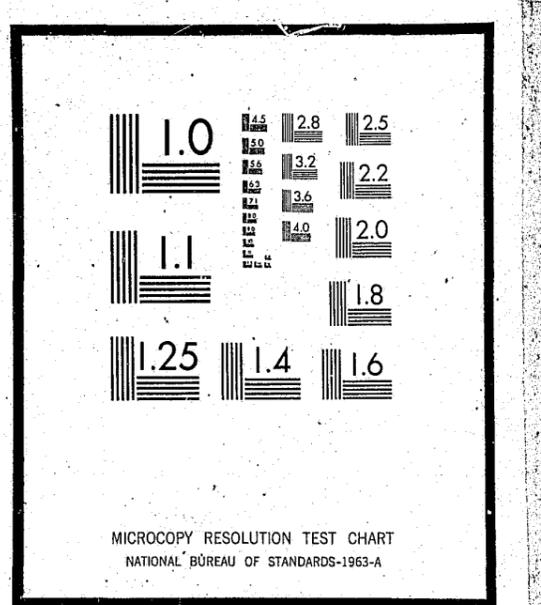


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California -  
~~THE~~ GROUP HOME PROJECT | AN EXPLORATION INTO THE  
USE OF GROUP HOMES FOR DELINQUENTS IN A  
DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT SETTING

by

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The Group Home Project - February, 1970.

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## INTRODUCTION

The California Youth Authority, under a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), has recently completed a three-year study<sup>1</sup> of group homes used as placement resources for Youth Authority wards. This research-demonstration study was conducted as an integral part of the Community Treatment Project (CTP), which is also a research-demonstration project jointly sponsored by the Youth Authority and NIMH. (1)

Although some of the final data analysis and reporting has yet to be completed, it is possible, at this point, to present an overview of the Group Home Project, to share some selected experiences, and to offer some tentative conclusions. It is the intent of this discussion to contribute to the growing amount of information relative to a nation-wide trend toward emphasizing treatment of delinquent youth in community-based programs, (2,3) and within this trend, a greater use of out-of-home placements - group homes being one type of such placement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> April, 1966 to October, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> A modified, shorter version of this report will appear in Children, Vol. 17, No. 4, July-August, 1970, under the title, "A Differential Use of Group Homes For Delinquent Boys".

## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Community Treatment Project: From late 1961 to October 1969, the CTP program was designed to compare an intensive treatment-control program in the community with the traditional Youth Authority program - typically institutionalization and parole (to caseloads of 70-80) - for wards 13 to 16 years of age who were committed to the Youth Authority from juvenile courts in the Stockton and Sacramento metropolitan areas (and from 1964 to 1969 also in San Francisco). First commitment eligible juvenile court wards were randomly assigned to either the "traditional" programs or to the Community Treatment Project and placed in caseloads averaging .12 per parole agent. (4)

Previous studies had strongly indicated that smaller caseloads offered greater likelihood that more adequate supervision and services would be provided. However, the reduced caseloads - as an isolated factor - did not assure that relevant treatment would, in fact, occur. (5) In addition, another study had indicated that the same worker and/or treatment was not equally effective with all types of wards. (6) Thus, other dimensions were added to the CTP program which have included:

(a) classification of wards according to their level of maturity

(based primarily on perception and behavior);<sup>1</sup> (b) matching of youngsters to workers; (c) differential and treatment-relevant planning and decision-making relative to each youngster's unique needs, personality and short and/or long-range goals; (d) use of the agent-youngster relationship as the major vehicle for change.

Additional treatment-program variables which have been employed in CTP include a school program (tutorial, remedial, and regular classes), consultants, specialized training, community resources, individual, family, and group counseling. Also included have been CTP Center activities, recreational and educational outings, and out-of-home placement (e.g., foster homes, group

<sup>1</sup> Warren, M.Q. and CTP staff - "Interpersonal Maturity (I-Level) Classification: Juvenile", 1966. A given youngster's position in this system is determined primarily through lengthy, in-depth interviews. The system has had - as a frame of reference and a tool - several important implications in CTP and the Group Home Project. The I-level system is summarized as follows:

<u>I-Level</u>	<u>Subtypes</u>	<u>Code</u>
1 <sub>2</sub>	Asocialized, Aggressive Asocialized, Passive	Aa Ap
1 <sub>3</sub>	Conformist, Immature Conformist, Cultural Manipulator	Cfm Cfc Mp
1 <sub>4</sub>	Neurotic, Acting-Out Neurotic, Anxious Situational Emotional Reaction Cultural Identifier	Na Nx Se Ci

homes, independent placement).<sup>1</sup> Thus, group home placement has been one of several kinds of placement alternatives and - in the broader context of CTP - one of many treatment variables available to agents in employing differential treatment concepts.

The concept of group homes is not new - dating back to 1916 in New York City. (7) Group homes can take on a variety of definitions, staffing patterns and uses. Some are agency-owned and professionally staffed and provide complete internal care and casework services; others are basically a foster home designed primarily for the care and supervision of several children. In some types of group homes, provisions are made for long-term care, while others are used exclusively for limited-term care. Most group homes probably take on characteristics between these extremes, adapting the many possible variables to meet local needs, concepts, and community and/or agency realities (e.g., finances, zoning laws).

The Group Home Project - its premises and definitions - grew out of some of the basic tenets and experiences within the Community Treatment Project, which related to treatment and out-of-home placement needs that parole agents were encountering when working intensively with delinquent youth in a community-based treatment program. A 1965 out-of-home placement survey

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<sup>1</sup> In summary, the effectiveness of the CTP program over the comparison (traditionally handled) group has been demonstrated by lower recidivism (revocation of parole); greater positive pre-post test score changes; and a greater proportion of successful discharges from parole. A bibliography of the numerous reports which have been published by CTP is available on request to Ted Palmer, Ph.D., Principal Investigator, Community Treatment Project, 3610 5th Avenue, Sacramento, California 95817.

revealed that more than 30% of CTP experimental youngsters had been placed outside of their natural homes. This contrasts markedly with the 5% statewide average for out-of-home placement of Youth Authority parolees. (8)

The basic reason for this greater emphasis on out-of-home placement in CTP had been the increased attention to locating living situations which will permit non-delinquent behavior to occur and will enhance - or at least not interfere with - the treatment program of given youngsters. For example, a youngster whose major way of relating to the world is conformity, or "allegiance" to external realities may have little or no alternative to delinquency in a highly delinquent neighborhood. Other youngsters caught in neurotic family binds and conflicts may have little "choice" but to escape through delinquent acting-out when placed with their families.

Problems in locating suitable foster homes, maintaining them, and integrating them with the CTP program resulted in the concept of utilizing group homes. It was felt that more controlled and thus more appropriate atmospheres could be established for a significant proportion of those youngsters needing out-of-home placement. In addition, agents were discovering many instances in which temporary housing was needed at various and often unpredictable times for youngsters, where formal, secure custody (e.g., juvenile hall) was not necessary or was felt to be inappropriate. These circumstances suggested the need for: (a) a number of out-of-home placement facilities; (b) a range of atmospheres among these facilities; and (c) temporary holding facilities.

The basic conceptual ideas of the Group Home Project began to be formulated in 1962 and a limited, and largely non-systematic use of group homes within CTP began. (9) Impetus was given to a systematic study of group homes by a statewide study of Youth Authority foster care needs, which included in its recommendations that the Youth Authority "...immediately proceed to set up a significant number of agency-operated group homes...with the particular purpose of learning as much as possible about their operation...". (10)

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The goals of the Group Home Project were: (a) to determine the feasibility of establishing and maintaining each of the group homes, (b) to develop a taxonomy of relevant environments, describing in detail the important aspects of the environments in treatment-relevant ways rather than through a controlled experiment, (c) to evaluate the impact of the group home experience on youngsters. All of these goals related to the attempt to assess the relative worth and utility of each home as a placement alternative and treatment resource, and its implications for use in other settings. Thus, the design involved exploration and hypotheses-making rather than hypotheses-testing.

The research role or focus was to describe - generally and in detail - all of the significant aspects of the Project. Thus, the role was similar to that of an anthropologist (in observing the culture), or to an historian. It required consistent and systematic involvement with every participant of the study population.

Group Home Types (Or, Models): The five different types of group homes defined in the original proposal were based on CTP's differential treatment concepts. Home Types I, II and III were designed specifically to meet the treatment-control needs of most of the subtypes in the three major I-level classifications found in the delinquent population (I<sub>2</sub>, I<sub>3</sub>, and I<sub>4</sub>). Home Types IV and V were designed for the short-term care of all delinquent subtypes. The original home types are described below, including the maximum capacity for each home and the I-level subtypes for which each home was designed, and for which the given home was exclusively available. The model describing a sixth type of home, developed by Group Home Project staff, was added in May, 1968. Due in part to the small number of girls potentially available for any of the given types of homes, the Project homes were developed for boys only. Co-educational arrangements were discussed but never tried.<sup>1</sup>

Type I - Protective (For four youngsters classified Ap or Cfm):<sup>2</sup>  
This type of group home was planned for very immature and dependent youngsters. The home should approximate normal family living as closely as possible and should be operated by a married couple with training and patience to offer intensive involvement, support and supervision for long periods of time.

<sup>1</sup> A seventh type of home, a group home for girls, was subsidized and studied during the last year of the Project but no model was developed, since the home had been developed in CTP outside of the design of the Group Home Project. Data or experiences with this home are not included in this article. See Turner, E., "A Girls' Group Home: An Approach to Treating Delinquent Girls in the Community", Community Treatment Project Report Series: 1969, No. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Due to reduced numbers of I<sub>2</sub>'s and Cfm's on parole in CTP and a smaller-than-usual number of these wards<sup>2</sup> having been committed, the Type I Home was opened in September of 1967 to compatible (with Cfm's, and with the home design) I<sub>4</sub> Na's and Nx's. This arrangement worked satisfactorily for the most part.

Type II - Containment (For six youngsters classified Mp or Cfc):

This home was envisioned for the youngster usually labeled as a culturally conforming delinquent or as a "defective character". The home should represent concrete and realistic demands for conforming, productive behavior. The home should operate essentially on a "non-family" basis since these youngsters frequently respond to firm, objective authority and control when these do not carry with them the price tags of emotional involvement inherent in most parent-child relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Type III - Boarding (For six youngsters classified Na, Nx, Se, or Ci):

This home was for some of the more mature and complex wards who are in the early stages of emancipation, but who do not have enough strength to be on their own. The home should provide a base from which to work as the youngsters continue to deal with the resolution of internal conflicts, with problems of emancipation, identity and the like. The group home parents should maintain an atmosphere of comfort without threat and should allow the youngsters to form meaningful relationships with them if the youngsters choose to do so.

Type IV - Temporary Community Care (For six youngsters of any I-level):

This home was to serve only temporary placement needs where custody or independent living is seen as being inappropriate and/or unnecessary. This type of placement can be used for (a) temporary housing while changing placements; (b) a context in which to do short-term counseling away from a stressful situation; or (c) housing while treatment planning is being formulated (or being reassessed). Support should be emphasized rather than custody and restriction.

Type V - Restriction (For six youngsters of any I-level): This home would be a substitute for detention in juvenile halls or similar facilities for those youngsters who need restrictive behavioral limits. Placement in this home - as in the Type IV Home - could permit the continuation of school, work, group meetings, etc. Placement would be for about ten days or less. If limits and surveillance were needed for a longer period of time, other arrangements would be made. To some extent this home would be run on an "honor" (i.e., unlocked door) system.

<sup>1</sup>This original model statement was revised as a result of experience in operating a Containment Home. Basically, the "non-family" aspect of the model was changed to read: "Opportunity for growth is thought to rest in the formation of atypical (for these types of youngsters), healthy relationship with adults within the context of authority, controls, etc.".

Type VI - Individualized (For six youngsters classified I<sub>4</sub> - primarily Na or Nx): This home was designed for those youngsters who may benefit from having a "family-like" situation and healthy adult relationships made available to them while resolution of conflicts with self and family takes place. A great deal of flexibility would be allowed in terms of the expectations of the youngsters relative to the home, and in terms of the nature of their relationship with the group home parents. Long-range plans for individual wards can include return to family, placement in an individual foster home, independent living, or continued placement in the group home.

Procedures And Administration: Most of the operating procedures were developed concurrently with the implementation of the proposal. Decisions were made in such a way that the operation of the Project and the homes would be harmonious with the proposal, with the CTP design and current treatment thinking, and the projected (or experienced) needs of group home parents, youngsters and staff.

The staffing pattern concept used in the group homes was oriented more toward the group foster home end of the continuum of group home "types" mentioned earlier. The reason for this decision rested with early thinking during 1962-65, in relationship to CTP's needs and views regarding an internally compatible program. The use of the homes was not seen as the major treatment vehicle since it was rather basic to the CTP design that the parole agents' role was that of being the focus for casework and treatment services. In addition, the group-foster home type of arrangement is less expensive than other staffing patterns and is usually more compatible with local zoning requirements.

Group home parent candidates (couples, as a rule) were recruited from the general population in much the same way that foster homes are recruited. Selected individuals - under a formal group home contract with the Youth Authority - were then to provide acceptable facilities, equipment, etc., in addition to the basic care and maintenance of youngsters placed in their homes. Among the several methods of programming payment to group home parents, the procedure which was finally adopted involved the payment of a monthly retainer (set pre-established amount) at the beginning of each month, plus a per-ward subsidy "reimbursement" calculated on the basis of the total number of ward-days that had accumulated during the preceding month. These amounts ranged from \$200 per month retainer plus \$125 per ward per month to a \$500 retainer plus \$110 per ward per month. The total monies available were not the same for all homes. During the operation of the Project, the Youth Authority's standard group home payment (for non-Project homes) was a \$200 retainer plus \$34 per ward per month.<sup>1</sup>

Selection Of Group Home Parents: Recruitment and initial screening were done by the Group Home Coordinator, whose responsibilities also included training, coordination and ongoing maintenance and evaluation of all Project homes in conjunction with CTP agents. Following the coordinator's appraisal, candidates were interviewed in-depth by the researcher, who also administered two

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<sup>1</sup> This has been increased recently to a \$300 retainer plus \$110 per ward per month

paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The coordinator and researcher then independently and - afterwards - jointly rated the candidates in relation to a scale of 52 items of personality and behavior. (11) The collective information was then evaluated with the CTP staff - individuals who would potentially be using a given home - to arrive at a final selection decision.

These questionnaires and ratings were not used as absolute measures of appropriateness. Instead, they were used in conjunction with the above interviews and other available information in an attempt to help refine perceptions as to given candidates' (a) appropriateness for foster care in general, (b) strongest area(s) of compatibility with given types of youngsters, home models, staff and current treatment concepts, and (c) flexibility and growth potential.

Except for those few areas pre-determined by the research design, attempts were made to handle issues and decision-making in a joint, cooperative ("team approach") manner. It was felt that this was imperative if given homes and the Project were to be an integral - rather than separate - part of the total CTP program. Such things as intake into the homes, training, home maintenance and management, staffings, evaluations, and contract terminations were designed to involve all principal people. Agents, supervisors, coordinator, researcher, and, where appropriate, group home parents were involved in various combinations in differing kinds of staffings or meetings - whether routine or occasional.

Placement into a group home was neither an automatic part of a given youngster's treatment program, nor was there any randomized assignment into given group homes or even across homes. Requests for intake into given homes were initiated by a youngster's parole agent in conjunction with his supervisor. In long-term care homes, a staffing was then held - involving the agent, supervisor, coordinator and researcher - to determine if a given youngster would be placed. In the Type IV, Temporary Care Home, arrangements were made so that placements could occur on an emergency and odd-hour basis.

Placements occurred both at the time of initial parole or at various points in time during a youngster's parole experience. Thus, placements in a group reflected one of the basic tenets of CTP: rational and treatment-relevant decision-making. Placement into a home did not include transfer of that youngster to the coordinator or one agent who handled all cases in a given home. This practice, employed by some agencies, was considered inappropriate in terms of maintaining continuity of treatment relationships and was seen as antithetical to some of the elements of the CTP research design (matching of agents and youngsters).

#### SELECTED EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS<sup>1</sup>

Because of the nature of the design of the Project and its relationship to CTP, it has been difficult to isolate the impact of group home placement and all of the variables affecting the use of group homes. However, many of the complex

<sup>1</sup> Due to space limitations, the discussion here is only an overview (across all of the homes) of selected areas. More complete discussion is contained in the Group Home Project's research reports. (12, 13, 14) Final reports will be available around April-May 1970.

dimensions regarding treatment of delinquent youths using the element of group homes are better known and - to a somewhat lesser extent - understood.

Overall, the experiences of the Project are viewed positively in spite of numerous problems. The homes provided a much needed service to youngsters. In the opinion of agents, many youngsters were provided with better living and treatment circumstances than could have been provided in any existing available alternative, even though a given group home might not have met "ideal" criteria for given youngsters. Short-term stabilization was frequently experienced.

It was possible to locate individuals who appeared, at the time they were selected, relatively appropriate to operate five of the six types of homes.<sup>1</sup> Some accuracy was experienced in predicting the type of home atmosphere selected individuals would most likely develop. Differences along dimensions such as strictness, flexibility, autonomy and the like could be seen when comparing the homes with each other. In all, seven sets of group home parents were selected who operated a total of eight different kinds of group homes.<sup>2</sup> At least one year of experience was obtained with each of the group home types (except for the Type V Home).

As of June 30, 1969, a total of 39 youngsters, representing 51 different placements (some were placed in more than one home) were placed in long-term care homes (six different homes in all). Of those 39 youngsters, 16 were Caucasian, 12 were

<sup>1</sup> No appropriate candidates were located for the Type V, Restriction Home, and the funds allocated for the Type V Home were diverted to subsidize the Type VI Home and the Girls Group Home.

<sup>2</sup> One couple operated both a Type I Home and Type IV Home at different periods of time.

Mexican-American and 11 were Negro. Their average age at time of each separate placement was 17 years, 2 months. They represented all 1-level subtypes except for the 1<sub>2</sub> Ap and 1<sub>4</sub> Se categories - with the majority (57%) being either 1<sub>4</sub> Na or 1<sub>4</sub> Nx. The average number of months on parole prior to each placement was 9.8 months - although 49% of the placements were made within the first six months of parole. The average length of stay for all long-term care homes was 162 days (5.4 months). 74% of the placements lasted for eight months or less. On the average, placements tended to last for about 43% of the maximum time that would have been possible (considering data-cutoff or home-termination dates).

Twenty-four youngsters, representing 42 different placements were placed into two temporary care homes. For temporary placements the average length of stay was 3.5 weeks; average age at time of placement was 16 years, 9 months; average number of months on parole prior to placement was 11 months; and, most of the youngsters placed (72%) were classified either 1<sub>4</sub> Na or Nx.

Behavior ratings on group home youngsters - in long-term care homes I, II, III and VI - were completed by group home parents and parole agents using the Youngster Behavior Inventory (11). The group home parents' ratings primarily reflected each given boy's behavior in their home, whereas each agent's frame of reference was more global, and included the boy's behavior both within and away from the home. The first ratings (here called pre-ratings) were completed after two months in placement had elapsed. Post ratings were then done approximately every two months thereafter, for as long as the given boy remained within the home.

Using these first ratings as a base, the post-ratings as perceived by group home parents, and summarized across long-term care homes, revealed that: (a) at the first post-test (4 months), there had been significant change for the better - in terms of improvement in positive, healthy behavior items and decrease in negative, disturbed behavior items; (b) after six months (post 2), the indices of positive behavior change were even more significant; however, indices of negative behavior had changed for the worse (but not significantly); (c) after eight months (post 3), indices of positive behavior were still improved over pre-ratings, but no longer significantly; and, negative behavior indices had significantly changed for the worse; (d) for positive and negative indices combined there was a significant change for the worse at post 3, reflecting a marked change compared to post 1 where there had been a significant change for the better.

Parole agents' ratings reflected a more consistently positive pattern even though no changes reached statistical significance. Agents perceived changes for the worse at post 2 and 3 in regard to positive behavior indices; but at the same time, they saw a rather consistent change for the better in post ratings on negative behavior indices, and on negative and positive indices combined. The behavior rating information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Pre-Post Behavior Change in Group Home Boys as Rated by Group Home Parents Combined, and by Agents Combined, for All Long-Term Care Homes (Types I, II, III and VI) Combined

Behavior Index Groups	Pre vs Post 1 (2 mos) (4 mos)		Pre vs Post 2 (2 mos) (6 mos)		Pre vs Post 3 (2 mos) (8 mos)	
	G.H. Parents n = 44	Agents n = 22	G.H. Parents n = 26	Agents n = 15	G.H. Parents n = 19	Agents n = 11
I: Indices of healthy, positive behavior	+	+	+	-	+	-
II: Indices of disturbed, negative behavior	+	+	-	+	-	+
I and II Combined	+	+	+	+	-	+

Key: + = "better" at post

- = "worse" at post

n = No. of ratings at posts. (Pre-ratings = 44 G.H. Parents; 22 Agents.)

Since youngsters absent from the homes after 4, 6, or 8 months could not be rated (factor of attrition), the particular set of youngsters included in any given post-rating group is not entirely identical to the set of youngsters in the pre-rating group. We are presently attempting to see if, for example, the background and parole characteristics of the post 3 rating group differ significantly from those of the other rating groups. If this, or other possible factors, do not account for the findings given here, it might be concluded that there was a "point of diminishing return" regarding impact of group home placement on given youngsters - at least as perceived by the group home parents. Overall, however, parole agents tended to perceive pre-post changes for the better (combining indices of positive and negative behavior) when rating youngsters from a more global frame of reference as compared with the group home parents.

During the data collection period (November 1966 - June 1969), four of the seven sets of group home parents were terminated - all by staff decision; none at the request of the group home parents. By October, 1969, two of the remaining homes had ended operation: one due to the death of the husband (Type IV, Temporary Care), the other (Type VI, Individualized) due mostly to geographical and program changes in the parole unit, and also in part due to the couple's feeling that they no longer wished to continue providing direct foster care. The remaining home (Type III, Boarding) is currently operating, some three years after it began. The shortest operation of a home was two months (Type I, Protective), although this same couple was with the Project a total of six months operating a Temporary Care Home on a trial basis for the remaining four months.

It is difficult to use any single factor to completely account for the termination of any of the four sets of group home parents mentioned above. In a very general sense, staff reached a point where they felt that the group home parents' philosophies, personalities, styles, and the like, fell below minimum acceptable standards relative to (a) the perceived needs of youngsters in the home and/or (b) current (or altered) treatment stances on the part of agents. With three of these four couples, group home staff felt that the individuals might be appropriate for particular types of foster care where the complexities of operating a group home would be absent and/or the types of youngsters would be different.

Most clear is the case of the First Type I Home, which was used later as a Temporary Care Home. This couple was simply not providing the level of care and supervision required, nor the level which they had provided as a CTP group home prior to becoming an official Group Home Project home. In the case of the other three homes, different and more complex factors were involved. These three homes seemed to go through a similar sequence of events - culminating in termination. With two homes, the sequence was experienced over an eighteen-month period of time. With the other home; the sequence was "compressed" into a four-month time period.

Generally, this sequence involved an initial period of operation that was encouraging and acceptable, only to gradually and then more rapidly go "downhill" - both in terms of staff assessments and in terms of how the group home parents seemed to feel. With some exceptions, it appeared that the

youngsters placed - individuals who were prone to be more delinquent<sup>1</sup> - provided relatively little positive feedback to the group home parents, whether directly or more in terms of noticeable, long-term change. The group home parents' reactions (typically complaining to - or opposition toward - staff; more pressure on the youngsters) were usually met with by implicit or explicit disapproval from agents and/or reduction of agent support. Once agents began to feel that given youngsters in a home were having detrimental experiences, or began to feel dissatisfied with the results of efforts to alter things - and/or uncomfortable in dealing with the group home parents - the "decline" of that home had passed the point of "no return".

The group home parents tended, as a group, to be from the lower-middle class ("blue collar") socio-economic segment of the community. They also tended to have not progressed beyond a high school education. They represented a wide range of ages (25-74; average age was 43; 71% were 40 or older). Five couples had children of their own living within the home (usually either pre-schoolers or adolescents). Four of the seven sets of group home parents (two of which were terminated) had had prior foster home experience. Their motivations and needs tended also to be rather simple and basic relative to the youngsters: They seemed to want to feel that what they were doing was helpful to the youngsters and that they, as people, were "accepted" by staff. There were many attempts to

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<sup>1</sup> As a whole, the group home youngsters tended to be "worse" parole risks than the remaining CTP experimental population, as indicated by comparing average Base Expectancy scores for the two groups. (15)

help them achieve a feeling of being part of the "team"; yet, in most cases, success in achieving this appeared to be relatively short-lived.<sup>1</sup> Even so, more success seemed to be achieved than had been the case with most CTP foster homes. Adding to the problems was the fact that no regular program of "relief" (time off) was established for the group home parents.

In retrospect, it appears that different or more appropriate assistance could (and in some instances - should) have been provided for the group home parents. The extent to which home terminations or other issues might have been affected by such assistance has been the subject of a good deal of debate among staff.

#### TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

Some of the suggestions evolving from Project experiences include: (a) some individuals who might be appropriate for individual foster home care of certain youngsters cannot handle the increased, simultaneous demands of several seriously delinquent, and frequently disturbed youngsters - particularly when these demands are later accompanied by complex, implicit and/or explicit role and treatment expectations; (b) agents and group home parents, though independently matched with youngsters, might still not be a "good match" with one another; (c) foster or group home parents (those usually available within the community), require

<sup>1</sup>The Project's overall attempt to develop a "team approach" involved many complex factors, and was only moderately satisfactory - with "success" varying a good deal among the different homes. There were differing opinions - at any given point in time - among staff (and group home parents) relative to roles, responsibilities, authority and the like - thus complicating the implementation of a "team approach".

special assistance when support, information, experiences, and the like are relevant to "where people are" as people, and when the emphasis is being placed on maintaining or developing their "natural resources" rather than trying to "professionalize" them; (d) for the older, more seriously disturbed delinquent, it may be necessary to sacrifice a certain amount of "home atmosphere" in order to lease or buy adequate facilities and to provide professionally trained staff (instead of, or in conjunction with, very carefully selected "house parents") in addition to utilizing volunteers and aides.<sup>1</sup> If staff left or did not work out satisfactorily, a change in physical placement for the youngsters in the home would not be required; (e) group home parents - whether having raised children of their own or not - who seemed to have a good intuitive "feel for", and acceptance of, the "adolescent turmoil" (apart from delinquency), appeared better able to weather crises and to "bounce back"; (f) planned - and sometimes spontaneous - relief is an absolute must, particularly in the case of group home parents or live-in staff.

In spite of the difficulties experienced, there was a general feeling among almost all staff that group homes should have an ongoing role in CTP. When the Group Home Project began, staff attitudes were more guarded, not only in relation to group homes, but relative to foster homes as well. At the close of the study, many agents seemed to feel more positive about out-of-home placements. They seemed to feel that - in spite of predictable problems - group home placement would usually be preferred over foster homes.

<sup>1</sup>This type of staffing pattern would, as a rule, be more expensive than the present approach.

This may seem rather paradoxical - but the homes did tend to provide better, more predictable, and more readily available services than foster homes had previously provided. For example, the use of the Temporary Care Home prevented the detention of many youngsters. Also, most youngsters placed seemed to resist placement less in the group homes than was usually the case with foster home placement; and, they seemed to view the former homes more as an extension of the CTP program and their agent.

In summary, we are left with a mixture of experiences which have raised more questions than they have answered. Group homes as a single program item offer no panacea. However, we feel that they should be given every consideration as a possible important treatment variable - but implemented only after planning which takes careful account of the needs of the population to be served and of the treatment/management goals of the agency and/or professional staff as well.

This study may or may not satisfy some of our intense needs for concrete evidence in working with delinquent youth. However, it is important to note that we are in a program-developmental era in which flexibility and complexity are not only a reality, but represent desirable - if not required - elements as well. Pilot, experimental and exploratory programs such as CTP and the Group Home Project take on understandable relevance, not always in the traditional sense of providing "unassailable proof" of one kind or another, but rather in the sense of adding to our growing understanding of and perspective on people, of the reasons why some individuals - by society's current definitions - are delinquent or maladapted, and of what can be done to further more constructive forms of adjustment on their part.

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**END**