PART TWO

THE INTERORGANIZATIONAL FIELD
OF REALITY HOUSE

(Presentation of Data)
CHAPTER V
REALITY HOUSE AND THE MID-MISSOURI
CRIMINAL JUSTICE NETWORK

An Historical Overview

Introduction: In the late 1960s, some very significant political and economic developments heavily penetrated the Mid-Missouri criminal justice system. Rising crime rates, overcrowded prisons, and high rates of recidivism brought forth renewed concern among national and state political leaders. Also, liberal reformism was becoming popular currency in the academic and governmental communities preaching the sins of incarceration and punishment and the virtues of reintegration. These political developments of the late sixties culminated in the Omnibus Act passed by Congress in 1968. This legislative act created the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), a national committee which was mandated to stimulate and structure through federal matching funds the emergence of innovative programs and organizations dealing with criminal justice and rehabilitation. The LEAA subsequently established a series of regionally based organizations to control and administer the flow of federal funds into the local areas. In Region III of Missouri, the overarching funding agency established by LEAA was the Mid-Missouri Council on Criminal Justice (MMCCJ) composed of a number of prominent citizenry including local and state officials.
Under the broad parameters of the Omnibus Act, MMCCJ has chosen to attempt to curb a "vicious criminal offender cycle," which according to its chairman, "involves a criminal offender appearing in juvenile court for minor offences, in circuit court as an adult accused of a felony and later returning to juvenile court as a parent of a juvenile offender" (MMCCJ, Jan. 16, 1970). To break this cycle, programs of the Planning council include community based treatment centers, a drug education program, foster homes, juvenile justice centers, a training program for law enforcement officers for early detection and prevention of juvenile delinquency, a volunteer Supervisor program and such other programs that would be of help in combating crime and juvenile delinquency.

Background History: Thus, Reality House is a joint venture of all the agencies involved in the criminal justice process at the local and state level in region III of Missouri consisting of Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Cole, Cooper, Howard, Moniteau, and Osage counties. The program was launched with local initiative in the late sixties as part of a national effort to combat crime and delinquency.

Locally, the Supervisor of District Six Probation and Parole office in Columbia supervising Probationers and Parolees and doing pre-sentence investigation for the local courts, was concerned for some time about the first time young offender who is a high risk on probation but does not deserve incarceration. He was looking for an alternative to both prison and probation. When LEAA monies were made available to the local law enforcement agencies and some of his friends and acquaintances were at the helm of MMCCJ, the District Supervisor seized the opportunity and discussed the idea with
a friend of his who was at the time the Prosecuting Attorney and also the Chairman of the MMCCJ. This person subsequently got elected as circuit court judge for Boone and Callaway counties, and continued to be the chairman of the MMCCJ as well. The Judge readily agreed to "the alternative to prison and probation" concept. The Judge and the District Supervisor discussed certain influential names in the community to be associated with this concept. They identified the Columbia Daily Tribune Managing Editor, and the Columbia Police Chief who have been on MMCCJ as chairmen of its two important committees—the Communications Committee and the Law Enforcement Committee. They also located an UMC faculty member who was a member of the MCCJ, the executive director of MMCCJ, a congressman and vice-chairman of MMCCJ, the director of Adult Education, and the then Public Defender. The reasons for involving these people, according to the Judge and the Supervisor were: Besides being on the MMCCJ, "the Police Chief is going to have to respond when residents violate the rules; the newspaper editor can help tell the story of what is really going on and help mold public opinion" (Nov. 12, 1975). "As a member of legislature," says the Congressman, "I can tell the General Assembly what kind of an alternative it is and how well it works and whether it is worth considering on a statewide basis. I have been impressed with the idea" (Interview on Sept. 5, 1975).

Obviously, the project, "a community based Residential Treatment Center," popularly known as "Reality House" became the most important need of the Mid-Missouri region. The Mid-Missouri Council on Criminal Justice in a formal meeting resolved that, "At present
within this region the courts are limited to either committing an offender to an institution or to placing him on probation, which in practice means putting him back in the community. After a careful study it is the judgment of this council that there exists a number of persons who show potential for rehabilitation. However, because of lack of home, job, and a living structure, there is a need to provide some temporary shelter, food, supervision, and treatment on a short term basis pending further disposition by the court" (MMCCJ, Jan. 16, 1970). The council has therefore invested a lot of money and effort in preparing and planning for the establishment of the Reality House program. In early 1970, the council dispatched a delegation to visit and study the PORT program at Rochester, Minnesota, an experimental community based treatment and rehabilitation program for the first time young offenders as an alternative to incarceration. The council also brought the executive and project directors of the PORT program and two of the circuit court judges, who happened to be on the Board of Directors of PORT, to explain to the local judges and the community leaders about the philosophy and operation of their program. Once the council was convinced of the feasibility and value of the project, they took the initiative in approaching the Division of Probation and Parole to persuade them to sponsor the project in their name, as it is required by the Omnibus Act for some local agency to sponsor such a project.

Upon the acceptance of the Board of Probation and Parole, the Mid-Missouri Council on Criminal Justice approved in July, 1970, 60% funding of an Action Grant for the establishment of a limited term Residential Treatment center for adult Probationers and
Parolees within its region. Accordingly, the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole and the MMCCJ signed a contract on the first day of September, 1970, to establish and conduct a Community Treatment Center (adult) in Region III area according to the provisions of Action Grant Number III Ac16A70 and to commence performance of this contract on the 1st day of September 1970 till August 31, 1971. The contractor and the council agreed to share the expenses in the amount of $12,634 in the form of in-kind contributions and $17,296 in hard cash respectively.

Board of Probation and Parole designated the district supervisor at Columbia as Project director of the program to operate it on their behalf. The council nominated an advisory board consisting of the council chairman, vice-chairman and two of its committees chairmen to assist the Board in the administration of the program.

The Board of Probation and Parole was involved with this project for the following reasons:

(1) The District Supervisor of BPP at Columbia was the initiator of the concept and associated with it.

(2) The Board has both Probationers and Parolees under its supervision in the community. The number of ex-offenders (probationers and parolees) under the Board's supervision is more than it is under the Division of Corrections. The BPP would release approximately 738 inmates per year compared to 180 work releasees by the Division of Corrections.
3. The mission of Probation and Parole is closer to that of MMCCJ.

4. The Board has been utilizing the services of half-way houses in the state already and they found them a useful resource. After one year of experimentation with the program, the council conducted a feasibility study as to the program's success and usefulness. The study unanimously recommended that the program be expanded in terms of both size and scope to deal with a greater number of offenders under a more comprehensive program of treatment and rehabilitation.

The council then approached the Board of Probation and Parole again to find out whether it would be willing to put in the extra commitment needed. The Board expressed its inability to do so for the following reasons:

1. The Board did not have adequate finances.

2. They had increasing commitments to the Magistrate and circuit courts to help them in the pre-sentence investigation and they were short of personnel.

3. Community Residential Treatment centers were not in their priority.

4. There was another reason for their reluctance which, of course, no one admitted openly. The department of corrections, of which the Board of Probation and Parole was only a division, was already authorized by legislation to deal with half-way houses, and therefore, the Board did not want to get into competition with the department of corrections. However, the Board strongly felt, and still feels, that it is legitimate that they should deal with
half-way houses, for reasons of both numbers involved and the long term supervision required in the case of their clients.

The MMCCJ had its own reasons for looking for someone willing to put in an increasing commitment to the program. "Any program we create," declared the council's chairman, "must ultimately have somebody willing to eventually assume fiscal or money responsibility for that program. When and if the Federal government closes down this program we hope that the programs we have created will have proven their usefulness to the counties and cities so that they will be continued. These programs will become your programs and your responsibilities" (Minutes of council meeting, Sept. 21, 1971).

The council, particularly the advisory board of Reality House, had a conflict of interest with the Board of Probation and Parole. The Board of Probation and Parole has two needs: Probation and Parole. By virtue of working closely with parolees, the Board has given greater priority to parolees than to probationers in referring them to Reality House. Moreover, the Board has disregarded the regional priority. Out of fifteen parolees they have referred during the first year only two belonged to region III and none to Boone County or Columbia.

The council's priority has been to serve the residents of its region. It did not want to spend its resources on people from other regions. Also, the program has been set up with a major emphasis on serving first-time young offenders as an alternative to incarceration. The Board has been using the program as a "dump ground" for its parolees. Thus, the very purpose and objective of the program has been under great stress. Interestingly enough, the
very architect of this "alternative to incarceration" concept was in charge of the program during this period. These things happened in spite of him. He had to yield temporarily to the bureaucratic pressures by admitting older and third or fourth time offenders including parolees into the program.

The view of the staff operating the program was that "the program we initially developed and operated was primitive and the people we were dealing with had more problems and required more intensive treatment. Our experience showed that there was a high rate of failure and recidivism which dictated that we take a hard look at the program--we grew in confidence, gained more experience, underwent some training in therapy, and felt that we could offer services in areas such as psychotherapy, behavior modification, reality therapy and guided group interaction...We found that there was a lot of enthusiasm, active cooperation and involvement of people in the community; we wanted to use the community's resources to the fullest extent...

"We felt the need for diversification of funding sources,

"Above all there was plenty of LEAA's money. We wanted to move away from the Board of Probation and Parole and lodge our program in the community" (Probation officer at the time, interview, Dec. 6, 1975).

Because of the circumstances mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the MMCCJ appointed a Board of directors for the Reality House program consisting of the council's Chairman, vice-chairman, executive director, two of the chairmen of the councils' committees on corrections and communication, one council member and
two influential and strategically important Columbians. The council further authorized the Board to incorporate with the Secretary of the State of Missouri as a not-for-profit private corporation to carry out the mandate of the council in developing and administering the program on an expanded scale. The council also appointed the district supervisor of the Board of Probation and Parole at Columbia to head the Reality House program on a full-time basis beginning December 1, 1971. He has been responsible, to a great extent, for popularizing the concept of community Residential Treatment centers, and mobilizing the forces and resources at the local, state and regional level to give birth to this program in Columbia.

Reality House, since then, has been a non-profit-corporation headed by a seven member Board of Directors drawn from the local community. The staff is employed by the corporation and responsible to the Board of Directors. The staff consists of a director, a program coordinator, a counselor, and 5 student resident staff members. The students are chosen as staff members to live in the house and to provide a role model for residents to emulate. The resident staff work in turns from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. every night and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Thus, the program is under supervision 24 hours per day.

The Program's stated goals are:

(1) "Serving as an alternative source for placing offenders, thereby reducing confinements to state correctional institutions;

(2) "Stopping negative behaviour of its participants and assisting them in learning responsible behaviour;
THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF REALITY HOUSE:

NMCCJ

Board of Directors

Director

Program Coordinator

Counselor

Secretary

Resident Staff  Resident Staff  Resident Staff  Resident Staff  Resident Staff

RESIDENTS
(3) "Demonstrating that juvenile delinquents and adult offenders can be integrated in this type of program, and that a

(4) "Community based program is more effective in meeting offenders' needs than institution, and that

(5) "It is less expensive to operate than institutions"
(Manual of Reality House).

TARGET GROUPS

(1) "Primary recipients of Reality House services will be residents of Boone County and surrounding counties comprising LEAA region III;

(2) "Juveniles and adults, generally between the age of 15 and 21;

(3) "Who would be a high risk if placed on probation or parole;

(4) "Those who have failed on Probation or Parole and would otherwise be committed to state correctional system, and who can be controlled and redirected in the Reality House program;

(5) "Those who, when considering individual needs and problems, would otherwise be retained in the state correctional system due to lack of adequate resources within the community"
(Manual of Reality House).

The Program: The philosophy and methodology of the Reality House program are that of milieu therapy, socialization theory, Guided Group Interaction, Positive Peer Culture and Democracy. Additionally, there are a number of important underlying assumptions in regard to human behavior and the correctional process. The first assumption
is that criminal behavior occurs in the community and to a large
degree needs to be resolved with the offender in the community.
Both the cause and solution to criminal behavior does not lie
solely within the offender but also in the larger system, i.e.,
the family and community. Second, offenders have the capacity to
act in a responsible, law abiding manner and the efforts in correc-
tions would be in the direction of maximizing the offender's self-
responsibility, self-direction and accountability. Third, in the
short period of four to eight months that the residents are in the
program, peer relationships could be effectively used to modify
attitudes, values, and behavior. Fourth, as in all correctional
programs, a resident sub-culture exists which could be taped, and
the sub-cultural norms, values and goals could be joined with
Reality House norms, values and goals. Fifth, programs do not
change people much in a positive direction unless the participants
feel that the program is their own--something they have responsi-
bility for. Sixth, the most effective and the least alternative
control and use of authority is peer pressure. Finally, the
residents themselves could establish positive group norms that
could influence the members both in the house and in their real
life situations outside the house.

The intervention strategy utilized in Reality House resembles
Guided Group Interaction. G.G.I. is a model in which the staff and
residents mutually share the responsibility of defining, developing
and implementing a therapeutic community to meet both the needs of
the residents and society's demand for control of illegal behavior.
The positive peer culture develops from each member having a persona
stake and commitment in the program. This commitment is achieved by maximizing the resident's input into the normative control structure governing the program. This commitment by the residents at Reality House has been achieved through participating in the program development, establishing the rules governing personal conduct, enforcing the rules, assessing penalties for irresponsible behavior, reinforcing compliance, admittance of new members, recommending discharges from the program and through gaining social acceptance from peers by achieving within the framework of program norms. Like the guided group interaction model, the Reality House program maximizes internal accountability by incorporating resident input. The resident is viewed as an active collaborator in the formation of interventions to meet his needs, not as a passive recipient. In an effort to maintain the high level of input and commitment in the program when the group composition changes over time, the program allows for regular reevaluation of the program itself.

In summary, the Reality House program which was conceived and initiated by a single individual as an experimental project received the approval and support of the organizational elite in the Mid-Missouri Criminal Justice System and got itself firmly established as an independent organization in the community of other correctional agencies. The emergence of Reality House program in the Mid-Missouri Criminal Justice network points out that organizational and inter-organizational phenomena are largely the products of the creative actions of organizational elite who could mobilize interpersonal resource networks, manipulate and react to changing political and
economic realities in the interorganizational network and the environment in their effort to realize certain interests and commitments. It also suggests that the political and economic forces in the larger society constantly impinge upon organizational events at various levels of the network.