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INTERORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT:  
THE CASE OF POLICE YOUTH BUREAUS AND THE JUVENILE COURT

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Police departments, juvenile courts, training schools, and a variety of welfare organizations together constitute the network of agencies formally instituted to deal with juvenile deviance.<sup>1</sup> Because each of the organizations has an interest in reducing deviance, it is sometimes assumed that they share the same goals and work closely and cooperatively with each other. The purpose of this paper is to report on an exploratory study of inter-organizational relations at one link in this network: relations between police youth bureaus and the juvenile court.

The domain of an organization is defined by Levine and White as "the specific goals (an organization) wishes to pursue and the functions it undertakes in order to achieve these goals."<sup>2</sup> For health organizations, Levine and White note that domain consists of "claims which an organization stakes out for itself in terms of (1) diseases covered, (2) population served, and (3) services rendered."<sup>3</sup> Thompson suggests that if "range of products" is substituted for "diseases covered", the concept of domain appears useful for the analysis of all types of complex organizations.<sup>4</sup>

Agreement among organizations regarding each others' domain is defined as domain consensus. According to Levine and White and Paul, domain consensus is one of three variables affecting the amount of exchange among organizations. Two other variables are (1) "the functions (organizations) carry out which in turn determine the elements they need," and (2) the organizations' access to elements from outside the local organizational network.<sup>5</sup> Although in the community they studied there existed domain consensus between health organizations that were local chapters of national organizations (such as Planned Parenthood, American Red Cross, American Cancer Society) and other health organizations, the actual amount of exchange among these agencies was apparently reduced because certain local chapters could rely on their national organization for many resources and were not entirely dependent upon the local as network.

Whereas Levine and White view domain consensus primarily as an independent variable affecting inter-organizational exchange, domain consensus may also be viewed as a dependent variable. It is proposed here that three variables affect the degree of domain consensus in an inter-organizational system: (1) the level of resources possessed by each organization, (2) the determinateness of the organizations' technologies, and (3) the degree of ideological difference among the organizations. While an ideal theory would specify the relative contribution of each of these factors, the present effort is aimed at conceptualizing each of them and illustrating their role in relation to a county juvenile court and two youth bureaus. Each of these variables will first be considered separately.

1. Resources, whether from outside or inside the system, affect an organization's ability to fulfill its domain -- its claim that it can deliver certain goods or services. For example, a skimpy budget hinders an organization's ability to hire and retain sufficient numbers of competent staff.

2. An indeterminate technology is similar to what Thompson calls "uncertainty in cause/effect relations."<sup>6</sup> A technology of low or unknown effectiveness will in the long run affect the organization's ability to fulfill its claims. Other organizations which initially honored and acted upon the organization's claims will in time dispute the organization's domain, and may seek alternative exchange partners. For example, uncertainty exists as to the most appropriate means of preparing police officers for their complex and changing roles. A university which claims to train police officers better than traditional police academies may initially have many supporters and purchasers among police departments in the area. But if its graduates do not demonstrably outperform police officers from academies or other programs, departments which initially supported the university may turn elsewhere.

An indeterminate technology is not the same and should not be confused with an inefficient technology. As long as resource levels remain high, an inefficient technology will not necessarily threaten the organization's ability to fulfill its domain. It can still deliver, though it does so at high cost.

3. Ideological differences may be defined simply as disagreements among organizations as to whether and how certain tasks should be performed, regardless of which organization performs them. The concept differs from domain consensus in that domain consensus refers to the degree of agreement as to which organization(s) should perform a task.

"Justice" versus "treatment," "welfare" versus "self-interest," and "environmental protection" versus "economic expansion" are examples of ideological differences around which organizations coalesce, and sometimes polarize.

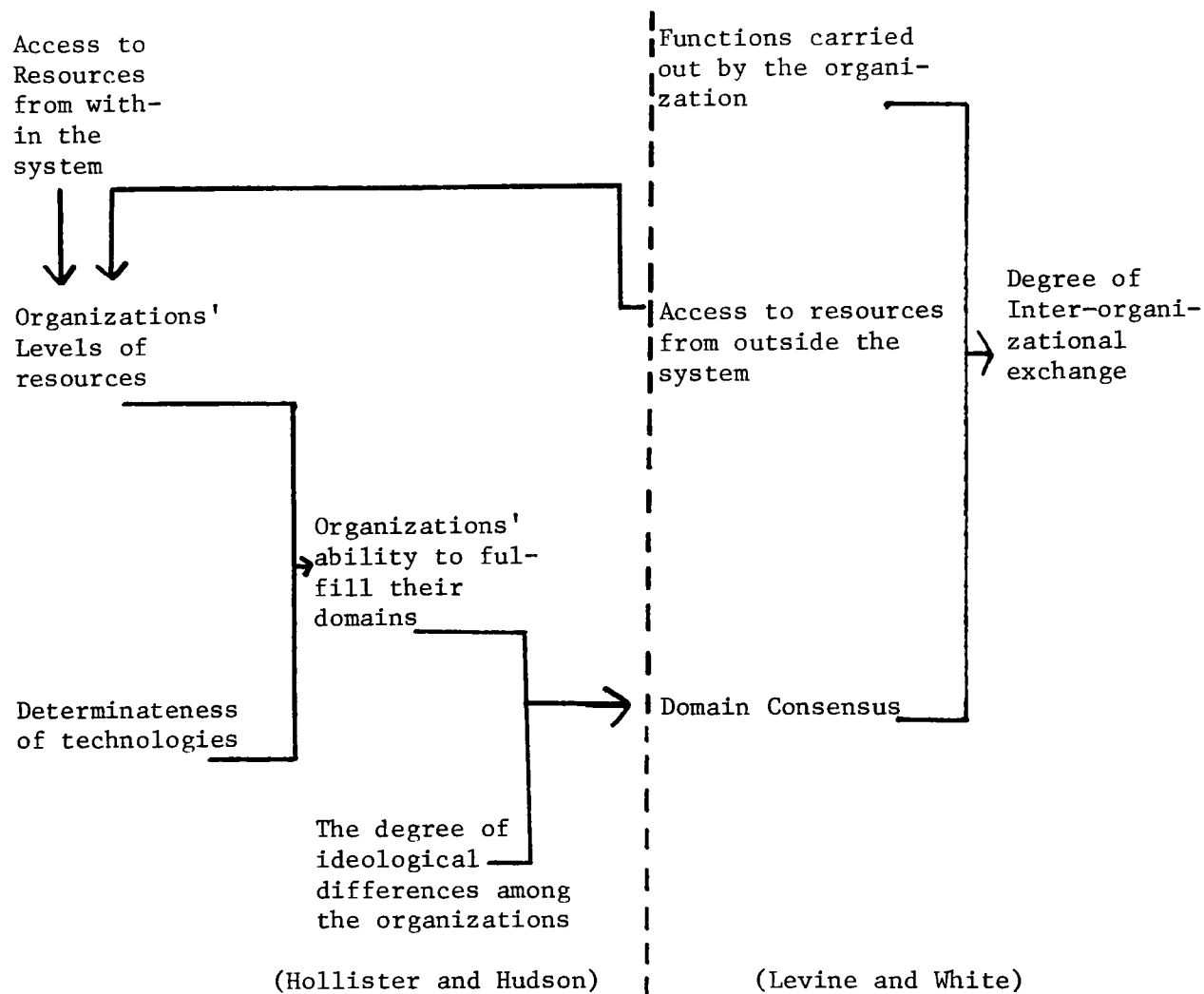
Ideological differences among organizations do not necessarily hinder an organization's ability to fulfill its own claims, but ideological differences do affect the amount of agreement regarding which, if any, organization(s) should perform a task--in short--domain consensus. Exchange may nevertheless occur among organizations differing ideologically, if they engage in similar functions or have little access to resources from outside the system.

Levine, White, and Paul do bring in ideological considerations, but in an ad hoc manner. They mention (1) differences in "views of the world" (a term unnecessarily broad) held by professionals and non-professionals, (2) "divergent policies regarding ways of handling the patient and referring him to other agencies," and (3) differences in "outlook and goals" held by specialties within the same profession, e.g., public health nurses and other registered nurses. These are said to be "other factors which impede greater coordination and effective mobilization of resources" among organizations in the health system.<sup>7</sup> All three of these factors may be seen as

aspects of ideological differences, which in turn affect agreement among these organizations regarding each other's claims.

The conceptual scheme of Levine and White and the elaboration of it presented in this paper are shown in Figure One.

FIGURE ONE. DETERMINANTS OF DOMAIN CONSENSUS,  
AND OF INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL EXCHANGE



The scheme shown in Figure One is illustrated below by a case study of inter-organizational relations between two city police youth bureaus and a county juvenile court.

Setting and Procedures:

The juvenile court and one of the city police youth bureaus were located in a Midwestern county seat, a city of about 70,000 people whose main industries were light manufacturing, research and development, and education (referred to in this paper as Forest City). The second police youth bureau was located in the same county in a nearby industrail town of about 20,000 people (referred to below as Satellite City). The two youth bureaus together accounted for 82 percent of all male referrals accepted by the Juvenile Court and 59 percent of female referrals accepted. Excluded from

the study were the police departments in several small villages in the county, the sheriff's office, and the two local posts of the state police located in the county. However, these excluded police agencies together accounted for only a small portion of referrals to the Juvenile Court.

Both youth bureaus had official standing within their respective municipal police departments and both had some full-time staff. At the time of the study, the Forest City Youth Bureau employed five full-time police officers, including one policewoman, plus secretarial staff. At the time of the study, the Forest City Youth Bureau employed five full-time police officers, including one policewoman, plus secretarial staff. The Satellite City bureau had one full-time officer and a secretary, plus intermittent help from officers assigned to other divisions of the police department.

The Juvenile Court had a staff of twenty-five, including a full-time director of court services, full-time "trained" workers (i.e., staff possessing Master's degrees in social work), several part-time trained workers, and several secretaries, plus two referees and a half-time judge. The referees, who heard cases in the absence of the judge and recommended dispositions to him, also had social work degrees.

Data regarding relations among these three organizations were collected over a three year period<sup>8</sup> through interviews with members of the three staffs; observations of members of each staff in interaction with juvenile offenders, other staff members, and staffs of the other organizations; analysis of the careers of selected cases through the youth bureaus and the court; observation of a series of meetings among the full staffs of all three agencies; and analysis of documents published by the organizations.

#### The Domains of the Organizations:

Both youth bureaus were formally charged with the task of handling complaints concerning juveniles. This included investigating complaints, apprehending suspected offenders, interrogating them, and "disposing" of the cases. Dispositions included, among other things, exonerating juveniles, giving warnings and advice, releasing to parents, referring to welfare agencies, and referring to the Juvenile Court. Although the same range of alternative dispositions was available to each youth bureau, the respective styles of operation and claimed domains differed considerably. The Forest City Youth Bureau sometimes placed a juvenile on its own informal system of "probation". In these instances it required the juvenile to report for regularly scheduled conferences with a bureau officer. The officer in charge of the Forest City Youth Bureau explained this device as follows:

We do treatment. Other agencies in the community can't handle all the cases, so we have to do treatment as well, and in doing this we look at the total situation the child is in. This helps us to decide whether to use the punishment approach or the education approach...We evaluate what the juvenile's adequacy is. Do they need help and guidance? If so, can the Family Service or Catholic Social Services help them, or do they need more authoritative help, for instance from the court? If they are not willing to cooperate, we may have to send them to the court. But all the social agencies in the community have long waiting lists. If the kids needs help now, then we should get to him now. Two weeks from now he might not be able to be helped nearly so well...

The Satellite City Youth Bureau, on the other hand, did not claim to treat juveniles. Its officer warned or threatened offenders, referred them to the juvenile court or occasionally to self-care agencies, or dispensed his own punishment for juvenile traffic violations. He usually kept the juveniles' drivers license for two weeks to three months:

We take the kid's license on the first offense. None of this foolishness about two or three times. This really shakes the kids up. The license is something they really need.

The Satellite City Youth Bureau generally scorned counselling by either police agencies or the juvenile court:

It's true that sending the kid to prison may not do any good to the guy himself, but it will deter his friends...If my kid was sent to the juvenile court, I would want him told that he's not going to be allowed to do these kinds of things, instead of being told, "We want to see what makes you tick." This makes it seem to him that he has an excuse...The kids need an example made of someone. I wonder how long it has been since anybody at the court has been punished. Almost everybody gets only warnings. You've got to show them.

The Juvenile Court, like juvenile courts in most states, operated under a very broad legal mandate to intervene in situations "endangering the health, welfare, or safety of the child, or the well-being of the community." The Director of Court Services and most court workers tended to emphasize rehabilitation and treatment rather than punishment for juvenile offenders. For example, one worker commented in response to a policeman's insistence that juvenile tire-stealers be punished more severely:

We are told by law, of course, that punishment isn't our job. Our job isn't to punish. So in order to change that, we'd have to change the law. Of course, we can send a person to the training school, and this amounts to punishment.

A second worker commented:

The question is how much time to allocate to each kid...Some get very little attention, and others get a lot. We try to give the most attention to those we feel we can help the most and farm the rest out to other agencies in the community.

The quotations above illustrate the low degree of domain consensus among the three organizations. The Satellite City Youth Bureau saw treatment functions as inappropriate for both the Juvenile Court and the Forest City Youth Bureau. Its officer wanted both agencies to deal more authoritatively and punitively with juvenile offenders.

The Forest City Youth Bureau claimed treatment (as well as other functions) to be within its domain. It would decide which cases needed counselling by its own officers, which needed treatment by social agencies, and

which should be referred to the Juvenile Court. Those who were to be referred to the courts were those who refused to "cooperate" and juveniles committing very serious offenses. The Bureau minimized the appropriateness of treatment by the Juvenile Court. It asserted that the appropriate domain of the Juvenile Court should be the exercise of authority in cases where the Bureau's methods were not sufficient, or where the offense was so serious and visible that the public demanded adjudication. A "good" court would be one which backed up the threats of the Bureau officers and which ordered the dispositions recommended by the officers.

The Juvenile Court acknowledged the screening functions of the youth bureaus (the screening out of juveniles committing minor offenses), but tended to scoff at the treatment claims of the Forest City Youth Bureau. Bureau officers had no professional training and were presumed by court workers not to be competent to treat, nor to be competent to decide whether juveniles or their families needed treatment. A "good" youth bureau would leave these decisions to the court. Conversely, the Juvenile Court viewed treatment as very much within its domain, and minimized punishment as a goal (though it acknowledged that the consequences of its intervention were sometimes a de facto punishment).

#### Domain Dissensus and Its Effects on Exchange:

A low degree of domain consensus among organizations may be referred to as domain dissensus. Its existence, theorize Levine and White, does not in and by itself prevent or terminate exchange among organizations because exchange is affected by at least two other factors--the functions the organizations engage in and the extent to which the organizations concerned each have access to resources from outside the local system.

In the present instance all three organizations were agencies of social control and were particularly concerned with juvenile deviance. As such they engaged in similar functions.

Secondly, the agencies were required by law (at least for certain kinds of cases) to interact with each other and not with other organizations. For example, the two youth bureaus were legally bound to refer to the Juvenile Court the most serious offenses, and the court was legally obligated to consider and dispose of the case (even if in some cases this meant waiving the case to the adult court).<sup>9</sup> The youth bureaus in these instances had no choice; they could not refer it to a non-judicial agency, nor could they choose a more "friendly" juvenile court.

The removal of certain juveniles from the community and the preceptions by other juveniles in the community of the Juvenile Court as a punitive institution can be viewed as resources that were needed by the youth bureaus to help deter delinquency. The youth bureaus' access to these resources outside the Juvenile Court was severely limited.

The Juvenile Court, on the other hand, did have access to cases from other sources than the youth bureaus. However, it received the bulk of its delinquency referrals from the two youth bureaus, and it was dependent on the youth bureaus for certain services, such as transporting juveniles to the detention home and apprehending runaway wards of the court. Thus, the youth bureaus and the Juvenile Court were forced to interact with each other much of the time, given legal requirements and the resulting unavailability of needed resources from elsewhere, and in spite of domain dissensus among the three organizations.

Nevertheless, exchange was diminished in areas where legal requirements and mandates were broad or ambiguous. For example, the statutes give the Juvenile Court broad discretion regarding whether or not to intervene. In the first year of the study the Juvenile Court rejected 120 out of 230 petitions (referrals) sent to it by the Forest City Youth Bureau. Court workers attributed the high refusal rate to the "inappropriateness" of many of the cases sent by the bureau. According to court workers, many petitions were not accompanied by evidence sufficient for the court to establish its right to intervene in the situation.

In one instance the Forest City Youth Bureau wanted the juvenile court to accept a petition on a boy and then order the mother and father of the boy to go to a family service agency for help. The court refused, claiming it would have great difficulty establishing jurisdiction over the case. Although the father was a chronic drinker and the mother allegedly "ran around" with other men, there was no evidence the child was physically neglected. The court intake worker said it would be difficult to justify the court's intervention, whereas the Bureau insisted that the court could accept the petition on the basis of "moral neglect." The court worker said moral neglect was very difficult to establish for a boy as old as this one (15 years) and further, that it was futile to force people to go to an agency for treatment when treatment would require willing cooperation. Court workers frequently objected to the police making specific recommendations as to what should be done with the child or family in question. Workers saw this decision, for cases accepted by the court, as belonging to court workers and not to police.

In some instances the court refused the petition because its workers believed the police were trying to use it to get the juveniles to confess. Workers objected to this use of court facilities, which they regarded as treatment or rehabilitative facilities.

Sometimes the court refused the petition because workers asserted that the time had passed when the court could work effectively with the juvenile, even though there was sufficient evidence to establish its jurisdiction. Court workers occasionally refused petitions for juveniles who had committed repeated and serious offenses and who had never been referred to the court by the Bureau until the most recent offenses but had instead been handled by the Bureau on its own informal probation system.

A second area of conflict concerned the exchange of information. Youth bureau officers complained that the Juvenile Court did not systematically inform police as to the Court's dispositions of the cases police referred to it, or as to which juveniles were wards of the court. Court workers refused to share this information on grounds that it was confidential material, but some workers also expressed concern over the uses the police might have for the information. Whereas police asserted that the information was necessary simply in order to coordinate their work with the court, some court workers expressed the fear that the bureaus might use the information to threaten certain juveniles, e.g., if a bureau knew a boy was on probation, an officer could threaten to refer him to the court if he didn't cooperate, for instance, in informing on other juveniles.



Court workers, on the other hand, sometimes complained that the youth bureaus were withholding information from the court on some cases so as to increase the likelihood of obtaining the disposition they desired on the case. Youth bureau officers denied this practice.

Thus, it appeared that neither information nor cases were exchanged as much as they might have been had there been greater domain consensus among the three organizations.

Factors Affecting Domain Dissensus:

Analysis of relations among the three organizations suggests three factors which contributed to domain dissensus: ideological differences, low resources, and indeterminate technologies.

Ideological differences were defined earlier as disagreements among organizations as to whether and how certain tasks should be performed, regardless of which organization performs them. Although all three organizations in the present study were concerned with juvenile delinquency, each viewed differently the nature and causes of delinquency, and each favored different strategies of social control. In discussing these differences, it is useful to refer to the concepts of "juridical" versus "medical" modes of deviance.<sup>10</sup>

In the juridical mode the deviant is deemed responsible for his acts. Investigation is focused upon the acts in question and other factors such as the family and community influences are de-emphasized. The deviant is impeded from returning to, or is dislodged from, his social positions. The deviant is not given nor permitted social and emotional support from the organization(s) involved. "Punishment" is emphasized as the appropriate means of social control.

In the medical mode the deviant is deemed not responsible for his acts, at least not wholly responsible. Investigation does not focus on intent but on the forces presumed to provoke and influence the deviance. The organization(s) involved attempt to help the deviant to return to his social positions and typically provide social and emotional support. "Treatment" is emphasized as the appropriate means of social control.

The two views of deviance are seen as incompatible with each other in that they imply different styles of interaction between staff and offenders, and imply different case dispositions. It is nevertheless true that regardless of how the offender and his handling are defined, both the juridical and the medical modes may have similar consequences in some cases, such as deprivation or stigmatization.

The Juvenile Court tended to hold the medical view. Most referrals accepted by the court were viewed by court workers as needing treatment (casework and counselling) in order to bring about long-run change. However, workers acknowledged that given the huge volume of cases in the court relative to staff size, it was impossible to give more than cursory attention to many cases. Workers also acknowledged that sometimes juvenile offenders did not respond to even very intensive counselling and that very authoritative and punitive measures were necessary in these cases. Thus the court tended to operate in the medical mode but sometimes also acted in the juridical mode

The Satellite City Youth Bureau tended to hold the juridical view; it stressed swift and certain punishment for offenses.

The Forest City Youth Bureau shared both views, claiming to decide which mode of handling was preferable in each case and referring to the Juvenile Court those offenders it deemed in need of punishment.

These differences of view regarding the "causes" of delinquency and of the best means for control very directly affected each organization's willingness to concur in the others' activities. One can speculate that these differences of view are inevitable. Police agencies may be likely to adopt a juridical view, given their primary concern with deterrence and enforcement. Juvenile courts may be more likely to adopt a medical view, given their usual mandate of concern for the protection of the child.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the ideological issues, domain dissensus between the bureaus and the court can be traced in part to the low resource level of the court. The Juvenile Court's ability to commit offenders to state institutions was severely limited, even when it desired to do so. Due to crowded state facilities, the court was allowed to commit only one juvenile per month to the state correctional institution for boys. The court's capacity to send boys to private institutions in cases where the parents could not pay was limited by its lack of financial resources. This meant that a high proportion of offenders who the youth bureaus would have liked to see committed inevitably had to remain in the community. More use was made instead of community social agencies and court probation.

Court probation, however, was viewed by the youth bureaus as largely ineffective and useless, in part because the bureaus viewed the juveniles they referred as cases which needed sanctions much stronger than more counselling or warnings. In addition, the youth bureaus (and court workers) correctly recognized the impossibility for most juveniles of more than a superficial attempt at treatment by the court, considering its very high case volume relative to staff size. This increased the bureaus' skepticism of the effectiveness of the Juvenile Court's policies. Had greater resources been available to the Juvenile Court in the form of more funds to hire staff and a larger quota of training school commitments, it might have been better able to fulfill its claims that its' policies reduced recidivism and thereby protected the community.

This takes us to the third consideration--indeterminate technology. None of the three organizations could demonstrate that its methods of handling juveniles accomplished the intended goals. The Juvenile Court could not demonstrate that even intensive casework with juvenile offenders reduced recidivism to any extent. Nor could the youth bureaus demonstrate that either "punishment" or the Forest City bureau's variety of treatment was effective. Staff in each organization believed their means to be superior, but for lack of systematic evidence, the Juvenile Court was unable to persuade the youth bureaus of the validity of its claims, and vice versa. Domain dissensus ensued.

### Summary

The study reported here is exploratory in nature and involved only three organizations. Its main contributions have been to suggest three propositions regarding variables that affect the degree of domain consensus in an organizational network and to illustrate their utility for analysis of relations among the three organizations studied. These propositions, as well as other parts of the total scheme (Figure One), need further refinement and testing. Presumably the conceptual model applies to any inter-organizational network, and it should be testable through the analysis of relations among organizations having varying degrees of technological determinateness, ideological differences, and varying resource levels.

### Footnotes

1. Other formal organizations may play an important part in labelling and processing juvenile deviants, but these organizations serve other formal goals as well. An example is the public school. Although its official mandate is education of the child, it may nevertheless play a crucial role in defining juvenile deviants. See for example, Walter E. Schafer, "Deviance in the Public School: An Interactional View," Ch. 3 in Edwin J. Thomas (ed.) Behavioral Science for Social Workers, (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 51-58.
2. Sol Levine and Paul E. White, "Exchange as a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Inter-organizational Relationships," Administrative Science Quarterly, V, No. 4, (March, 1961), p. 597.
3. Ibid.
4. James D. Thompson, Organizations in Action, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), p.26.
5. Sol Levine, Paul E. White, and Benjamin D. Paul, "Community Inter-organizational Problems in Providing Medical Care and Social Services," American Journal of Public Health, LIII, No. 8, (August, 1963) p. 1183-93.
6. Thompson, op. cit., p. 134.
7. Levine, White, and Paul, op. cit.
8. Principal support for this research was provided by a curriculum development grant from the Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in cooperation with the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, and by a research grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, United States Public Health Service. The principal investigators were Robert D. Vinter and Rosemary C. Sarri.
9. In this state, as in many others, the juvenile court could waive jurisdiction to an adult court of cases which would have been considered a felony if committed by an adult.

10. See Howard M. Jackson, "A Study of the Evaluation of Social Control: The Organization, Theory, and Practice of Jurisprudence and Medicine," unpublished doctoral dissertation, the University of Michigan, 1963.
11. The thrust of U. S. Supreme Court decisions in the last decade has been toward the protection of due process for the child, e.g., the Kent and Gault decisions. These have resulted in more formality and advocacy in the juvenile court, at least at the hearing stage. The full effect of these decisions on courts operating in the medical mode remains to be seen, but one may predict some movement once again toward the juridical mode. However, the decisions reinforce, not diminish, the juvenile courts' mandate to protect the child. For a study of ideological conflict within the juvenile court, see Vaughn R. Stapleton, "Normative Conflict in the Juvenile Court," paper presented at the 1967 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco.