations.

Information on law enforcement response to these calls were collected from 11 selected law enforcement stations. As discussed in the Methods section, these data are only partially complete. Law enforcement personnel in most of these stations routinely record reports of all missing juveniles on a Missing-Juvenile or Runaway Log. Thus, existing law enforcement records provide a fairly accurate enumeration of the characteristics of calls concerning this one status offense. This is less true of other status offenses. Obtaining information on calls concerning incorrigibility, truancy, and other status offenses requires obtaining data beyond that routinely recorded as part of normal law enforcement procedures. Furthermore, these types of calls may be referred to Intercept Officers. Where this occurs, information on these calls was obtained from the Intercept Officers, rather than law enforcement officers.

Success in tracking down the referral processes within these stations and obtaining records of calls beyond that routinely recorded was partially

successful as noted in the Methods section. From nine of the 11 stations we have data from the Missing-Juvenile Log. We have data on calls recorded by Intercept Officers from three of these nine stations. From two stations, neither type of data was available. Thus, in three stations (Norton, Southville, and Fairview) we have a reasonably accurate enumeration of all calls to which law enforcement officers responded either by filing a Missing-Juvenile Report or by referring the caller to an Intercept Officer. Since this coincides with the normal procedure for handling such calls in these three stations, these data cover a fairly complete and unbiased enumeration of all calls received by these three stations from family members concerning a status offense situation. From another six stations (Clayton, Glenville, San Rios, Grafton, Parkerville, and Springfield) we have data only on calls concerning missing juveniles.

Our principal focus here is to describe the law enforcement<sup>10</sup> responses to these calls. However, before addressing this question directly, a description of the frequency and characteristics of the calls will be presented. This description will provide a context within which to examine the responses to the calls.

### 3.1 The Context

Tables 1 through 6 provide a general description of the calls received by the nine law enforcement stations from which we have data. We will discuss the frequency of the calls and their distribution by offense, gender, and age.

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<sup>10</sup>The term "law enforcement" is used through the remainder of this report to refer to police and sheriffs, as well as Intercept Officers.



### 3.1.1 Frequency

Table 2 presents the frequency of calls in the stations. While there is a large range in the number of calls received, the meaning of these differences can only be understood in relation to the relative size of the population at risk (roughly the population under 18 years of age) in each law enforcement jurisdiction. This statistic could only be obtained for five of the stations. However, based on these five stations which represent a range of ethnic and economic distributions, there appears to be little community variation in the incidence of calls reporting missing juveniles. It is also evident that the frequency of calls is far higher when calls to Intercept Officers are included. Thus, this table gives some evidence of the number of calls we are missing in those stations where we only have Missing-Juvenile Log data.

### 3.1.2 Offense

Table 3 presents the distribution of the calls by offense. Since the data from six of the stations systematically exclude calls not involving a missing juvenile, including data from these stations in this analysis would make little sense. Thus, Table 3 only presents data from Norton, Southville and Fairview, for which we have both Missing-Juvenile Log data and Intercept data. Furthermore, the very high proportion of runaways in each of these three stations may well be the result of the greater pressure to record this type of offense than others. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that calls concerning runaways do in fact comprise the largest proportion of calls received by law enforcement stations

Table 2

## The Frequency and Incidence of Calls

<u>Station</u>	<u>Number of Calls</u>		<u>Incidence of Calls per 10,000 Persons Under 18 Years Old</u>	
	<u>Intercept and Missing Juvenile Log</u>	<u>Missing Juvenile Log</u>	<u>Intercept and Missing Juvenile Log</u>	<u>Missing Juvenile Log</u>
Norton	229	154	-	-
Southville	103	58	15	9
Fairview	83	50	15	9
Clayton	-	71	-	-
Glenville	-	19	-	-
San Rios	-	51	-	12
Grafton	-	31	-	9
Parkerville	-	32	-	-
Springfield	-	28	-	9

\* Comparison data were drawn from one of two sources: (1) Population, Employment and Housing Survey, 1977, Community Development Department, Community Analysis and Planning Division (2) Housing and Census Data (for Springfield) for 1978.

Table 3

## The Distribution of Calls by Offense

<u>Offense</u>	<u>Norton</u>	<u>Southville</u>	<u>Fairview</u>
Incorrigibility	11%	20%	21%
Runaway	73%	58%	59%
Truancy	4%	1%	4%
Multiple Offenses*	12%	19%	14%
Other (Non-criminal)	0%	1%	2%
Missing	0%	1%	1%
Total N	(229)	(103)	(83)

\* Two or more offenses, at least one of which is a status offense

from family members concerning a status offense situation.

We see from this table that while runaways comprise the largest proportion of calls in each of the stations, this relative proportion is larger in Norton than Southville or Fairview. Multiple offenses (i.e., two or more offenses at least one of which is a status offense) and incorrigibility comprise the second and third largest categories. Truancy comprises a very small percentage of the calls in any of these stations.

### 3.1.3 Gender

The number of calls about female offenders (384) is far higher than the number about males (209). However, the male/female ratio varies both by offense and community. In Table 4, the number of males and females involved as subjects of calls recorded in Missing-Juvenile Logs and Intercept Officers (where the data are available) is presented. The overall proportion of female subjects is 69 percent in the logs, but only 50 percent in the Intercept data.

The difference in the male/female ratio in these two sets of calls could be the result of recording biases by law enforcement or Intercept personnel. On the other hand, it may be simply that females are subjects of a larger proportion of the calls concerning runaways but not of the calls concerning other types of status offenses.

There are also some community differences in the proportion of female subjects. Among calls about missing juveniles, the proportion of females ranges from a high of 86 percent in San Rios to a low of 59 percent in Grafton. These differences suggest a pattern: the wealthier the community the lower the proportion of calls about females. Fairview, Grafton and Springfield are three of the wealthiest communities in our sample. Among the others, Glenville is the only community that approaches these three communities in economic status.

Table 4

## The Distribution of Calls by Gender

<u>Missing-Juvenile Log</u>				<u>Intercept</u>		
<u>Station</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>% Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>% Females</u>
Norton	40	104	72%	31	38	55%
Southville	12	34	74%	19	20	51%
Fairview	18	27	60%	19	11	37%
Clayton	25	45	64%	-	-	
Glenville	3	16	84%	-	-	
San Rios	9	36	86%	-	-	
Grafton	12	17	59%	-	-	
Parkerville	11	21	66%	-	-	
Springfield	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>60%</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total N	(140)	( 315)	$\bar{X} = 69\%$	( 69)	( 69)	$\bar{X} = 50\%$

The data from Intercept confirm this, with Fairview being the wealthiest of these three communities and having the lowest proportion of calls about females. Whether this is due to a greater incidence of status offenses among the males in wealthy communities (or a lower one among females), a greater tendency among parents in wealthy communities to report status offender sons, or a greater likelihood that law enforcement personnel will record status offender males in wealthier communities is unknown. However, the official records in these stations suggest that while in some cases poor communities are handling almost exclusively female status offenders (particularly among missing juveniles), those in wealthier communities are handling more equal numbers of males and females.

#### 3.1.4 Age

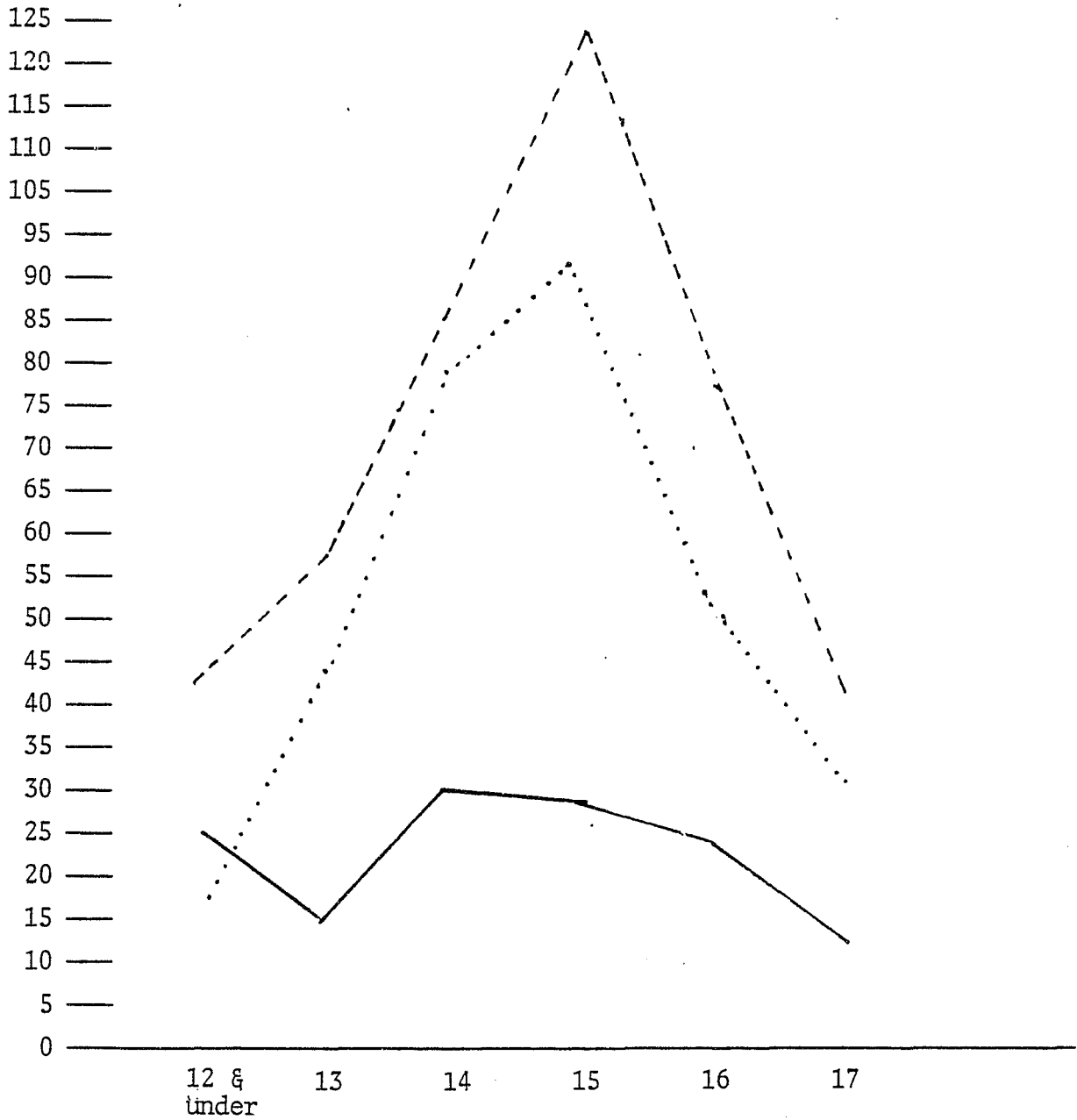
The modal age category for the subjects of calls recorded in Missing-Juvenile Logs is 15. There is a gradual increase from age 12 and sharp decline after age 15 (see Figure 1). Males and females have different age distributions. The distribution of females is sharp, peaking at 15 years. The distribution of males is more even across the years. Females reach a peak age, 15 years, when they are most likely to be the subject of these calls, whereas males have no such peak age. The age distributions of the subjects of calls to Intercept show a similar overall trend and similar male and female differences (see Figure 2). However, the peak age for females is slightly younger.

No pattern of community differences exists on the ages of subjects of calls recorded in Missing-Juvenile Logs. However, a modal age of subjects of calls to Intercept in Southville (13 years) is two years younger than the modal ages for subjects in Norton and Fairview (15 years). This station has the lowest economic status and largest minority population of the three stations.

Figure 1

Age Distribution for Officially Reported Missing Juveniles

Number of Calls



Key

Females . . .

Males —

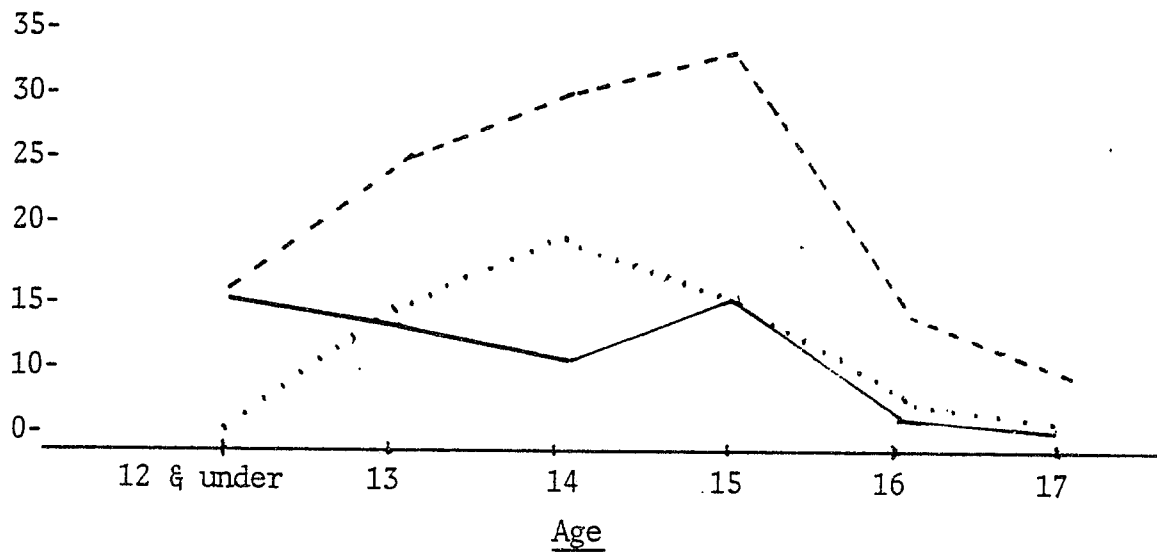
Females and Males - - -

Age

Figure 2

Age Distribution for Subjects of Calls  
Intercept

Number of Calls



Key

Females ...

Males ———

Females and Males - - -



Either status offenders are not reported by parents and/or recorded by Intercept Officers at older ages in this community, or status offenders are younger in this community.

### 3.1.5 Summary

The data presented in the preceding pages suggest that law enforcement officers receive a substantial number of calls from families concerning status offense situations. In the three stations where data are available from both Missing-Juvenile Logs and Intercept Officers, we see that Intercept handles an important proportion of the total calls received.

The most frequent offense (based on the data from only three stations) is runaway. Runaways are more likely to be females, especially in less wealthy communities. Other types of offenders are no more likely to be female than male. The typical female subject of these calls is 15 years. It is more difficult to typify the age of male subjects.

### 3.2 The Nature of the Response

Ideally in this section we would examine the responses to the various types of calls we have discussed in the previous sections. However, we are seriously restricted in this endeavor. The majority of the calls discussed above were taken from the Missing-Juvenile Logs. The information on such calls was restricted to that routinely recorded in these logs and in Missing-Juvenile Reports. These documents contain very little information on the response to the call. In fact, the only information available on most of these calls is that a Missing-Juvenile Report was filed. Therefore, these calls were excluded from our analysis of the law enforcement response to calls. This analysis is restricted to calls to Intercept Officers and their responses to them. However, given the centrality of Intercept in the handling of status

offense situations at the time; this restriction is not as serious as it might otherwise be.

Nearly half (48 percent) of the calls received by Intercept are responded to with a referral. Direct counseling by Intercept Officers is the response to only 10 percent of the calls. Thus, the role of Intercept appears to be primarily one of providing information about other services rather than direct service delivery (see Table 5).

Given the frequency of the referral response, we will examine it more closely. Table 6 presents the distribution of referrals among various types of agencies. (This table includes all referrals, whether given as the sole response or in conjunction with some other response.)

Referrals to police and probation plus the referrals to other justice system related agencies (such as non-secure detention facilities for status offenders, diversion, and police-sponsored programs) comprise 41 percent of the referrals. Another 9 percent are referrals to public welfare. None of these are referrals to community agencies in the sense of removing juveniles from the controls of official systems. The percentages of actual community referrals (40 percent of the referrals and 21 percent of the total responses) seems quite low considering the subjects involved, i.e., persons inquiring by telephone about status offense situations. Those within the justice system apparently tend to refer to other agencies within the system. This is confirmed by Gordon's (1981) findings.

There are some differences among these three stations in both their likelihood of responding with a referral and the composition of the referral category (see Table 7). Fairview shows a higher proportion of referrals than either of the other two stations, while Southville shows a higher percentage of

Table 5

## Responses to Calls

<u>Response</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Investigate	2%	3
Counsel-this agency	20%	29
Refer	48%	71
Unable to Respond	16%	24
Other	7%	10
Two or more of the above	7%	10
	<u>100%</u>	<u>147</u>

Table 6

## Types of Agencies to Which Referrals are Made

	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Police/Probation	23%	18
Justice System Related Agency	18%	14
Public Welfare	9%	7
Community Agency	40%	31
Missing	<u>9%</u>	<u>7</u>
Totals	100%	77

Table 7  
Responses to Calls by Station

<u>Response</u>	<u>Norton</u>		<u>Southville</u>		<u>Fairview</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Investigate	4%	3	0%	0	0%	0
Counsel-This Agency	14%	10	44%	18	3%	1
Refer	39%	29	39%	16	81%	26
Unable to Respond	24%	18	5%	2	13%	4
Other	11%	8	5%	21	-	0
Two or More of Above	<u>8%</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>1</u>
Totals	100%	74	100%	41	100%	32

counseling by the Intercept Officers. Fairview is located in the wealthiest of the three communities and perhaps there are more community services available. Southville is located in the least wealthy community; perhaps alternative services to those of official systems are not available or affordable within the community. However, the types of agencies used for referrals (Table 8) do not support this explanation. Only about a third of the referrals in Fairview are to community agencies while nearly two-thirds of the referrals in Southville are to community agencies. Consequently, the proportion of the total calls resulting in a referral to community agencies is approximately the same in the two stations. This suggests that the differences in their responses to calls are due to different styles of responding or perhaps to different requests from the callers, rather than differences in the availability of services. We will examine this second possibility shortly. However, before turning to the requests from the callers, one final point should be noted about the responses of these Intercept Officers.

In Southville and Fairview, the referrals to community agencies are almost entirely to two facilities. In Southville, 10 out of 12 referrals are to one facility (an alcohol and drug abuse agency) and in Fairview five out of 10 of the community referrals are to one facility (a general counseling agency). It may be that these two facilities are the most appropriate ones in their communities to respond to the types of calls these Intercept Officers receive. It is also possible that once Intercept Officers establish a referral relationship with a community facility, they continually refer to that facility regardless of the nature of the call.

The requests from the initiators of the calls form a sharp contrast to the responses we have just discussed. The requests tend to be for a high level

Table 8

Types of Agencies to Which Referrals Are Made  
by Station

<u>Referral</u>	<u>Norton</u>	<u>Southville</u>	<u>Fairview</u>
Police and Probation	10	1	6
Justice System Related	11	1	2
Public Welfare	0	3	4
Community Agency	10	12	10
Missing	0	2	5
Totals	<u>31</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>27</u>

of involvement by Intercept. Requests for the filing of petitions, the arrest and/or detention of the subject, and counseling by Intercept comprise over 60 percent of the requests (see Table 9). Given the tendency of Intercept to respond to calls with referrals, rather than direct service delivery, this suggests a disjuncture between what callers request and what they receive from Intercept. Table 10 demonstrates this point more emphatically. When we compare the request made by the caller to the response from the Intercept Officer, it is clear that the greater the involvement of Intercept requested by the caller, the less likely he/she is to receive the requested response. Those who request the highest level of involvement, incorrigibility petitions or the detention or arrest of the subject, receive the corresponding response (investigate) only 10 percent and 3 percent of the time, respectively. In fact, those who desire the greatest involvement are the most likely to find Intercept unable to respond at all. Those who desire little involvement, i.e., those who request referrals, received a referral 89 percent of the time. If those who request the most involvement from Intercept are those who are the most desperate or those who have the fewest alternative resources, a serious service vacuum is suggested. The station by station distribution of requests shows that the different patterns of response by Intercept Officers noted earlier is partially due to differences in requests. Southville, with the highest proportion of "counsel-this agency" responses, receives more requests for referrals (see Table 11). This suggests that Intercept Officers may respond to calls differently in different communities because the people in those communities make different demands of them. Furthermore, it is in the least wealthy community (Southville) that the most requests are made for counseling by Intercept, and it is in the wealthiest community (Fairview) that the most requests are made for counseling referrals. This



Table 9

## Requests From Callers

<u>Request</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Incorrigibility Petition	14%	20
Arrest/Detain Subject	20%	29
Counsel-this Agency	29%	42
Missing Persons Report	3%	5
Placement of Subject	3%	5
Counseling Referral	18%	26
Two or More of Above	5%	8
Other	<u>8%</u>	<u>12</u>
Totals	100%	147

Table 10

Response By Request

		<u>Decreasing Involvement</u> >			
<u>Response</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>Incorrigibility Petition</u>	<u>Arrest/ Detain</u>	<u>Counsel this Agency</u>	<u>Referral</u>
Decreasing Involvement ↓	Investigate	10%	3%	-	-
	Counsel-this Agency	10%	7%	48%	4%
	Investigate and Refer	10%	3%	-	-
	Counsel and Refer	-	-	7%	-
	Refer	40%	48%	26%	89%
	Unable to Respond	15%	28%	12%	8%
	Other	<u>15%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>-</u>
Total N		(20)	(29)	(42)	(26)

(Table includes only the largest of the request categories - 117 out of 147 cases)

Table 11

## Requests From Callers By Station

<u>Request</u>	<u>Norton</u>		<u>Southville</u>		<u>Fairview</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Incorrigibility Petition	16%	12	2%	1	22%	7
Arrest/Detain	35%	26	2%	1	6%	2
Counsel-this Agency	18%	13	68%	28	3%	1
Missing Persons Report	1%	1	0%	0	13%	4
Placement of the Minor	5%	4	0%	0	3%	1
Counseling Referral	10%	7	17%	7	38%	12
Two or More of the Above	4%	3	7%	3	6%	2
Other	<u>11%</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>3</u>
Totals	100%	74	100%	41	100%	32

suggests that the degree of involvement desired by Intercept is inversely related to the economic status of a community.

### 3.3 Summary

In examining the nature of the calls received by law enforcement stations concerning status offense situations and the nature of the system's response to these calls, we see evidence of conflict between the degree of involvement requested by these callers and the degree of involvement in the response to these calls. While most calls concerned runaways (typically a 15 year old, female runaway), we know only that the response to these calls was the filing of a Missing-Juvenile Report. More information is available on calls to Intercept Officers. Based on the analysis of these calls, it is evident that parents desire Intercept Officers to become involved in the situation through filing incorrigibility petitions, arresting the minor, or counseling. Intercept, however, rarely responds in this fashion, more commonly referring the caller to other persons or agencies. Furthermore, the discrepancy between request and response is more likely the greater the involvement requested by the caller.

All of this, however, is based on very limited information on what these callers desire from law enforcement and what the nature of the problem is that they are calling about. In the next section we will examine these issues directly through data collected from interviews with a sample of the callers.

4. THE DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION AND OF  
THE APPROPRIATE LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE

In the preceding section, data were presented which suggest that after AB3121 the law enforcement response to calls regarding status offense situations may be in conflict with the desires of the parents and guardians who initiate these calls. This suggests the possibility of both a negative reaction to the law enforcement contact by the callers and a discrepancy between the services desired and the services received. However, this is only speculation. We have only presented the most superficial view of why these calls were made or what the callers hoped law enforcement would do in response to them. Understanding these perceptions is the first step in understanding their evaluations of the responses they receive.

Presenting data on these perceptions is the purpose of this section. We will examine interview data from a sample of parents and guardians (as parents comprise the majority of these persons, we will refer to these persons in general as "parents") who made the law enforcement contacts discussed in the previous section.

We will also examine the perceptions the juvenile subjects of these calls have of the situation and of the appropriate law enforcement response to it. The juveniles may or may not have perceptions similar to those of parents. The existence of such differences would suggest that parents and juveniles might not agree on the need for services at all. Certainly, if juveniles perceive the role of law enforcement as inappropriate, they are unlikely to be amenable toward any services provided by law enforcement, even if their parents think this is desirable. Such discrepancies make service utilization problematic

and perhaps impossible given its increasingly voluntary nature under AB3121.

This section has four purposes: (1) to examine the range of definitions of the situation and the appropriate police roles that exist among parents who contact police about their status offender children; (2) to examine the range of definitions of the situation and the appropriate police roles among the juvenile subjects of these calls; (3) to contrast these sets of definitions, in order to assess the degree of agreement or disagreement between parents and juveniles; and (4) to set up a context within which to examine the way the actual police response is evaluated by parents and juveniles.

#### 4.1 The Definition of the Situation

While it was the parental complaint that brought these status offense situations to the attention of law enforcement personnel, little is known about how family members view the situation within the family which led to this contact. The definition of the situation is a complex issue which can be approached in a number of different ways. An effort was made to select an approach which would allow comparisons between family members and which would be particularly relevant to one's evaluation of the actual law enforcement response. In this research, the definition of the situation is divided into two parts: the definition of the problem and the perception of the juvenile. The definition of the problem is examined through tapping respondents' views of specific aspects of the status offense which led to contact with law enforcement. We asked respondents (1) how long ago the situation began, (2) whether or not the current situation needed to change, (3) if change was needed, who in the family needed to change, and (4) if the person needing to change was the juvenile, what was the cause of his/her problem. We hoped that these factors would provide insight into the range of circumstances about which law enforcement was contacted.

These are also factors which might point out perceptual differences among family members. For example, juveniles may see the onset of a problem as more recent than do parents, or juveniles and parents may each see the other as needing to change. Such disagreements over the definition of the problem, if they exist, suggest problems in parents and status offenders coming to mutually satisfactory solutions to the situation. Finally, these factors should be related to one's evaluation of the law enforcement response which will be discussed in the next section. For example, those who see the situation in terms of long-term onset or as needing to change may evaluate the law enforcement response less positively than those who view the problem as having recently started or as not needing to change.

Our second approach to the definition of the situation focuses on one's perception of the juvenile offender and is based on previous research. In Little's discussion of runaways (1981), runaways were categorized as Liberation-Seeking or Paternalism-Seeking. A Liberation-Seeking runaway is one who views him or herself as competent and as having run away in order to be liberated from the constraints of childhood. A Paternalism-Seeking runaway is one who does not view him or herself as competent and as having run away to seek alternative parenting, i.e., in order better to pursue childhood. Beginning with these two types of self-perceptions of runaways, this current research will extend their usage in two ways: (1) they will be used to tap the self-perception of incorrigibles and truants, as well as runaways and (2) we will examine the perceptions that parents have of their status offender children on these dimensions.

These two types of status offenders are not only very different, they also connote different types of reactions to the runaway episode. Interestingly,

the two patterns correspond to two segments of the Children's Rights Movement, each of which advocates a very different official response to status offenders. There are the Liberationists (Farson, 1974) who view adolescents as competent and consequently would accord them the legal rights of adults. They would eliminate juvenile justice system jurisdiction over status offenders. There are others, who we might call Paternalists, who view adolescents as incompetent and would respond to status offenders as persons with needs which adults must fulfill. They would maintain juvenile justice system jurisdiction over status offenders to assure that these needs would be met. Thus, this measure of the definition of the situation ties one's perception of the subject with issues in the current debate over the desirability of a justice system response to status offenders.

There are three purposes for including this approach. First, it offers another perspective on the definition of the situation, one that is integrally tied to current social movements. Second, it provides another focus on the conflict between status offenders and their parents, one that is related to perceptions of the juvenile rather than just the problem alone. Third, like the definition of the problem, the perception of the juvenile is likely to be related to the evaluation of the law enforcement response received. Those who view the status offender in liberationist terms are less likely to view the law enforcement response as positive than those who view the offender in paternalistic terms.

#### 4.1.1 The Definition of the Problem

4.1.1.1 Onset. Respondents are almost evenly divided between viewing the problem as having suddenly begun and viewing it as having a longer term onset. Forty percent or more of juveniles, mother and fathers each perceive the situation



as having a sudden onset (see Table 12). Approximately 20 percent of each group of respondents view the situation as typical behavior for the juvenile, with 31 percent to 37 percent of each group viewing the behavior as having worsened over the past one to five or more years. There is remarkably little difference among juveniles, mothers and fathers in the distribution of responses, although mothers are the least likely to view the onset as sudden.

4.1.1.2 Change Needed. The majority of the respondents feel that change is needed. If we combine the percentages saying change is definitely needed with those who "sort of" desire change, we see that 62 percent of the children, 63 percent of the mothers, and 58 percent of the fathers desire change (see Table 13). Less than 20 percent of any group definitely do not want the situation in the family to change. Thus, the motivation for change is high among these status offenders and their parents. This suggests that both the incentive to participate in treatment programs is high and that the desire for a helpful response from law enforcement is strong.

Given the nature of our sample, it is not surprising that parents desire change. Presumably most people who call law enforcement do so because they desire change. There may be many families with status offense situations who do not desire change and thus do not contact law enforcement, but these families would not fall into our sample. The point is that the group we are attempting to describe, i.e., families who have contacted law enforcement, are a group who desire change. Furthermore, while a high level of desire for change among parents is likely given the sample, it does not follow that the juveniles would share this desire. Nonetheless, our data show that to a large extent they do.

Table 12

Respondents' Perceptions of Onset

	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Sudden	45%	40%	43%
Gradually Worsened over 1 yr.	17%	20%	21%
Gradually Worsened over 2 yrs.	5%	8%	13%
Gradually Worsened over 3 yrs.	2%	3%	--
Gradually Worsened over 4 yrs.	1%	3%	1%
Gradually Worsened over 5 yrs.	1%	3%	2%
Typical Behavior	23%	21%	18%
Other/don't know/missing	<u>5%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>2%</u>
Total N	(145)	(182)	(103)

Table 13

Respondents' Perceptions of the  
Need for Change

	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Yes, definitely	50%	49%	47%
Sort of	12%	14%	11%
Not really	21%	16%	22%
No, definitely	16%	19%	18%
Don't know/missing	<u>        </u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>2%</u>
Total N	(145)	(182)	(103)

4.1.1.3 Identification of the Client. Among those respondents who felt that change was needed, we also asked who needed to change. On this issue, there was a clear split between the perceptions of children and their parents (see Table 14). While only 11 percent of the subjects stated that they were the sole person who needed to change, 34 percent of the mothers and 50 percent of the fathers cited their children as the sole person who needed to change. If we combine all categories which include the juvenile as at least one of the persons who need to change, the gap between parents and children on this issue remains. Less than half the juveniles (44 percent) list themselves among those who need to change, whereas over 80 percent of both mothers and fathers include them.

This may also be due to the nature of our sample. Those parents who contact police may be more likely than parents who do not to view their children as the ones who need to change. Furthermore, these parents may be the ones who are least able to convince their children of this. In other words, our sample is likely to have a larger proportion of families in which parents define their child as the one who needs to change while the child disagrees about this than is true of families of status offenders in general. However, this group of families who have contacted police for assistance contains a higher proportion of parents who think their child should change and a high proportion of juveniles who think others should change.

4.1.1.4 The Cause of the Juvenile's Problem. Among those respondents who listed the juvenile among those needing to change, we asked what the respondent thought was causing the problem (see Table 15). The most interesting thing about the responses to this question is the high proportion of respondents, especially juveniles, who list "adolescence" as the sole cause of the problem.

Table 14

## Respondents' Identification of the Client

	<u>Juveniles</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Juvenile	11%	34%	50%
Juvenile & others	33%	47%	33%
Others, not Juveniles	48%	14%	12%
None/don't know	<u>7%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>5%</u>
Total N	(91)	(11 )	(60)

Table 15

Respondents' Perceptions of the Cause of  
the Subject's Problem

	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Adolescence	40%	22%	26%
Adolescence and Others	8%	33%	30%
Emotional/Psychological	20%	19%	24%
Other/don't know/missing	<u>33%</u>	<u>26%</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total N	(40)	(95)	(50)

This stage of the life cycle is clearly viewed as a source of deviance. By itself, it is perceived as causing problems in the home which result in contact with the juvenile justice system. Insofar as one must be a minor in order to commit a status offense, this is, of course, true. The high proportion responding to this question with the answer "adolescence" also has important ramifications for treatment intervention. One wonders what any change agent is expected to do about adolescence. If adolescence in and of itself is the cause then the cure is to become an adult. However, this requires chronological as well as emotional maturity. Given the lack of a "cure" for adolescence, attributing the situation to adolescence may negate one's feeling that anything should or could be done about the situation.

4.1.1.5 Summary. We have presented four variables tapping some aspects of the definition of the problem: onset, the need for change, the identification of the client, and the cause of the problem. Respondents vary in their perceptions of the issue of onset. The majority, however, desire that the situation change. By dichotomizing and combining these two variables, four categories of responses are created: (1) a definition of the onset as long-term and a strong desire that the situation change, (2) a definition of the onset as short-term and a strong desire that the situation change, (3) a definition of the onset as long-term and the lack of a strong desire that the situation change, and (4) a definition of the onset as short-term and the lack of a strong desire that the situation change. These four categories of definitions of the situation will be referred to as chronic, acute, status quo, and phasic, respectively.

Table 16 presents the distribution of this combination variable for each group of respondents. There is little difference in the patterns of responses for juveniles, mothers and fathers, although mothers are more likely than fathers or juveniles to see the problem as a chronic one. There is, however, considerable variation on this issue.

Table 16

## Respondents' Perceptions of Severity

<u>Severity</u>	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Chronic	34%	41%	35%
Acute	26%	26%	20
Status Quo	15%	15%	18%
Phasic	19%	16%	22%
Other	6%	5%	4%
Total N	(145)	(182)	(103)



Turning to our two remaining variables, among those respondents who feel change is needed (i.e., among the chronic and acute respondents) parents are more likely to feel that the juvenile should change and juveniles are more likely to feel that other family members should change. Thus, this is an aspect of the definition of the problem about which juveniles and parents show the greatest disagreement. Finally, where the juvenile is listed among those who need to change, "adolescence" is frequently noted as the cause of the problem, either alone or in conjunction with other factors.

#### 4.1.2 The Perception of the Juvenile

In this section we will examine the definition of the situation from a different perspective. Rather than focusing on respondents' perceptions of the problem, we will focus on respondents' perception of the juvenile. We will categorize respondents' perceptions along a continuum, based on the two factions of the Children's Rights Movement and developed in earlier research on the self-perception of runaways. However, in this research, we will extend the use of this continuum to other offenses and to the parents of status offenders.

In Little's research on runaways, three groups of self-perceptions were found among the runaways. One group viewed themselves incompetent, dependent, and as having run away to seek more adequate parenting than that they were now receiving. These runaways were labeled Paternalism-Seeking. There also was a group of Liberation-Seeking runaways who perceived themselves as competent and as having run away to be on their own, liberated from the constraints of childhood. In addition to these two groups, a third group emerged who fit neither extreme. Among these was a group for whom running away was intended as a very temporary episode, spurred primarily by the desire for adventure. These findings demonstrate the variety of self-perception of runaways and the need for a variety of responses to these situations.

While these categories were initially constructed from qualitative data, another strategy was needed in this research, given the large numbers of respondents interviewed. A series of vignettes, each reflecting the key elements of one of the three types of runaways described above, were constructed. As this research included incorrigibles and truants as well as runaways, vignettes for these offenses were also constructed. However, with these status offenders we restricted ourselves to the Liberation-Seeking and Paternalism-Seeking categories, as the Adventure-Seeking category was emergent rather than conceptual. Respondents were asked to choose the vignette that best described themselves, in the case of juveniles, or that best described the juvenile, in the case of the parents. These vignettes divide respondents in terms of those who think of themselves or their children as competent and as rebelling against the constraints of childhood (those who choose the Liberation-Seeking category) and those who define the situation in terms of an attempt by a child to find more adequate forms of parenting (those who choose the Paternalism-Seeking category). Consequently, the self-selected category placement of respondents on these vignettes provides a categorization of respondents' definitions of the subject that corresponds to the broad social issues incorporated in the Children's Rights Movement and the implications of this movement for the treatment of status offenders. (See Appendix C for a discussion of the validity of these vignettes.)

4.1.2.1 The Distribution of the Vignettes. Table 17 presents the distribution on each set of vignettes for each group of respondents. These data are presented by offense rather than in combination for two reasons. (1) The vignettes are based on data collected about runaways and they may be less appropriate for other status offense situations. In fact, they do appear to be the most reliable in the runaway situation (see Appendix C). Therefore, by examining each offense

Table 17

Respondents' Choices on Vignettes  
By Offense

	Runaway			Incorrigibility			Truancy		
	Juvenile	Mother	Father	Juvenile	Mother	Father	Juvenile	Mother	Father
Paternalism-Seeking	19%	12%	14%	38%	25%	45%	33%	67%	50%
Liberation-Seeking	18%	14%	19%	31%	25%	9%	33%	0%	0%
Adventure-Seeking	31%	46%	35%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Paternalism-Seeking and Liberation-Seeking	2%	1%	3%	13%	25%	18%	33%	33%	50%
Other Combination	9%	10%	9%	--	--	--	--	--	--
None	20%	16%	20%*	19%**	25%	27%			
Total N	(93)	(114)	(74)	(16)	(16)	(11)	(3)	(3)	(2)

\* Includes 1 missing case and 1 "don't know"

\*\* Includes 1 missing case

separately, the purity of the analysis for the runaway situation and the possibility for examining differences between offenses is maximized. (2) The Adventure-Seeking category exists only for runaways. Compiling the data across offenses would inaccurately skew the distribution of choices away from this category.

Multiple offense situations, i.e., situations where the police were contacted for a combination of status offenses or status offenses and criminal offenses are also examined separately (see Table 18). At this point they have not been combined with the respective categories in Table 17 because multiple offense situations may be viewed differently than single offense situations. For example, incorrigibility may be viewed differently if in combination with some other offense than if it is the only offense.

Looking first at Table 17, the overwhelming pattern is one of similarity between parents and juveniles. Adventure-Seeking is a frequent choice among all respondents for the runaway situation and especially among mothers. This vignette minimizes the significance of the act to the greatest degree. Rather than describing the act as a rebellion against parenting in general or specifically against one's own parents, it pictures the act as a brief, unimportant episode. Within this context, we see that all respondents and especially mothers are likely, at least within the interview situation, to minimize the significance of the act.

The Paternalism-Seeking category is somewhat more likely to be chosen by juveniles than their parents. This is the description that is most critical of parents and places the blame for the runaway episode on their behavior more than any other category. Juveniles are, to a limited degree, more likely to place the blame on their parents than are parents (as would be expected). However, there certainly is not a large percentage of juveniles who feel this way.

In the incorrigibility situation, both Paternalism-Seeking and Liberation-Seeking are more common choices than in the runaway situation. However, this is likely to be due to the absence of the Adventure-Seeking category.

Turning to the multiple offense situations (Table 18), an interesting difference is seen. For both the runaway situation and the incorrigibility situation, Liberation-Seeking is chosen in a higher proportion of cases by juveniles and fathers than it is for these offenses when they are not in connection with other offenses. This relationship also holds for mothers in the incorrigibility situation. This suggests that these offenses are more likely to be seen in Liberation-Seeking terms, i.e., in terms of rebellion against adolescence, when they are accompanied by one or more other offenses.

As we have seen, the vignettes show some differences between parents and juveniles in their perception of the juvenile, but overall these differences are minor. The distribution of choices is relatively similar for parents and juveniles.

There are more important differences between the distributions on various offenses. These differences may be partially due to the different choices available to respondents, but may also be due to different perceptions of each of the status offenses. Because of these differences, it would be unwise to combine the three sets of vignettes. However, there are few interpretable cases in any set except for runaways. While there are a fair number of incorrigibles, many of these cases have responses in the "Liberation- and Paternalism-Seeking" category and the "None" category, leaving very few meaningful responses. Consequently, in further analyses using the vignettes, we will be restricted to the runaway situation. Furthermore, in analyzing the vignettes for runaways, we will combine the multiple offense runaway situations with the pure runaway

Table 18

Respondents' Choices on Vignettes  
By Offense  
For Multiple Offense Situations

	Runaway			Incorrigibility			Truancy		
	Juvenile	Mother	Father	Juvenile	Mother	Father	Juvenile	Father	Mother
Paternalism-Seeking	16%	8%	0%	17%	12%	0%	42%	32%	11%
Liberation-Seeking	36%	11%	46%	33%	44%	75%	11%	0%	33%
Adventure-Seeking	24%	33%	15%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Paternalism-and Liberation-Seeking	8%	6%	0%	22%	16%	13%	0%	11%	0%
Other Combination	8%	14%	15%	--	--	--	--	--	--
None	8%	28%*	23%	28%*	28%	13%	47%*	57%*	56%
Total N	(25)	(36)	(13)	(18)	(25)	(8)	(19)	(28)	(9)

\* Includes 1 missing case

situations. As noted earlier, there is a greater tendency to view the subject as Liberation-Seeking in the multiple offense situation. Combining them with the pure runaways increases the size of that category. As the rest of our analysis using the vignettes will focus on the relationship between vignette choices and other perceptions (as opposed to distributions on the vignette choices) this is not a problem. In fact, given the small number of pure runaways choosing Liberation-Seeking, the additional cases from the multiple offenders is advantageous.

#### 4.1.3 Summary

We have presented two approaches to the definition of the situation. One focused on aspects of the definition of the problem; the other focused on the perception of the juvenile. In tapping the definition of the problem, we used four measures: onset, the need for change, the identification of the client, and the cause of the problem. The two first measures, onset and the need for change, were combined into one variable: severity. While these measures to varying degrees pointed to differences within groups of respondents, only one measure, the identification of the client, demonstrated strong differences in perceptions between juvenile and parents.

The perception of the juvenile was measured by using the vignettes describing status offenders varying in their degree of competence and desire to rebel against the constraints of childhood. The distributions of choices on these vignettes show little difference between juveniles and parents.

Thus, in defining the situation, parents and juveniles primarily differ on one measure of the definition of the problem: who needs to change. This disagreement can be interpreted in two ways in relation to developing policies for responding to status offenders.

One interpretation is that a mediator, such as a therapist or counselor, is needed to bring these discrepant perceptions together. Given this interpretation, one would advocate the funding of family counseling programs.

A second interpretation is that it is not necessarily possible or even desirable to attempt to resolve this disagreement. Rather, the solution is to give adolescents greater freedom to be independent from their parents. In this interpretation, the disagreement between parents and subjects is viewed as a problem only so long as those adolescents are constrained to maintain their current status of dependency and subjection to their parents.

Regardless of the policy interpretation one draws, these data suggest that parents and juveniles will define the appropriate role of law enforcement differently. In the next section we will examine these differences.

#### 4.2 The Appropriate Role of Law Enforcement

In this section we will examine how parents and subjects define the appropriate role of law enforcement in the handling of status offense situations. The interviews included data on several questions related to the respondent's definition of the appropriate role of law enforcement. We asked respondents: (1) if they thought the juvenile's behavior was illegal, (2) if they thought current police policies toward status offenders were appropriate, and (3) in the case of parents, what they hoped to accomplish by contacting the police. Each of these factors tap a separate aspect of the definition of the appropriate police role and are factors along which respondents are likely to vary.

Furthermore, they are factors on which juveniles and their parents are likely to disagree. Juveniles may not see their actions as illegal, i.e., as not a law enforcement issue. Parents on the other hand, since they have contacted law enforcement, are likely to see the behavior as illegal. Juveniles



and parents may also disagree on the level of law enforcement intervention they think is appropriate.

Finally, differences on these factors are likely to correlate with different evaluations of the response received from law enforcement. For example, those who feel the act is illegal are likely to be more dissatisfied with current levels of law enforcement response than those who do not see it as illegal.

#### 4.2.1 Illegality

The majority of all respondents consider at least some aspect of the juvenile's behavior to have been illegal and thus a police problem, although juveniles are a little less likely than parents to think that it was (see Table 19). Almost a quarter of the parents, however, do not think it was illegal, which is interesting since they contacted the juvenile justice system about it. They consider it a "police problem" even though they do not view it as illegal. This suggests that a substantial number of parents expect a "social work" rather than a law enforcement response to the situation. This is a type of response which police (although perhaps not Intercept) are decreasingly likely to make after AB3121 was enacted (see Klein, 1981).

#### 4.2.2 Appropriateness of Current Policies

Table 20 presents the view respondents have of current police policies. There is a considerable difference between the perceptions of juveniles and parents. Only 47 percent of the juveniles view current policies as appropriate, while 77 percent of the parents view them as appropriate. We also asked respondents how they thought police would react to the juvenile's behavior and found little difference between parents and juveniles. Thus, parents and juveniles differ little in what they think police can do (and as noted earlier, in whether or not they think the act is illegal). Parents, however, are far more likely

Table 19

Perceptions of the Subject's Behavior  
as Illegal

	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Yes	64%	73%	68%
No	33%	21%	23%
Other/Don't Know/ Missing	3%	7%	9%
Total N	(145)	(182)	(103)

Table 20

## Perceptions of Current Police Policies

	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Reaction is Appropriate	47%	77%	77%
Reaction is not Appropriate	39%	14%	13%
Other/Missing/Don't Know	13%	9%	9%
Total N	(135)*	(176)*	(101)*

\*Applicable only for those respondents who felt they knew what the current policies were.

to feel the reactions are appropriate than are juveniles.

#### 4.2.3 The Purpose of Contact

Table 21 presents the reasons mothers and fathers have for contacting the police. The most common reason among both mothers and fathers (accounting for nearly one-third of the responses) is for the protection of the juvenile. Of the remaining reasons, fathers are somewhat more likely than mothers to list punitive reasons (punishment of the juvenile, removal of the juvenile from home), while mothers are more likely to list counseling.

#### 4.2.4 Summary

We see that the principle difference between parents and juveniles in their perceptions of the appropriate law enforcement role is the issue of the appropriateness of current policies. While parents and juveniles differ little in what they see as the content of these policies, the parents are far more likely to define them as appropriate. This suggests that the juveniles will be less positive in their evaluation of the actual law enforcement response received than their parents.

#### 4.3 Discussion

We have examined the definition of the situation and of the appropriate law enforcement role. While most of the variables used in examining these perceptions showed some variation within groups of respondents, only two demonstrate important differences between parents and juveniles: (1) parents are more likely to view juveniles as the person who needs to change than are juveniles themselves and, (2) parents are more likely to think current police policies toward status offenders are appropriate than are juveniles. Here we will examine the relationship between these two measures.

Table 21

## The Purpose of Contacting Law Enforcement

	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
1. Counseling (by Agency or Referral)	24%	17%
2. Protection of Subject	32%	31%
3. Punishment of Subject	5%	10%
4. Removal of Subject from Home	8%	17%
5. Adherence to Laws	4%	4%
6. 1 + 3	1%	--
7. 2 + 5	4%	--
8. 1 + 5	2%	--
9. Other Combination	<u>19%</u>	<u>21%</u>
Total N	(167) *	(94) *

\*Applicable only for those respondents who contacted Law Enforcement themselves.

We see from Table 22 that those juveniles who define themselves as the one who needs to change are more likely than other juveniles to view the current policies as appropriate. They are least likely to view them as appropriate when persons other than themselves are defined as the ones who need to change. Apparently there is something about current policies which juveniles feel is appropriate and/or perhaps desirable primarily when they perceive themselves as the ones who need to change.

In fact, juveniles may feel that law enforcement should not be involved at all in status offense situations unless they are the ones who need to change. While we did not specifically ask this question, we did ask whether or not they thought the act was illegal. Defining an act as illegal presumes the legitimacy of law enforcement involvement. We speculate that juveniles who perceive themselves as the ones who need to change will be more likely to view the act as illegal than those who perceive others as the ones who need to change.

Table 22 presents this relationship. While the relationship is not as strong as in the case of the appropriateness of the reaction, the speculated relationship does exist: juveniles who define themselves as the ones who need to change are more likely to define the behavior as illegal than those who define others as needing to change. Juveniles are more likely to view law enforcement involvement as appropriate and their behavior as illegal when they view themselves as the one who needs to change.

If designation as the one who needs to change is synonymous with culpability for the situation (and it is likely to be), these two relationships suggest that subjects view the current law enforcement policies and the definition of status offenses as illegal as statements of their culpability for the events that occurred. If, in fact, a juvenile does perceive him or herself as culpable, then this reaction is consistent with his or her own definition of the

Juvenile's Definitions of Current Policies Within  
 Categories of Definitions of Who Needs to Change

	<u>Person Who Needs to Change</u>		
	<u>Self</u>	<u>Self and Others</u>	<u>Others</u>
<u>Current Policies</u>			
Appropriate	67%	54%	34%
Not Appropriate	33%	43%	41%
Other/ Don't Know	<u>0%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>24%</u>
Total N	(9)	(28)	(41)
<u>Illegal?</u>			
Yes	80%	79%	64%
No	<u>20%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>36%</u>
Total N	(10)	(29)	(44)

situation. On the other hand, if a juvenile defines others as culpable, the juvenile's definition of the situation is more likely to be at odds with that attributed to law enforcement personnel.

Turning to parents, we see that only one of these two relationships holds (see Table 23). Parents are somewhat more likely to view the current police policies as appropriate when persons other than the juvenile are defined as needing to change. This is the opposite relationship of that found for juveniles. However, the percentage differences are small in relation to the number of cases (especially for father) and the relationship cannot be given much importance. On the other hand, parents, like juveniles, are more likely to perceive the act as illegal when they perceive the juvenile as the one who needs to change. This suggests that parents as well as juveniles connect the definition of the juvenile as culpable with the definition of the act as illegal.

This connection between the perception of the appropriate law enforcement role and the culpability of the juvenile is interesting given the philosophy of the juvenile court in relation to status offenders. The rationale for the definition of status offenses as illegal is once based on protection, not punishment. However, persons who come into contact with the system, and particularly the status offenders themselves, do not necessarily define the contact as protection. Rather, they connect law enforcement involvement with the culpability of the juvenile. This is important in relation to service delivery to status offenders after AB3121. So long as juveniles do not see themselves as culpable (and most do not) they are unlikely to view law enforcement as a viable resource for services. Given the implication of AB3121 for voluntary service utilization, a very limited number of status offenders may be obtaining services through the juvenile justice system.



Table 23

Parents' Definitions of Current Policies Within  
Categories of Definitions of Who Needs to Change

		<u>Person Who Needs to Change</u>		
		<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Juvenile and Others</u>	<u>Others</u>
<u>Current Policies</u>				
<u>Mothers</u>	Appropriate	76%	74%	93%
	Not Appropriate	24%	16%	0%
	Other/Don't Know	<u>0%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>7%</u>
	Total N	(38)	(50)	(15)
<u>Fathers</u>	Appropriate	77%	65%	86%
	Not Appropriate	13%	20%	0%
	Other/Don't Know	<u>10%</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>14%</u>
	Total N	(30)	(20)	(7)
<u>Illegal</u>				
<u>Mothers</u>	Yes	82%	76%	69%
	No	16%	20%	31%
	Other/Don't Know	<u>2%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>0%</u>
	Total N	(38)	(54)	(16)
<u>Fathers</u>	Yes	83%	55%	57%
	No	14%	40%	29%
	Other/Don't Know	<u>3%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>14%</u>
	Total N	(29)	(20)	(7)

5. THE EVALUATION OF THE SERVICES RECEIVED  
FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT

Given the differences between parents and subjects in their definition of who needs to change and of the appropriateness of current police policies toward status offenders, we would expect these groups of respondents to have very different evaluations of the actual response received from law enforcement. In this section we will compare the evaluations of parents and juveniles and examine the relationship between these evaluations and the perceptions discussed in Section 4.

Although these data are limited, they provide a starting point for assessing the degree to which law enforcement contact meets the expectations of status offenders and their parents and some understanding of the reasons for any negative evaluations.

5.1 Evaluation of Law Enforcement Contact

As Table 24 shows, parents are far happier after law enforcement personnel have been contacted than are juveniles. Thirty percent or more of both mothers and fathers felt better after the initial contact was made. However, only six percent of the juveniles felt better. The most frequent response among juveniles was one of neutrality, i.e., they didn't care about the police being contacted or it didn't matter. However, nearly as many juveniles were angry about it and a slightly smaller percentage were frightened. In combination, over half of the juveniles felt some type of negative reaction to the telephone contact, other than frustration. Given this reaction, it is likely that services which result from this contact, whether directly with a law enforcement facility or with a community facility, would be colored by these negative feelings.

While substantial percentages of mothers (44 percent) and fathers (38 percent) felt some negative reaction, these were of a very different sort than those

Table 24

Respondents' Evaluation of the  
Initial Contact with Police

	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Better	6%	35%	30%
Angry	19%	8%	4%
Frustrated	4%	12%	16%
Frightened	16%	1%	--
Other Negative	10%	23%	18%
Neutral	26%	6%	18%
Ambivalent/other/don't know	<u>19%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>14%</u>
	(145)	(181)*	(103)

\* Not applicable for 2 mothers

of juveniles. While juveniles were angry or frightened, parents were frustrated or had some other negative reaction, but rarely were they angry or frightened.

A third of the parents and less than a third of the juveniles had some form of direct contact (for counseling, advice, etc.) with law enforcement personnel following the telephone contact. (This direct contact was other than the signing of a Missing-Juvenile Report.) Of those who had direct contact, approximately 30 percent found it to be helpful (see Table 25). This small proportion of positive evaluations appears even smaller when one considers that those parents who had direct contact with law enforcement personnel are likely to have been parents who felt most positive about the liability of police to help and, therefore, facilitated the direct contact. Furthermore, parents and juveniles show little difference in their reactions to these contacts, with juveniles being only slightly less positive about the contacts than mothers or fathers. Since it was the parents who made the initial contact with law enforcement and parents felt positive about this contact far more frequently than did juveniles, we would have expected parents more than juveniles to see the contact as helpful.

A very substantial difference between the evaluations of parents and juveniles is found in terms of the desirability of future contact with police (see Table 26). Here we see that approximately 70 percent of either mothers or fathers would contact police in a similar situation while only 13 percent of the juveniles would want them contacted.

These data show that juveniles evaluate the response of law enforcement far more negatively than do parents when we examine their reactions to the initial telephone contact and their assessments of the desirability of future contact.

Table 25

Respondents' Evaluation of Direct Contact  
With Law Enforcement Personnel

	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Helpful	30%	32%	26%
Neutral	18%	20%	29%
Not Helpful	48%	39%	39%
Missing/don't know	<u>5%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>5%</u>
Total N	(40)	(59)	(38)

Table 26

## The Desirability of Future Police Contact

<u>Would you contact or want police contacted?</u>	<u>Juvenile</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Yes	13%	71%	73%
No	73%	16%	15%
Other	14%	14%	11%
Total N	(145)	(183)	(103)

However, they do not differ from parents in their evaluation of the direct contact.

Our next step is to see if these differences between parents and juveniles are related to their different perceptions of who needs to change and of the appropriateness of current law enforcement policies. We would expect that perceiving the juvenile as the one who needs to change, or perceiving the current law enforcement practices as appropriate, would contribute to a positive evaluation of the actual response from law enforcement. If this is true, then it appears that the reason juveniles feel less positively about the actual police response is because they do not see themselves as the one who needs change and/or they do not view current police policies as appropriate.

Tables 27 and 28 present the relationships between each of these variables. No real pattern emerges from these tables. While juveniles who define themselves as the ones needing to change are the most likely to evaluate the initial response from law enforcement and the possibility of future contact positively (see Table 27), the percentage differences are small in relation to the total number of cases. Furthermore, juveniles who define themselves as the ones who need to change are also the most likely to define the initial contact with police negatively.

More of a pattern can be found with perceptions of the appropriateness of current police policies (see Table 28). All three groups of respondents are more likely to evaluate the initial contact with police negatively if they define current police policies as not appropriate. However, a similar pattern across respondents cannot be found for the desirability of future contact.

Table 27

Evaluation of Initial Contact Within Categories of Definition  
of Who Needs to Change

Evaluation of Initial Response	JUVENILES			MOTHER			FATHER		
	Juvenile	Juvenile & Others	Not Juvenile	Juvenile	Juvenile & Others	Not Juvenile	Juvenile	Juvenile & Others	Not Juvenile
	Positive	13%	4%	3%	28%	36%	47%	41%	25%
Negative	75%	69%	51%	59%	50%	47%	48%	50%	43%
Other	13%	27%	46%	13%	14%	7%	10%	25%	43%
Total N	( 8)	(26)	(37)	(32)	(50)	(15)	(29)	(16)	( 7)

Desirability of Future Contact Within Categories of Definition  
of Who Needs to Change

Desirability of Future Contact	JUVENILES			MOTHER			FATHER		
	Juvenile	Juvenile & Others	Not Juvenile	Juvenile	Juvenile & Others	Not Juvenile	Juvenile	Juvenile & Others	Not Juvenile
	Yes	20%	7%	9%	69%	71%	63%	70%	74%
No	70%	87%	73%	18%	13%	19%	23%	11%	14%
Other	10%	7%	18%	13%	15%	19%	7%	16%	29%
Total N	(10)	(30)	(44)	(39)	(52)	(16)	(30)	(19)	( 7)



Table 28

Evaluation of the Initial Contact within Categories of Perceptions of the Appropriateness of Current Policies

<u>Initial Response</u>	<u>APPROPRIATE?</u>					
	<u>Juvenile</u>		<u>Mother</u>		<u>Father</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Positive	7%	6%	37%	26%	39%	10%
Negative	56%	62%	51%	59%	40%	64%
Other	37%	32%	12%	16%	21%	27%
Total N	(59)	(47)	(122)	(19)	(70)	(11)

Desirability of Future Contact within Categories of Perceptions of the Appropriateness of Current Policies

<u>Desireability of Future Contact</u>	<u>APPROPRIATE?</u>					
	<u>Juvenile</u>		<u>Mother</u>		<u>Father</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Yes	19%	11%	69%	74%	78%	58%
No	70%	79%	18%	13%	17%	17%
Other	11%	9%	12%	13%	5%	25%
Total N	(64)	(53)	(131)	(23)	(78)	(12)

Thus it appears that differences on these perceptions between parents and juveniles do little to explain the differences between parents and subjects in their evaluation of actual response received from police. The fact remains that parents and subjects do evaluate the response very differently and it is not merely due to differences in their definition of who should change and the appropriateness of current policies.

## 6. ALTERNATIVE SERVICES

Given the preceding discussion, it appears that many of these families may want contacts with services beyond those acquired through their initial contact with law enforcement. We have presented data suggesting that parents and juveniles both want change in the family situation but disagree over who needs to change. One interpretation of these data is that a third party arbitrator is needed if a mutually satisfactory solution is to be found. However, only a third of any group of respondents had contact with law enforcement beyond the initial telephone contact and only about a third of these felt positive about this contact. Furthermore, juveniles were negative about contact with law enforcement in general, suggesting that in most cases juveniles would not be receptive to services provided by this agency.

In the light of these findings, the situation seems open for involvement by community agencies. In fact, AB3121 specifically supported and encouraged the use of community agencies as an alternative to juvenile justice system handling of status offenders and minor criminal offenders.

The data we have available on the response of law enforcement to calls from families of status offenders (see Section 3), suggest that referral to other agencies is a frequent response. However, these referrals are referrals to community agencies only about half of the time. The other half of the time they are referrals within the juvenile justice system or to system-related agencies. Thus, the initial contact with law enforcement may not have resulted in a referral to a community agency. However, callers may find community agencies through other sources. In this section we first examine the process of finding

referrals to services after the initial law enforcement contacts and the type of agencies these involve.

Second, we will focus on community agencies. We will examine the utilization of these agencies and how they are evaluated by those families who contacted and used them.

### 6.1 The Referral Process

In this section we are interested in the types of services that are considered after the contact with law enforcement, and how these contacts came to be considered by respondents.<sup>11</sup> Respondents were asked if they were referred to any other agency through their law enforcement contact or if they considered contacting any other agency even if their law enforcement contact did not result in a referral. In combination, those who responded positively to either of these questions constitute those families in our sample who at least considered the possibility of contacting another agency. This is the initial step in utilizing an alternate service.

Of the 202 families who were interviewed, 108 considered at least contacting one other agency after contacting the juvenile justice system. Thus approximately half of the families did not consider and did not receive referral suggestions from law enforcement and were eliminated from the referral process at this initial step. This suggests that there is a lack of knowledge about services for status offenders. This is consistent with the earlier research

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<sup>11</sup> While these questions were asked of each family member who was interviewed, in the immediate discussion we only desire to have this information represented once for each family. As mothers were the family members most frequently interviewed and the family member most likely to have made the law enforcement contact, we took this information from the mother's interview whenever possible. If the mother was not interviewed, the father's interview was used.

on runaways, in which it was found that runaways knew of few, if any, services available to them. While we did not interview their parents during that earlier research, it also appeared through our brief contacts with parents that they also knew of little in the way of services. This current research confirms this lack of knowledge and shows it to exist among other status offenders and their parents, as well as runaways.

Twenty-seven of the families who did consider contacting an agency also considered contacting a second agency. Thus, a total of 145 contacts with agencies were considered.

We had initially anticipated that the majority of these 145 potential agency contacts would be with community agencies. As Table 29 demonstrates, just over half (56 percent) are community agencies, while 31 percent are juvenile justice system, or system-related,<sup>12</sup> agencies. Consequently, agencies which are considered after the contact with law enforcement keep the client within juvenile justice system control a substantial proportion of the time.

Given our earlier discussion (Section 3) of the high proportion of referrals law enforcement makes to juvenile justice system or system-related agencies, it seems likely that many of these system referrals may come from the law enforcement contact, while many of the community referrals come from another source.

As we see in Table 30, the majority of referrals to juvenile justice system or system-related agencies come from the police. The largest source of referrals to community agencies is the "other" category, consisting primarily of self-referrals (often the result of prior contacts with an agency or knowledge

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<sup>12</sup>A system-related agency is one with strong justice system ties such as a counseling agency operated by non-sworn personnel but housed within a police station.

Table 29  
Type of Referral

Juvenile justice system	16%
Justice system-related	15%
Public Welfare	6%
Community Agency	56%
Missing or Inadequate Data	7%
	<hr/>
Total N	(145)

Table 30  
Source of Referral within Categories of  
Type of Agency

<u>SOURCE OF REFERRAL</u>	<u>TYPE OF AGENCY</u>		
	<u>Juvenile Justice System</u>	<u>System-Related</u>	<u>Community Agencies</u>
Police	12	11	13
Probation	2	4	14
Court	2	0	1
School	1	2	15
Other (Self, Relative, etc.)	5	5	35
Missing Data	1	0	3
Total N	<u>(23)</u>	<u>(22)</u>	<u>(81)</u>

through the media) and referrals from relatives. Thus, most people who do consider community agencies do not do so because the agency has been suggested to them by police.

This table also shows some interesting differences between police and probation in their frequency of referrals to community agencies. However, these differences are difficult to interpret. While referrals received from an Intercept Officer would be coded as a probation referral, we suspect that respondents frequently confuse Intercept Officers with police officers, given their presence in police stations. As a result, referrals from Intercept Officers may be included with police referrals. Given our earlier discussion (in Section 3) of the high proportion of referrals given by Intercept Officers to juvenile justice system or system-related agencies, this seems likely.

The relatively high number of community referrals that were made by schools is interesting in relation to Gordon's (1981) report. She suggests that community agencies may be receiving more referrals from schools as a result of AB3121.

Overall, these data point out two important points about the referral process. First, only a limited number of referrals beyond the law enforcement contact were considered and only a portion of these were referrals to community agencies. Out of 202 families, only about half even considered an agency beyond the law enforcement contact. These families reported a total of 145 instances in which they had considered contacting other agencies after their contact with the police. Just over half of these were community agencies.

Second, the most frequent way referrals to community agencies came about within this sample was through informal channels, because people were already aware of these agencies or had relatives or friends who knew of them. Law



enforcement did not play a significant role in making community referrals.

## 6.2 Community Agencies

While the number of contacts with community agencies is small, the presumed importance of these agencies after passage of AB3121 necessitated our examining them in greater depth. In this section, we will focus first on the utilization of these agencies and then on the evaluation of the agencies by those who went to them.

### 6.2.1 Utilization

Utilization of an agency involves two steps. First, the agency must be contacted in order to obtain information and perhaps set up an appointment. Second, the potential client must actually go to the agency. A potential client can be eliminated from the utilization process at either of these two steps.

The overwhelming majority of the community agency contacts which were considered resulted in contact with the agency (see Table 31). While this percentage is very high and speaks well for the possibility of potential clients contacting an agency once they consider it as an alternative, there is a bias built into this percentage. Those people who actually contacted an agency are more likely to remember having considered an agency than those who considered one but never made contact. This would result in an overestimate of the proportion of people who made initial contact with an agency they considered.

Of the 77 initial contacts with agencies, 59 or 77 percent actually resulted in utilization (see Table 32). (Again this may be an overestimate, as those who actually went to an agency are more likely than those who did not to remember having considered and contacting an agency.)

Table 31

Did You Contact the Agency?

Yes	92%	(75)
No	5%	( 4)
The Agency Contacted Us	2%	( 2)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total N		(81)

Table 32

Did You Go to the Agency?

Yes	77%	(59)
No	21%	(16)
Will in the Future	3%	( 2)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total N		(77)

Only 20 of the agency contacts which were considered failed to result in utilization.<sup>13</sup> Few of these potential clients dropped out at the stage of making contact with or going to the agency. However, many of the families we interviewed were eliminated from the utilization process at the initial stage, i.e., at the point of considering contact with an agency. As was discussed earlier, only about half of the families we interviewed even considered contacting an agency and of those contacts considered, less than 60 percent were with community agencies.

This suggests that if one wished to increase the utilization of community agencies by status offenders and their parents, the most fruitful approach would be to increase public awareness of these agencies and facilitate the perception of these agencies as viable alternatives. There appears to be, based on these data, a great potential for police to take a more active role in disseminating this information.

#### 6.2.2 Evaluation of Services

The focus is now shifted from the utilization process to the families who completed this process and actually went to a community agency. In this section, the evaluation by parents and juveniles of the services received from these agencies will be presented.

Tables 33 and 34 present both the parents' and the juveniles' evaluations of the agencies. In general there is little difference between the evaluations of parents and juveniles and in both cases the evaluations are relatively positive. The majority of both groups of respondents found the agency helpful and

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<sup>13</sup>The 20 potential contacts which did not result in utilization stem from a variety of reasons including refusal by the subject (4 instances), refusal by the agency (3 instances), and high cost of the services (3 cases).

Table 33

Helpfulness of the Agency

	<u>Juveniles</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Helpful	56%	63%
Not Helpful	31%	31%
Neutral	11%	2%
Don't Know	3%	5%
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total N	(36)	(59)

Table 34

Would You Contact the Agency Again?

	<u>Juveniles</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Definitely Yes	44%	68%
Definitely No	36%	25%
Maybe	19%	5%
Don't Know	0%	2%
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total N	(36)	(59)

over half of the parents and slightly less than half of the juveniles would contact them again in a similar situation. As in the case of evaluating contact with law enforcement, a more negative evaluation by juveniles and a greater parent-juvenile difference is evidenced when one asks if it is desirable to have future contact than when one asks if the contact was helpful. Perhaps when assessing future contact, juveniles include negative aspects of the incident in their evaluation, rather than exclusively evaluating the agency contact. It is also possible that agency contact is a basically negative experience for juveniles, even when it is helpful within the context of the situation. On the other hand, it may be that the agency was so helpful that the need for future contact is not anticipated by juveniles.

## 7. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

We have analyzed two types of data within this report: descriptive data on the law enforcement response to calls from families of status offenders and interview data from a sample of these callers. These data have given us a picture, although far from complete, of the post-AB3121 relationship between the juvenile justice system and status offenders and their parents and of the role which community agencies play as a result of changes in this relationship. The following points were made:

- (1) Based on data recorded by Intercept Officers, the response to calls from families of status offenders is one which minimizes the direct involvement of law enforcement while the requests from these callers frequently solicit involvement. A common response is to refer callers to other agencies. Furthermore, these other agencies often are ones which maintain close contact with or are part of the juvenile justice system. Callers are only infrequently referred to community agencies.
- (2) Juvenile subjects and parents define the situation in the home in similar ways with the exception of one crucial variable. While parents frequently see the juvenile as one of the persons who needs to change, the juveniles tend to see persons other than themselves as the ones who need to change.
- (3) Juveniles and parents agree on all but one variable tapping perceptions of the appropriate response of police to the situation. Both agree that the act is illegal and have similar perceptions of what

law enforcement can presently do, but they disagree over the appropriateness of these current policies.

- (4) Those juveniles who define themselves as the ones who need to change tend to be more likely to define the current policies of police as appropriate and to view the act as illegal. This suggests that defining themselves as the ones who need to change is synonymous with assigning culpability for the situation to themselves. Juveniles tend to view the involvement of police as appropriate only when they are culpable.
- (5) Juveniles and parents differ in their evaluation of the actual response received from law enforcement, with parents feeling more positive than the juveniles. Few respondents had direct contact with law enforcement (for counseling, advice, etc.) but those who did tended to react relatively negatively, whether they were juveniles or parents.
- (6) The differences between parents and juveniles in the definition of who needs to change and the appropriateness of current law enforcement policies does little to explain the differences between parents and juveniles in their evaluation of the actual response from law enforcement.
- (7) Community agencies can potentially play an important role in providing services to these families. Once people consider them as viable alternatives, they frequently utilize them and evaluate them positively. The differences between parents and juveniles in their evaluation of police are less evident in the evaluation of community agencies. However, few families consider using these agencies, and law enforcement does not contribute greatly to the referral process.

Given these findings, it appears that the current law enforcement role in responding to status offense situations is very limited. Their response is likely to be less than that desired by parents, because parents view police involvement positively. On the other hand, since juveniles define police involvement negatively, juveniles are unlikely to be pleased with police taking a more active role. Community agencies may provide a positive resolution to this situation, both by filling a service deficiency for parents and by being more acceptable than police to juveniles. It appears, however, that few people are aware of these agencies. Law enforcement has the potential of playing a far greater role than they are currently in providing information about these agencies to the families of status offenders.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>This point is not a new one. As Klein (1976) noted a decade ago, police were not referring substantial proportions of juveniles to community agencies during earlier diversion efforts. However, under AB3121, the failure of police to make such referrals is even more significant as few status offenders are inserted into the justice system.



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