CHAPTER IV
METHOD AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The methodological implications of a dialectical approach differ significantly from those of the rational and functional theories and their positivistic methodology now dominating inter-organizational analysis. In most interorganizational analysis, researchers attempt to understand organizational life by abstracting certain features—morphological properties or circumscribed negotiated orders—out of their social context. In contrast, the dialectician must penetrate and comprehend organizational life in its total concrete peculiarity. He/she must relate the morphological and substructural levels of organizational reality by tracing out the intricate patterns of contradictions and social relations beginning from the construction and reconstruction of material existence. Thus, the methodological strategies of dialectical analysis must conform to the theoretical commitment of totalization and at the same time retain intimate familiarity with the subterranean processes of social production.

In taking a processual view of social reality, the dialectical perspective views the organization as a temporary and unstable combination of sedimentations arising from different times and situations involving quite different social constructions. Structuration in organizational life is never a continual, predictable process, for it depends to some degree on the unique reflective actions of individual participants and their power to carry out
their objectives. Basic to this perspective is the notion of uneven development. Periods of relative quiescence and stability may suddenly give way to mobilization and conflict. If different structural features of organizations change in different times and with different frequency resulting from the residues of individual reflective action, then empirical regularities of the moment are suspect. In granting empirical regularities of the moment, abstracted from their social historical context, the dominant position in research, organizational researchers have chosen to submerge history and thus possess a distorted conception of the meaning of contemporaneous variations and a preemption of future possibilities (Benson, 1973). In dialectical analysis, predicatable relations at any one moment in time are only of limited significance. The binding together of contemporary structures is sequential, historical, and contingent and the underlying processes which forge regularities should not be taken for granted. In dialectical analysis, empirical regularities in organizations constitute an embedded, overlayed residue of sequences of social production which must be traced out and historically reconstructed. In all, the methodological strategies implied in the theoretical commitments of dialectical analysis are in stark contrast to the positivistic methodologies of conventional organizational theory. The theoretical commitments of a dialectical approach to organizations demands a methodological strategy which maintains an intimate familiarity with the construction and reconstruction of concrete organizational life and at the same time allows for comprehensive contextualization and historical reconstruction.

Intimate associations with Reality House as a participant observer by virtue of being on its resident staff has given me a
unique opportunity to observe, first hand, the internal and external
dynamics of organizational life over a period of time. The importance
of being a part of the on-going dynamics of organizational life
can not be adequately emphasized. This opportunity, coupled with
my theoretical and methodological leanings, has prompted me to
undertake the study of interorganizational relations which is
gaining prominence in the recent past.

The Target Field of Study. The focus of present study will be on the
interactions and interrelationships between Reality House at
Columbia, Missouri, a treatment and rehabilitation program for
youthful offenders on the one hand, and three of its referral agencies
on the other. The field of study, then, consists of Reality House,
two of the Missouri state government agencies, viz. the Division of
Probation and Parole and the Division of Corrections, and the
Circuit Court at Columbia serving Boone and Calaway Counties.
Confinement of this study to only these four agencies is purely an
arbitrary decision. The only criterion that justifies such a
determination is that all of these agencies are involved in trans-
actions with one another directly and on regular basis concerning
referrals. Other criteria such as exchange of funds, services or
information may also be invoked to extend the field to include many
more organizations. For expediency and other considerations, present
investigations are confined to the study of interrelationships
between these four agencies.

Also, there is an increasing trend in interorganizational
research to conceive all interaction agencies in a collective sense
and analyze the relationships among them instead of between them. In the present study, however, it is decided to remain at the dyad level of analysis instead of embracing the total configuration. It is believed that each dyad situation is a unique one and has its own peculiar historical overtones as well as political and economic contingencies and therefore, must be understood as such.

In keeping with the conceptual framework adopted in the present research, it is also decided to study the linkage of each of the three dyads with its surrounding agencies so as to delineate the interpenetration and integration of different levels of social reality.

**Sources and Methods of Data Collection**

**Participant Observation:** Participant observation is defined here as a field research strategy that simultaneously combines analysis of historical documents, respondent and informant interviewing, direct participation and observation, and introspection (Denzin 1973:186). It is considered to be the most suitable method to come to grips with the kinds of theoretical concerns raised in the present study.

I joined Reality House, on its resident staff, in September 1972. Since then, I have been actively engaged both in the intra-agency as well as in the inter-agency activities of the program. My professional responsibilities at Reality House involved individual counseling, guided group interaction therapy and participation in the weekly staff meetings to discuss the residents' progress in the program and develop treatment strategies to work with problem
cases. I have established a favorable rapport with the staff and residents and earned a reputation for being professional in discharging my responsibilities in the program. At this point, two years after working with the program, I asked the director of the program whether I would get the needed support and cooperation from him, as well as from others of other agencies in case I undertake research on the problems and processes of the interagency relations of Reality House. He not only showed great interest in the idea but also was persistent in encouraging me to undertake the research project. I was not only given full and free access to all the files, including confidential material and interagency communications, but also both the director and myself spent countless evenings at his home sometimes discussing things that I could not have had access to otherwise. Through him and through my own contacts and interactions, I developed good friendships with some people of the same and other agencies, who shared with me candidly their own personal experiences, as well as the politics of the interagency relations (Robert Perry, Perry Winget, Bob Kauffman, Art Farlow, Mark Kupprer, and Larry Long). I visited their homes, cooked Indian food for their families and spent several evenings talking over these matters. These conversations were immensely helpful in gaining inside information about the informal cliques, personal rivalries and private decision making processes of organizational life.

Also, over the last two years, I have taken a part in some cases as "participant as an observer," in other cases as an "observer as participant," in several of the interagency meetings, conferences and workshops. Wherever it was appropriate, I was included in the
team representing Reality House in interagency meetings. In other instances, the director of Reality House used to introduce me as a staff member and also as a researcher working on interagency problems and request the members' permission for my presence in the meetings.

Thus, during the last two years, I participated as an observer in a number of meetings of the Board of Directors of Reality House (about 15); observed as a participant of several of the meetings between the representatives of Reality House on one hand and those of the Division of Corrections (4), and the Division of Probation and Parole (5) on the other. I also observed the proceedings of the Missouri Association of Community Residential Treatment Centers (3), meetings between the Executive Board of MAC RTC on the one hand and the director of the Division of Corrections (1), the Director of the Department of Social Services (1), Senator Conway (1), Senate Appropriation Committee hearings on SB No. 594 on the other.

Also, I observed parole hearings at the main penitentiary (2), parole revocation hearings (2), court hearings (7). I attended workshops on Reality therapy (3), Transactional Analysis (2), a volunteer conference, city council hearings (4) and Community Services Council hearings.

In addition, I also visited all of the referral agencies, Missouri Council on Criminal Justice and Mid Missouri Council on Criminal Justice from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the week days for several weeks observing, talking, taking down notes and going through the relevant files at the time of interviewing my respondents in different agencies.
Historical Data: Historical data would be helpful to account for the forces leading to the information of the interorganizational field in the present study, the rise and decline of relationships between organizations, and the situational responses of these organizations to the daily interactional contingencies.

Historical data in the present study consisted of:

(1) Minutes of the meetings of the Mid-Missouri Council on Criminal Justice and its various committees since January, 1970 (eight months before the establishment of Reality House). These minutes provided us with valuable information relating to the initial preparations and the various stages of development of the Reality House program. They also served the very useful purpose of checking or verifying the individual accounts of the past history of Reality House.

(2) Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors of Reality House from the time Reality House became an independent corporation in December, 1971, which were useful in knowing how the agency reacted and responded to certain demands and pressures from its environment.

(3) Minutes of the meetings of the Missouri Association of Community Residential Treatment Centers and its various sub-committees since the association came into existence in June, 1973. These meetings informed us of a relentless struggle for dominance and control that went on over the years between the Division of Corrections and the Association.

Letters of correspondence between the Division of Probation and Parole and MMCCJ regarding the establishment of Reality House,
first under their auspices and later as an independent corporation; letters of correspondence between Reality House, on one hand, and the Division of Probation and Parole, the Division of Corrections, Courts, City Council of Columbia, on the other; letters of correspondence between MACRTC and the DC; letters between MACRTC and the Senators and Congressmen of the Missouri state legislature. The letters served the most useful function of providing the rationale and explanations of significant events that occurred between agencies. They also reflected the sentiments and attitudes of the heads of these agencies towards one another.

Budgets, contracts or agreements provided yet another important source of information. They not only gave us information with regard to the state of the economy over a period of time, but also provided us with explanations for funds, additional funds and various sources of funds. Formal contracts or agreements, on the other hand, are the most visible evidence of formal relations or structures between agencies in this study. Renewals or violations of these contracts from time to time exemplified the precarious or problematic nature of the most formalized relations between the agencies.

Reports: MMCJ, MMCCJ and LEAA evaluated the Reality House program from time to time and these reports were helpful to some extent to check the researcher's own assessment of the status and progress of the agency. Also, monthly reports were prepared and sent by Reality House to its Board of Directors delineating the significant events that had occurred during the month, including information on residents.
Newspapers accounts are another good source of information on community interest. Reality House enjoyed the goodwill of the local dailies and a number of features on the program, as well as on individual residents, have appeared from time to time, which served as a good means of community education in corrections.

**Open-Ended Interviews:** Interviews were conducted at three levels. For information regarding the day-to-day interactions and interrelationships between agencies and the conditions and consequences thereof, "referral-contact" personnel were interviewed from a minimum of one hour to a maximum of several hours. The agencies included in this case were Reality House, The Division of Probation and Parole, the Division of Corrections, and the Courts. The size of the personnel in each of these agencies varies from agency to agency. A total of 26 personnel distributed agencywise (the Division of Probation and Parole--14, The Division of Corrections--4, Courts--4, Reality House--4) were interviewed at the service delivery level. Likewise, information regarding the political and economic aspects of the interagency relationships was gathered from interviews with the administrators and the boundary personnel of these agencies: The Division of Probation and Parole--8, The Division of Corrections--2, the Courts--3, Reality House--1, in all 11 of them. Other agencies included in this regard were MCCJ, MMCCJ, the City Council, the Boone County Court, the Community Services Council which all have funding connections. Office bearers of MACRTC were also interviewed for information on the political activity of the agency.
For information on community reaction to the program, prosecuting attorneys, public defenders, city police officials, the sheriff and his deputies and some people from community organizations were interviewed.

In general, the interviews lasted from about 45 minutes in a very few cases to several hours in a few other cases. In half of the instances, the interviews had to be terminated in the middle and continued on some other day. Except in a very few cases, there was a good reception to the study and a willingness to participate. Several interviewees commented that it was educational to them. Generally, there was more cooperation from the agency officials having connections with the program than those unrelated to it. In some cases, appointments were not kept for half a dozen times because of more pressing demands. I had to spend three weeks in one agency, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., to catch two respondents a couple of times each.

Crime Commission: Boone County and the City of Columbia governments appointed a crime commission, consisting of various law enforcement agencies, elected officials and citizen leaders, to inquire into the rising incidence of crime in the region and recommend ways and means of combating the crime problem. The commission met once a week for four months, heard legislators, public officials, law enforcement officials, citizen groups, and deliberated on the problems of crime. The researcher attended every one of these meetings, took notes, observed the proceedings and on some important occasions taped the proceedings of these meetings. The meetings provided crucial information, directly or indirectly related to Reality House and the community's attitude toward the program.
Recording individual accounts of phone conversations between the representatives or organizations: Just to have a feel for the frequency of interaction and the kinds of topics talked about on the phone, two dictaphones were kept at the disposal of the counselors at Reality House for a couple of months for them to dictate their conversations with the representatives of other organizations soon after the conversations were finished.

Interview Guide and Its Use: In my interviews with respondents at various levels of both the network organizations and the organizations in the environment, information was sought on the following areas:

(1) History: In addition to the documentary evidence, certain key individuals known to have been associated with the initial conceptualization and development of the Reality House program were asked to reconstruct the history of the network including the rise and decline of relationships between the organizations. These narratives together with the documentary evidence were used to construct the history of the present interorganizational field.

(2) The Political and Economic aspects of the network relationship: The administrative and boundary personnel including those of environmental organizations were asked to describe the political and economic aspects of the relationship of their organizations with the organizations in the network vis a vis the Reality House program. The focus was on the nature of dependence/interdependence of these organizations for funds, clients, services, and information; the power differentiation between them; and the actions and policies adopted by each organization to affect the actions and policies of the other organization.
in the network. These interview materials complemented the observational and documentary evidence in portraying the subterranean activities of the network organizations and their elites.

(3) Also respondents at all levels of organizations in the network were asked questions on domains, ideologies, technologies, and work evaluation. The purpose of information on these aspects of inter-organizational network was to compare and contrast the findings of present study with those of conventional interorganizational research.

(a) Domain: Domain is operationalized in this study as whether the respondents agreed with the role and scope of their counterpart organizations; whether they perceived the tasks of these organizations as complementary or conflicting to the tasks of their respective organizations.

(b) Technology: Technology is defined as consisting of specific techniques, methods, strategies or approaches adopted by the network organizations in accomplishing their tasks.

(c) Ideology: Ideology is conceived of as the rational explanation and the philosophical underpinnings associated with the technology of the network organizations. Three alternative ideologies that were popular at the time were cited for the respondents to identify the ideology of their respective organizations with one of them. The three ideologies cited were: Incarceration or Reform, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation or Clinical Approach.

(d) Work evaluation: Work evaluation was obtained by assessing the attitudes and opinions of the members of the network organizations about each other's work. How well the other organizations and their members were performing their tasks? Were the personnel of other organizations competent to do their jobs?
(4) The nature of the relationship between the organizations:
How did the respondents characterize the interactions and interrelationships between their respective organizations? The focus here was on the frequency, extent, depth and duration of the interactions.

These methods and techniques provided adequate data to delineate or construct the field of interorganizational relationships surrounding Reality House in the following five chapters.